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Conformed to the Image of Christ

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Many years ago I received my undergraduate degree in Animal Sciences. My specific area of interest in that broad category of science was dairy cows. As an undergraduate I took a course in dairy cattle judging. Every breed of dairy cattle has a breed association that oversees the continual development and promotion of that breed (e.g., Holstein, Jersey, Guernsey, etc.). Each breed association has what is called the “ideal cow” that possesses all the desired physical characteristics of that specific breed. Each breed even has portraits and models of what they consider their “ideal cow”, the real world there are no “ideal” cows. When dairy cows are judged at a show the judge is constantly, in his/her mind, comparing the cows being judged with that “ideal.” Similar concepts are involved when judging other livestock or even dogs (e.g., the Westminster Dog Show). A term that often comes up when judging such animals is “conformation.” That is, how well does the actual specimen one is judging “conform” to the ideal.

I don’t know if you’ve ever thought about it, but the concept of “conformation” is applicable to Christianity. Consider Paul’s statement in Romans 8:29: *“For whom He foreknew (i.e., Christians), He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”* Have you ever given the idea of conformation “to the image of His Son” much thought? When I contemplate that concept, it hits me like a “ton of bricks”! Think of the great privilege and honor God extends to the Christian in that He wants the form and fashion of our character to conform to that of Jesus Christ.

Further, He fully expects us to achieve this most worthy goal! He does not expect us to make it on our own. But with His constant care, strengthening and guidance we can make it (cf. 2 Cor. 6:16b-7:1; Gal. 5:22-25; 1 Pet. 1:13-16; 1 Jn. 1:5-7).

I don’t mean to oversimplify it, but I believe there are two overarching things we must constantly strive for as we cooperate with God’s strengthening power to develop in our lives to achieve this most noteworthy goal of conforming “to the image of His Son.” First, we must have a laser-like focus on doing God’s will in all situations. Jesus said, *“My meat is to do the will of him that sent me”* (Jn. 4:34). Each and every day I must remind myself to focus on that above all else. A good thought in that regard is given by the apostle Paul when he says, *“put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”* (Rom. 14:7)

Second, I must love others more than myself and serve rather than seeking to be served. Jesus said, *“the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve”* (Matt 20:28). He proved that on the cross! Paul describes it this way,

“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” (Phil. 2:3-8)

Let us busy ourselves today by giving ourselves totally, completely, and absolutely to Him (Matt. 5:6; 6:33). The apostle Paul did it with God’s help and so can we! Let his words describe each and every one of us, *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”* (Gal. 2:20)



Is an Individual Born in Sin?

Is an individual born in sin? Many individuals today would answer 'yes.' Many believe that when they were born into this world, they were born a sinner. This false doctrine is referred to as "Original Sin,". What does the Word of God say about this, how does it answer the question?

"The word of the LORD came to me again, saying, "What do you mean when you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children's teeth are set on edge'? "As I live," says the Lord GOD, "you shall no longer use this proverb in Israel. "Behold, all souls are Mine; The soul of the father As well as the soul of the son is Mine; The soul who sins shall die. " (Ezekiel 18:1-4)

"As *for* his father, Because he cruelly oppressed, Robbed his brother by violence, And did what *is* not good among his people, Behold, he shall die for his iniquity. "Yet you say, 'Why should the son not bear the guilt of the father?' Because the son has done what is lawful and right, and has kept all My statutes and observed them, he shall surely live. (Ezekiel 18:19-20)

"Fathers shall not be put to death for *their* children, nor shall children be put to death for *their* fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin." Deuteronomy 24:16

The answer to this question as revealed within Scripture is 'No.' The soul that violates the will of God will die for his or her sins alone. Sin is an individual action that violates the will of God. It cannot be transferred from one person to the next.

If you have been around a new born baby you will quickly realize that he or she has not violated the will of God. How can the baby? A baby and a young child lack the skill and knowledge necessary to intentionally do that which is morally wrong.

No individual is born in sin.

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