

## A CURE FOR THE "SAME OLD, SAME OLD" BLUES

Turn in your Bible to Ephesians 2, please. (Just then ----- walks in and I stop and greet him. "Hi, long time no see. How's life treating you?" "You know, same old, same old." "No, I don't know. What does that mean?" "Well, every week is the same. Get up Monday morning, go to work, come home for supper and a little TV, get up the next morning and do the same, 5 days a week. Saturday you get up and mow the lawn and wash the car, Sunday go to church and do some chores, then it's Monday and same old, same old.")

Do you ever feel that way, like life is a rut? Someone defined a rut as a grave with both ends kicked out. In Pilgrim's Progress, Pilgrim described such a life as being "trapped in the slough of despond." If you can relate to such sentiments, there's a verse in Ephesians two that will drain that swamp for you and replace the same old same olds with new joy and purpose. The first half offers a lifetime perspective, and the second part a weekly perspective. So let's notice 1st in v.10a:

### I. GOD IS WORKING IN YOU TO PRODUCE AN EXCITING TRANSFORMATION

Salvation in scripture is both the popping of a flashbulb and the process of a lifetime. Vs. 1-9 look at the instantaneous change that takes place when you trust the Lord Jesus as your personal Saviour, believing He is God who became a human being, lived without sin and died on the cross in your place for your sins, then rose again. John 5:24 records that instantaneous change of passing from death to life, from condemnation into salvation. That experience means you are redeemed as God's purchased possession, but He is not content to leave you as you are, a sinner controlled by a sin nature. Eph.2:10 testifies that you become His workmanship in a lifetime experience of transformation by His resurrection power into the likeness of His Son. The Greek word is *poiema*, which means "handiwork, a craft project testifying to the skill of the craftsman." Kathy and I enjoy going to tag sales, because people are selling what they don't want anymore and realize that, if we don't need it either, we can walk away, no offence. However, I'm always uncomfortable walking around at a craft fair, because these are handmade objects the maker has spent a lot of time and energy on and has pride in, and to examine it and put it back is like a personal affront. Yet when I teach my Monday night home Bible study in Southwick, I realize I'm sitting at one of God's craft fairs, because each person present is one of His lifetime projects. Some are young Christians, others old; some are babes in Christ looking forward but unsure of what lies ahead; others (like me) are older saints with more mileage behind us than ahead. But what we have in common is that the Lord who saved us loves us and has a wonderful plan for our lives – to change us from the self-willed, sinful people we once were when we trusted Christ into the likeness of His Son – holy, caring, compassionate, spiritually mature, without the bad habits and baggage we once had. When you consider what He started with and how far He has to go, no wonder it's a lifetime project.

If you're looking at your life and feeling the blahs, perhaps it's because you see yourself presently as something like this amateur woodworker's birdhouse and thinking that's the finished project, not seeing instead the potential you can become in time. So to put the future potential in perspective, let me share the steps the Lord is committed to:

1. God settled on the concept of what to make you before the world was created – Eph.1:3-5; II Thess.2:13. That’s when He chose you for salvation, gave you as a gift to the Lord Jesus (Jn.6:37,44), and decided what He wanted to create of you as His poieyma, to show the world to come a testimony of His transforming power.
2. God finalized the blueprint of the materials He would be working with at your conception, writing a DNA code that would determine your size and shape to come, and placing you in a family situation He would use in shaping your personality – Isaiah 44:2; Jeremiah 1:3.
3. God created an interest and need for Him as He began calling you to Himself - Romans 8:28-30.
4. God brought someone into your life to share the gospel, at which time He purchased you for Himself by bringing you to understand grace, Christ’s substitutionary death and resurrection and the free gift of eternal life that is in Him – Eph.2:1-9; I John 5:9-13; I Cor.6:19, 20; Phil.3:12..
5. the project begins in earnest – to be conformed to the image of Christ – Rom. 8:29
6. the project will ultimately be completed on 2 levels:
  - a. in life, as you grow in spiritual maturity and holiness – Col.1: 27-8; Eph.4:11-15.
  - b. At death, when you are presented before the Father “holy, unblameable and unreproueable” – Col. 1:21-22. And the greatness of God’s promise and commitment to complete this project is that He will never give up on us or put on the back burner while He becomes interested in someone seemingly more worthy - Philippians 1:6. The testimony to His workmanship depends on each of us becoming that finished project He can show off and boast of.

