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God's Answer to Despair

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Suicide is currently the leading cause of death between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five. This in turn is the result of an overwhelming sense of despair that has swept across the landscape of our national societal scene in the last forty to fifty years. Despair, the end result of depression is attended by a loss of hope. For many of these young people life has neither any meaning nor real purpose. They thus conclude, "So why bother going on?"

For years their evolutionary-minded teachers and professors, who possess a non-Christian worldview have taught them that we are all mere cosmic accidents, sheer animals and that our ape ancestors evolved by chance from their ancestors the amoebas. With this view of humanity, one's fellowman appears to have no dignity and there is an utter disdain for the sanctity of life. The natural result of all that is abortion on demand and schoolhouse massacres.

Secular humanism has taught young folks to look to mankind for answers, but they have not come up with any answers that satisfy their deepest longing for an understanding of meaning and purpose where their own particular lives are concerned. The media offer sound bites, their professors cliches and their parents a mere shrugging of the shoulders in response to their questions regarding life's meaning. They

don't know why they are here in the first place and furthermore they've been taught that ultimately life ends in annihilation.

One verse in the pages of Holy Scripture has the answer to each of these profound questions, queries that their fellow humans could not reasonably address;

Where did I come from? (origin)
Why am I here? (purpose)
Where am I going when my life ends? (destiny)

That wonderful reassuring passage is found in 2 Corinthians 5:5:

> Now it is *God* who *has made us* for this very *purpose* and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing *what is to come.* (Emphasis added)

ORIGIN

Paul has reiterated what we are told repeatedly in the Bible, "God . . . has made us." We have been made in his image, or likeness. That fact alone should give us the utmost feeling of respect for others and ourselves. That solitary fact should engender within our hearts a sense of dignity when we look at other humans. God certainly takes those images seriously, for we are told in Genesis 9:6 that the penalty for taking the life of another human, the image of God, is capital punishment.

The likeness or image of God within mankind resides in the soul. God is Spirit and thus has no body. However, God is eternal, intelligent, moral, reasonable, volitional, emotional, and personable. Each of those God-like qualities resides in the soul of every human being.

We are not the end result of a cosmic accident occurring billions of years ago in some primordial slime followed by millions of mutations and natural selections. We are the end result of intelligent design and each of us has been created for a distinct purpose.

When a person becomes a Christian by grace and the gift of faith (Ephesians 2:8-9) God re-creates us (2 Corinthians 5:17). He quickens our soul's dead spiritual component (Ephesians 2:4-5) and enlightens our minds with the truth of who Christ really is and what he did for us (2 Corinthians 4:6). At that point of re-creation we can begin to fellowship with God in prayer, worship him in truth and grow in our knowledge of him and obedience to him through his Word.

PURPOSE

The key verse that we are looking at (2 Corinthians 5:5) teaches that God has made us "for this very purpose". The word *this* located there refers back to 2 Corinthians 5:1-4, verses which describe our glorification; the time when we're in heaven and we have become like Jesus. That is the ultimate purpose for every child of God; every Christian (See Romans 8:30, Philippians 3:20-21 and 1 John 3:2).

Even before that utmost purpose for each of our lives has been fulfilled in our glorification, God has a plan and purpose for our earthly lives. That is made perfectly clear in many places throughout his Word, such as in Jeremiah 29:11. He wants us to become progressively sanctified and so he has provided his Word (John 17:17). He has planned for us to be successful and to prosper (maximizing our potential) and he has thus provided a blueprint for that also (Joshua 1:8). He wants us to be useful in ministering to the needs of others in the body of Christ and so he has provided each one of us with various spiritual gifts (Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11; Ephesians 4:11-13).

Even unbelievers have a purpose in God's master plan (Romans 9:17). Every talent, each skill, each and every shred of inventiveness that any person ever possessed in all of history has been the result of God's common grace for it has all been for the benefit of all mankind. God in his providence has seen to it that pagans and saints alike are endowed with abilities that will enhance our creature comforts and the general well being of humanity.

Much of the emptiness and lack of fulfillment that people

experience is the result of never having discovered God's purpose for their individual lives. Of course they seldom do find God's purpose until they've actually found God. Frustration comes when those people try this or that job, profession, or trade only to discover that they're not "cut out" for it. Even the phrase "cut out" implies a pattern, a design, and a purpose that they have yet to ascertain. Jesus said of his sheep, his chosen children, those for whom he died at Calvary, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

He wants each of us to be fulfilled. He wants us to become what he has planned and purposed for every one of us to be. He wants to show us what that specific plan and purpose for each of our lives is. When we discover that, we will have full and productive lives that bring glory to God. Apart from that discovery life remains dull, frustrating and boring.

DESTINY

A destination is a place to end a journey. All things have a starting point and an end point; a cause and effect. Our starting point has been made perfectly clear. An infinite, sovereign, omnipotent and personal God created us. Our destination is only in doubt from the standpoint of two possibilities; heaven or hell. Annihilation is not an option. Having been made in the image of God, your soul and mine, the real essence of our being, is in existence for eternity. Eternity in heaven is called "eternal life" while eternity in hell is called "eternal death."

Thus the question is, "How can I be assured of heaven instead of hell when it comes to my destiny?" The answer is found in Christ. The apostle John gives us this assurance: "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may *know* that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13).

Every child of God, every believer has the "Spirit as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come." The Holy Spirit resides in the heart of every believer from the time of his or her new birth (John 3:5-6). That "deposit" in the person of God the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity guarantees our

destiny; that which "is to come," eternal life with our triune God, the angels and every believer of all time. God's Holy Spirit is our blessed hope. With that kind of assurance we should never lose hope. The writer of Hebrews says, "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (Hebrews 6:19). The "anchor" of which he spoke was a sea anchor that was immediately tossed out behind a ship as it entered a storm. It looked somewhat like a large windsock; not like an anchor that's dropped in the harbor so that the ship won't move. This anchor provided stability to the ship so that it would not be blown off course and run aground on some rocky shoal, while the vessel itself continued to move forward.

So it is with our "blessed hope," this "anchor for the soul." When the storms of life rage in the form of illness, divorce, financial ruin, tragedy, disappointment, depression, or national crises, we may sometimes feel low or even slip gradually into a state of depression, but we Christians should never reach the point of running aground on the rocky shoal of despair; for that is a state of hopelessness. Whatever else we may lose our hope is secure because God has secured it (Philippians 1:6).

If somehow, sometime and somewhere any one of us has the opportunity to dialogue with some young person who seems to be in a desperate state, this uncomplicated truth derived from God's Holy Word has the power to turn them around and to give them hope. The message is clear; our *origin* is from God, our *purpose* is to live for and bring glory to God, and our *destiny* is to live with and enjoy our triune God forever. The knowledge of our *origin* gives an explanation to our past, the comprehension of our *purpose* gives meaning to our present, and the understanding of our *destiny* gives hope to our future.

"Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the spirit, as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come" (2 Corinthians 5:5). Amen.

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