

Lessons from the Locksmith

October 1995

We recently had to replace one of our house keys, and I went to a local hardware store to have a duplicate made. I had always been curious as to how the key-making machine worked, and since no other customers were in the store I decided to ask for an explanation.

As the assistant placed the original key and the smooth blank into their respective holders, he began to explain the origin of the mechanism. During WW2, some of the airplane-mounted machine gunners would become so completely focused on their German targets that they would occasionally shoot the wings and tails off their own airplanes. To prevent this, a device was installed that automatically raised the machine gun when it swiveled in the direction of the airplane.

This principle was then incorporated into key-cutting. As a guide moves along the original key, it synchronously moves the spinning blade to which it is attached. The blade cuts the blank key according to the pattern of the original thus making an exact copy.

Paul, reflecting upon the eternal purpose of God, notes that saved people were to be *“predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren”* (Rom 8:29). Jesus is the original key and our lives are blanks; if we are cut according to the original, then the door of heaven is unlocked to us.

But how do we become like Jesus? The Scriptures reveal Jesus – His words, His attitudes, His character – but by what process are we cut to His pattern?

First, our will must be so engaged that we are studying Jesus unto the purpose of imitating Him. The author of Hebrews admonishes us to look *“unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith”* (Heb 12:2). This takes a conscious effort to harmonize our lives with The Life; it won’t happen automatically.

The trials and tribulations of life will chisel, cut and grind us into something different than we were at the start. But what will we become? What will the successes and failures, joys and sorrows, pains and pleasures make of us? That will be determined by the pattern which we determine to follow.

Those whose aim is not focused on Jesus will be destroyed, sometimes by their own bullets. The key which is not made according to the original will not open the lock. Let us learn from the locksmith and be conformed to the image of Jesus.