So if you’re feeling the “same old, same old” blues, maybe it’s because you’ve lost sight of the fact that constructing a building one brick at a time is slow, methodical work and you can’t see the progress in your life. Or maybe you’ve gotten your eyes off what the Lord wants to do in your life and onto what you want in your life – happiness over holiness, personal fun and fulfillment over spiritual fellowship, in which case the Lord will let you drift for awhile until the emptiness and hypocrisy of the world – and the loneliness of your heart – make you realize what you’re missing and want to come back. Remember, He’s working with human beings who have free wills, not with clay or wood where He can simple sand down the rough spots. But because He expects a little cooperation, I’d suggest 3 steps to get the spiritual excitement back:

- a. Make a conscious decision to get back on the workbench – Romans 12:1.
- b. Make a conscious decision to spend time in the Word – Rom.12:2; Ps.1:1-4. If you’ve drifted away as Hebrews 2:1 warns against, repent and confess it, then plan to get up a little earlier for a Quiet time, or turn off the TV for an hour and fellowship with Him – I John 1:1-4.
- c. Deal with those distractions and besetting sins that break your fellowship with the father by an act of your will – Hebrews 12:1,2; Romans 6:1-16.

Hey, get excited at the prospect of what an omnipotent God could do in you for His glory. Look back over your Christian experience so far and recall the testimonies of His grace, His provision at various times, and the bad habits and personality weaknesses He’s delivered you from already. You may not be perfect – none of us is – but rejoice over how far you’ve come and ask Him to get back to work on you again!

If this long-term picture doesn't race your motor, let me give you something exciting for the short run, the coming week, for ex. Eph.2:10b teaches that:

## II. GOD DESIRES TO WORK THROUGH YOU IN DIVINE APPOINTMENTS.

These "good works" He's planned for your life are what are called "divine appointments," a crossing of paths He programmed to happen so He can use you in some spiritual way. Let me show you two scriptural examples, one simple and commonplace; the other supernatural but which makes the concept clear.

1. Acts 16:12-15 God brings Lydia to decide to attend a riverside prayer meeting one Saturday, and brings the Apostle Paul there for the first time. He's welcomed and given the chance to speak and, through this intertwining of fates, God opens Lydia's heart and salvation is experienced plain and simple, the fulfillment of God's eternal plan for her. Like sitting beside someone in the cafeteria at work, sharing with a hitchhiker, inviting a neighbor over for coffee. What begins as a casual conversation ends up as an eternally planned divine appointment.
2. Acts 8:26-39 the Lord brings a hungry heart all the way from a foreign country to Jerusalem searching for the true God, only to leave disappointed and confused. Then God brings Philip to the road he'll be taking home, a conversation begins, he's invited up into the treasurer's chariot to interpret the passage he's reading, and Philip must have laughed inside when he realized that – purely by chance, of course – the eunuch is reading the greatest passage in the whole Old Testament on the substitutionary death of the coming Messiah. Talk about low-hanging fruit!

Could God use you in a divine appointment, perhaps even this coming week? Would that add a little joy and excitement to your life, to realize God had just worked through you to fulfill an eternal plan for someone's salvation? He could, if you meet these prerequisites:

- a. pray for such opportunities. You have a commission as His ambassador to "beseech men in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God" (II Cor.5:17-21)
- b. know how to present the clear gospel message of salvation by grace
- c. be sensitive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit to share
- d. be bold to step in and ask, "If you were to die tonight, do you know where you'd spend eternity? May I take a few minutes to share a life-changing truth with you, whereby you can KNOW you'll go to heaven when you die?"
- e. realize you're only a vessel – some plant a seed, some water it, some have the joy of bringing in the harvest as soul-winner...however God wills to use you is fine. Don't be disappointed if they don't get saved, as if it's your fault because you're not a better salesman; don't be proud if they do.

There's another fantastic way the Lord can use you for divine appointments which isn't mentioned as much. It's in II Corinthians 1:1-5, where God can use you not only in the presentation of the gospel but in the preparation for the gospel, as His messenger of comfort to prepare the soil in the heart of someone God doesn't have a direct channel to.. It requires the disturbing step of suffering, whereby the Lord allows you to endure the same physical affliction as the target soul endures, so you can share the comfort you receive directly from the Lord. This serves as preparation of heart for the gospel, It sounds severe, but remember, you did tell Him that your body belongs to Him and He can