No one becomes a doctor overnight

Think of a young man who does whatever he likes until he is twenty-four. He does not study medicine, does not set foot in a laboratory, does no training in hospitals and sits no exams. No one would imagine that he could become a doctor overnight. Even if he visited a hospital now and then, gave money for patients or wore a white coat, no one would let him treat the sick. These things may have value in themselves, but they do not take the place of training.

In the same way, no one becomes a software engineer just because he owns a computer and now and then watches videos about programming. A professional has been formed by years of study, by thousands of lines of code, by errors corrected and failures owned. If someone claimed that a person could live for decades as he pleased and then suddenly receive all the experience through some mysterious procedure, we would call the claim absurd. No one can receive overnight the result of a road he has not walked.

Character cannot be transferred

The principle matters even more when it comes to character. Character is not information that can be copied, nor a skill that can be injected instantly. It is formed through repeated choices, through real experiences and through the daily practice of right principles. Being kind, patient, honest and humble does not mean knowing the definitions of these virtues, but practising them until they become part of you. They cannot be bought, inherited or received from someone else.

Many people still imagine that a change of character will happen automatically, somehow, after death. On this view, a person can go on living by the same patterns, and God will sort the problem out later. But what would be the point of this present life, with all its trials, choices and lessons, if the transformation were going to happen later anyway, without us? The road is part of the destination. It forms the person who can enjoy what he will receive.

The only school

Man has been placed in a world where good and evil, truth and lies exist, and where he chooses every day. Here he runs into selfishness and learns to give. He meets injustice and learns justice. He struggles with resentment and learns forgiveness. Trials develop patience, and hardships bring to light the true state of the heart. Life's challenges are not mere obstacles, but opportunities to grow.

In the Kingdom of God, evil will no longer exist. And where evil no longer exists, there is no temptation either, that is, the pull towards evil, nor any trial in which a person could overcome evil. Eternity is not the place where a person's formation begins, but the place where he enjoys its fruit. A pupil can no longer learn the lesson once he has left the exam room. In the same way, a person cannot make up after death what he refused to learn during his life. That is why the present time is so valuable: "behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Like a pianist

No one is born a perfect pianist. Talent may be there, but mastery comes only through long practice. A pianist does not reach a high level just by reading scores. He has to practise every day, make mistakes, correct them and repeat until what he has learned becomes part of him.

It is the same with truthfulness, patience and kindness. You can know them very well in theory and still not have them. They become yours only when you live them out in real situations. This is not about extraordinary achievements, but about character: love, patience, kindness, honesty. That is why true faith does not mean only accepting certain truths with the mind, but living them day by day.

Not a lonely struggle

The good news is that no one is left to struggle alone. God does not only set the bar; He also gives the help to reach it. The Bible promises that He "will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able", and that He will also give the way to come out victorious (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Just as a medical student looks at his teachers and wants to become like them, man also has a model: Jesus Christ. He is the Teacher from whom we learn how to think, how to love and how to live. Change is neither man's solitary effort nor a work done without his will. It is a partnership between God and man, step by step, in the school we are in right now.

From the free brochure "The Purpose of Life". You will find the brochure under Resources.

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