

REWARDS OF CHRISTIANS

When you want a film developed, you simply drop it off at the drug store. From there it goes through a certain process and after the film is developed you pick up the pictures and display them in your photo album, frame or wallet. Today, of course, the development of photography is done by modern technology, and it is a lot quicker and easier than it use to be, however, the basics of developing a film is still the same.

THERE ARE THREE STEPS TO THE FILMS DEVELOPMENT

1. **"The Developing stage"** The "*exposed*" film is placed in a developing solution. There, images begin to appear. When it has reached the best stage, it is taken out and placed into another solution
2. **"The Fixer"** This stops the development of the negative. The instant the "*Fixing-bath*" touches the film all development ceases . . . all changes in the image stops. From that moment on, it remains the same!
3. **"The Display Stage"** The image appears in "*another*" form and is transformed into prints. The finished prints show off the skill of the photographer and the technician who processed them.

Ephesians 2:1-10 states, "*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*"

Funeral services often present a wrong picture of death and heaven. We speak of death as, "*the end of all toil,*" or, "*At death God equalizes all men,*" etc. Messages at funerals often imply that it does not matter how one lived on earth "*everything will turn out alright.*"

Death is referred to in Scripture as "*The last enemy.*" Why? The answer is, because death brings to an end all opportunities for growth. It closes the door to this life on earth and the opportunity we now have to "*Lay up treasures in heaven.*" Death brings an end to all this. The period of "*developing into the likeness of Christ*" will be over forever at the moment of death.

1. OUR LIFE HERE ON EARTH IS THE DEVELOPING STAGE

Instead of being placed in chemicals, we are placed in circumstances. Our life becomes the exposed film. The world God allows us to be in becomes our "***Developing tank!***" *Some* image is being impressed upon our spirit now, in this life. Hopefully it is the "*image of Christ,*"

characterized in the Fruit of the Spirit. Whenever God feels that the image has reached the best development He can hope for He takes us out of this life and places us in the "**Fixer**," which is death.

Once death touches the image . . . hopefully the image of Christ . . . the development is arrested **once and forever**. At the Judgment Seat of Christ God will take "*the developed negative*" . . . (that is us) . . . and will present it in the new finished print . . . (*our eternal form*) . . . and display it to its best advantage.

Once these "*prints*" . . . (that is, ourselves in our new form) . . . are on display **every- one** throughout eternity will behold the genius and remarkable grace of God to reproduce His own image and bring it to His likeness.

Ephesians 2:7, "*That in the AGES TO COME He might SHOW the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward US through Christ Jesus.*"

There will not be any change in this image, once the developing process stops. You can't "*retouch*" the negative. There will be no second chance. Our image will remain precisely as it is when we enter the "*fixer*" . . . (that is, DEATH)! We will enter into glory exactly as we are when death strikes our bodies. We will stay that way throughout all eternity.

We determine what the image will be. How successful God is, is determined by us. God provides the conditions for bringing the image to the best possible portrait, but we supply the picture. God knows when to remove the "*exposed film*" . . . (us) . . . from the "*developer*" . . . (life on earth) . . . and place it in the "*fixer*" . . . (death).

HOW DO WE TAKE THE PICTURE?

Allowing the Holy Spirit to polish and perfect our life forms the image in our life. Every hurt, every abuse, every disappointment is calculated by God to shape us a little more into the image of Jesus Christ. Every time we hold our tongue, return good for evil, or speak kindly instead of critically the image gets more and more like Christ. As we show mercy to those who hurt us, understanding to those who abuse us and sympathize with those who are unruly our life is conformed more like unto Jesus Christ's. As we sacrifice ourselves for others, patiently bear with others, when they are at fault, we take on more of the character of Jesus Christ. All this can **only** take place in the "*developer*" . . . (life here on earth).

When God feels that we are the best we are going to be, He will take us out of the "*Developer*" . . . (this life on earth) . . . and place us in the "*Fixer*" . . . (death). Death is the great "**Fixer**." Only here on earth will we find conditions to maturity. Death stops our development.

After death, in heaven, we will find nothing to forgive. There will be no anxieties, no frustrations and no temptations. Our character is formed as we **react** to testings, to trials in this life.

Patience, long-suffering, loyalty, gentleness, meekness, goodness, these are determined in the "*developer*," this life on earth. As long as we are alive on earth, we can make changes, however, once we are summoned to the Fixer, (Death), development is all over.

The nature of this life is *change*. The nature of things in eternity is *changeless*. This life is the day of opportunity. We enter into heaven the very person we are at the moment of death. Only our physical *body* dies. The person inside feels nothing. Death does not change man in any way. Nothing will happen to the real **YOU** when you die, other than release from your earthly prison. You will not even notice the transition from this life to the next. Death will happen so fast . . . "*in the twinkling of an eye*" . . . and you will be in eternity.

Only here on earth do we find the conditions for bringing us to maturity!

We cannot learn forgiveness, nor develop patience in heaven. We will not encounter anxieties, or frustrations, in heaven - we only encounter these things in this life. Our character is formed in this earthly life as we **REACT** to testings and trails in this life. What we become is up to us. We can be as sweet or sour as we like.

WE ARE STEWARDS OF OUR PERSONALITIES!

God provides the conditions whereby we can mature. We can mature into the likeness of Jesus Christ, **IF WE WANT TO!**

God will not force us to mature. Right up to the moment of death, we can make *changes*, however, after death, we change no more. We will remain forever just as we appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ. This judgment changes nothing, it only *reveals* what we are and rewards us for what we really are.

Life is, often, like a pressure cooker. Tough meat is placed into the pressure cooker in order to tenderize it. God never promises us that life would be easy, but, rather, He allows our experiences in order that the pressures of life will make us more like Jesus Christ. The trials, testings, and pressures of life are calculated by God to prepare us to a life with Christ. Romans 8:28, "*We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose . . . to be conformed to the likeness of His son.*"

God desires heaven to be filled with those who are like unto His Son, Jesus Christ. We are now in preparation. It is in this life that we can acquire these graces of Christ. If we do not allow the Holy Spirit to conform us into the image of Jesus Christ, it will seriously diminish our capacity for Christ and our ability to enjoy heaven.