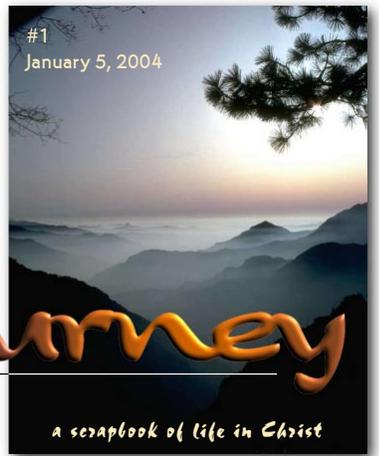


"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." (Galatians 2:20)



the Journey

a scrapbook of life in Christ

Twists and Turns

The colorful brochure for our tour of Egypt listed the exotic sites we would be visiting during the winter of 1982: Cairo, Luxor, Thebes, Giza, the Valley of the Kings. For months I had pored over my reference books, planning in exquisite detail what would be my one chance to examine in person (as opposed to in the pages of a book) the important aspects of each ancient site. I familiarized myself with inscriptions, wall carvings, key architectural details, dates and historical context. With all my planning so well organized, I imagined the tour as a bee-line series of stops:

1. Land in Cairo.
2. Go directly to Point A.
3. Study Point A.
4. Go directly to Point B.
5. Study Point B, and so on.

Reality, however, was dramatically different. It went something like this:

1. Land in Cairo.
2. Meet your friendly tour guide, Amir.
3. Finally arrive at Point A after a detour to Amir's brother-in-law's jewelry shop.
4. Leave Point A after fifteen minutes of "sightseeing."
5. Go directly to a tourist trap where Amir will get a 10% kickback from any sales.
6. Spend an hour at tourist trap.
7. Bribe Amir to take us to Point B, instead of his cousin's perfume shop.
8. Bribe Amir further to leave us alone for the rest of his natural-born days, and so on.

Expectations

During those heady days immediately after we took Jesus Christ to be our Savior, most of us imagined that the remainder of our life in Christ would be a bee-line path of pristine righteousness culminating in our victorious passage through the pearly gates to walk the golden streets of heaven. We, of course, understood that we were new at this, and expected to be in even better shape by the time we reached our destination. Thus, even in those infant days, we understood that life in Christ would be a *process*—and something that should improve with each day on the path.

But it never occurred to us that we would so often veer *off* the path all together.

The hard reality of living with Jesus is that the hours and days of joy, fulfillment, hope, holy ecstasy, and exhilarating victory are inevitably intermixed with hours and days of something far less. What we thought would be a straight highway up toward heaven quite quickly was revealed to be a more circuitous plank road filled with twists and turns, ups and downs, delays, obstacles, and abrupt switch-backs. The ultimate destination remains the same; nothing can remove that glorious promise of eternity before the throne. But until that day arrives, we who remain in the flesh will have to put up with the built-in shortcomings of the flesh and the fact that life here on earth is often not very heavenly. And we will have to discover both new and old ways of returning to—and staying on—the path of God's design.

The Journey

This brand new weekly publication will chronicle that sometimes tortuous, but ultimately rewarding, triumphant journey of life in Christ. The Christian path is one of adventure: there is never a dull moment. It passes through valleys, and climbs the highest peaks—but it need never sink into the "Slough of Despond."

In the moment of our rebirth, God *justifies* us and, in one sense (as in "set apart"), *sanctifies* us. But in a second sense, sanctification is an ongoing, maturing process that gradually—sometimes painfully—changes us into the likeness of our Savior. It is a holy occupation that is conducted while in the flesh, thus is imperfect, and grossly inefficient. The journey of sanctification is, ultimately, a very human process.

Since the journey does not proceed in a straight line, the chronicle of this journey will be more like a family *scrapbook* than a systematic journal. We will encounter both friends and foes, neighbors and strangers. We will discover the sometimes uncomfortable truth about ourselves on the way to learning the reassuring truth about our Lord. We will find encouragement for a road that is sometimes treacherous, sometimes bathed in the light of the Son. We will be honest and unafraid, but we will always seek our footing on the trustworthy foundation of God's word.

So join us on this journey of discovery and sanctification as we seek to become more and more, each day, like our Lord Jesus Christ.

But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(2 Thessalonians 2:13-14)

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

When we pray, asking God to sanctify us, are we prepared to measure up to what that really means? We take the word *sanctification* much too lightly. Are we prepared to pay the cost of sanctification? The cost will be a deep restriction of all our earthly concerns, and an extensive cultivation of all our godly concerns. Sanctification means to be intensely focused on God's point of view. It means to secure and to keep all the strength of our body, soul, and spirit for God's purpose alone. Are we really prepared for God to perform in us everything for which He separated us? And after He has done His work, are we then prepared to separate ourselves to God just as Jesus did? "For their sakes I sanctify Myself..." (John 17:19). The reason some of us have not entered into the experience of sanctification is that we have not realized the meaning of sanctification from God's perspective. Sanctification means being made one with Jesus so that the nature that controlled Him will control us. Are we really prepared for what that will cost? It will cost absolutely everything in us which is not of God.

Are we prepared to be caught up into the full meaning of Paul's prayer in this verse? Are we prepared to say, "Lord, make me, a sinner saved by grace, as holy as You can"? Jesus prayed that we might be one with Him, just as He is one with the Father (John 17:21-23). The resounding evidence of the Holy Spirit in a person's life is the unmistakable family likeness to Jesus Christ, and the freedom from everything which is not like Him. Are we prepared to set ourselves apart for the Holy Spirit's work in us?

(Oswald Chambers)

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)

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