

O TO BE LIKE THEE

THOUGHTS FROM MAJOR LORNE PRITCHETT

Are we sure we want to pray this? While the prayer is noble and worthy, being like Jesus in 2022 could be anywhere from totally disruptive to totally dangerous.

When this prayer is uttered or sung in hymns like this one, it is often set to a quiet but passionate arrangement. We are not saying simply 'I want to be like you Jesus,' but the writer unleashes a yearning, a longing, a passion when he adds the simple 'O' before it. 'O to be like Thee.' It appears that we often have at least a romantic, and at best, a religious desire to be like Jesus on His better days. We want to be like Him when He feeds the masses from a meagre lunch or when He saves the day for a grieving father whose little daughter just died. 'Yes Lord, make me like you – it is my persistent, constant longing.'

I wonder though, once I have left the prayer closet, will that longing still fully possess me when someone cuts me off in traffic or humiliates me in public? Does the passion still linger when the door before us is too narrow for a cross bearer to enter? Does it survive when we would rather have darkness than light? Does the passion still rage when God's truth is most inconvenient in a certain crowd?

To be like Jesus is being willing to eat with sinners every day without compromising holiness. It is being willing to advocate for a poorly populated narrow road while the majority passes you by on a wider road. To be like Jesus is to have an unswerving loyalty to Almighty God every day, in every way and everywhere. To be like Jesus is to send a seeking young rich man away sorrowful or to be feted on Sunday and crucified on Friday.

Personally, though I confess to the persistent passionate longing, I have and am falling far short every day. Yet here is what I believe. To sincerely have the longing is vital to our walk with Jesus. When we gaze upon Him and watch His forgiveness of the nail pounders, when we listen to Him hearing the priestly confession of the dying thief, when we see His heart spilled out on His cross without protest, it wrings the cry from our hearts, 'O to be like Thee,' loving, forgiving, patient, kind, '...willing to suffer, others to save.' O to be like Thee Lord.

Yet with those same words, we also are admitting that the consistent, persistent longing has yet to become a total reality. In that massive gap between our persistent longing and His pure likeness, there is where we are driven to grace. Our stark reality is that we have all fallen and are falling short of His glorious reality. It is the 'why' of His cross. So, we should sing this song with a passionate longing and with a constantly repentant heart.

This song reminds us of another: *'To be like Jesus, this hope possesses me...His Spirit helping me, like Him I'll be.'* Or as in this beautiful hymn *'Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart.'*

**AS GENERAL EVA BURROWS SAID,
"THE HOLY SPIRIT UNFOLDS THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST IN THE BELIEVER."
AND WE SAY WITH SINCERE REPENTANCE AND HUMBLE HEARTS,
'AMEN LORD, SO BE IT IN ME.'**