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FROM GLORY TO GLORY.

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord." – 2 Cor. 3:18.

AFULL transformation into a likeness of character to our heavenly Father should be the constant effort of every true child of God. It is not enough that we gain a knowledge of his plan and a pleasurable realization of his mercy and grace toward our unworthy race, and that we joyfully tell the good news to others; and it is not enough that we exert ourselves with uncommon zeal to bless others with those [R3655 : page 329] good tidings of great joy for all people; for we may do all of these things and more, and yet, if we do not let our Heavenly Father's goodness and grace have its due effect upon our own hearts, our knowledge, and even our good works, will profit us but little.

Our main object, therefore, in studying God's Word and his character as therein revealed, should always be to bring our own hearts and minds into closer sympathy and likeness and co-operation with his. As the Apostle says (1 Thes. 4:3), "This is the will of God, even your sanctification" – our full setting apart, or consecration of mind and heart entirely to the Lord, that he may complete the good work of transforming us into his own glorious likeness, by the operations of his Spirit through his Word, and thus fit us for the enjoyment of his abounding grace in the ages to come.

In the above words of the Apostle we notice particularly that the statement is made of *all* the Church – *we all* are being changed from glory to glory. And the inference is consequently a strong one, that those who are not being so changed are not of the class addressed. This is a solemn thought, and one that claims the most careful consideration of all the consecrated. The question [R3656 :

page 329] with us is not, Have we made a full consecration of ourselves to the Lord? but, having made such consecration, are we, in accordance with that consecration, fully submitting ourselves to the transforming influences of the Spirit of God to be changed daily more and more fully to the glorious likeness of our God?

Like the Apostle, then, addressing all the consecrated and faithful, we also of today may say, We all are being changed from glory to glory under the molding, fashioning influences of the Spirit of God. We can see it in each other, thank God! and we glory in it. Yesterday the mallet of divine providence struck a blow upon that member of the body of Christ, and an unsightly excrescence of pride fell off, and he looks so much more beautiful today, because he did not resist the blow, but gracefully submitted to it. The day before, we saw another under the wearing, painful, polishing process, to which he patiently submitted, and oh, how he shines today! And from day to day we see each other studiously contemplating the divine pattern and striving to copy it; and how we can note the softening, refining and beautifying effect upon all such! So the Spirit of God is at work upon all who fully submit themselves to his will.

But while the mallet and chisel and the polishing sand of divine providence do a very necessary part of the transforming work, by way of relieving us of many of the old and stubborn infirmities of the flesh, which cannot be so promptly and so fully eradicated by the gentler influences of the Spirit, the Apostle points us to the specially appointed means for our transformation in the careful and constant contemplation of the glory of God as revealed in his Word, and also in his blessed Ambassador, Jesus Christ, saying, "We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory."

"With open face" would signify without any intervening veil of prejudice or fear or superstition, but with simplicity of heart and mind. So we behold the glory (the glorious character) of the Lord –

not with actual vision, but as in a glass, as reflected in the mirror of his Word and as exemplified also in his living Word, Jesus Christ. And to aid us in this study we are promised the blessed influences of the Spirit of the Lord, who will guide us into all truth and show us things to come.

As we look into the mirror what a glorious vision we have of the divine justice, which we promptly recognize as the very foundation of God's throne (Psa. 97:2), as well as the foundation of all our present and future security. If we could not recognize the justice of God we could have no assurance that his gracious promises would ever be fulfilled; for we would say, Perhaps he will change his mind. But, on the contrary, we can say, He changeth not, and whatsoever he saith shall surely come to pass. See with what inflexible justice the sentence upon our sinful race has been executed! Generation after generation, for over sixty centuries, has witnessed it; and no power in heaven or earth could revoke that sentence until the claims of justice had been fully met by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Justice, says the Word of God, must be maintained inviolate at any cost. And herein we read not only our rightful condemnation as a race of sinners, but also our final, complete and glorious deliverance, because "***God is just*** to forgive us our sins" (1 John 1:9), since the precious blood of Christ redeemed us from the curse of death.

And while we thus read justice in the character of God, and mark with what scrupulous care he regards and respects this principle in all his dealings with his creatures, we see how he would have us respect the same principle in all our dealings. Thus we are led to consider what is the exact line of justice in this and that and the other transaction; and to remember also that this must be the underlying principle in all our conduct: or, in other words, that we must be just before we can be generous. This principle should, therefore, be very marked in the character of every Christian.

Next we mark the love and mercy of God. The death sentence upon our fallen race was a most merciful sentence. It was equivalent to saying: See, I have of my own free favor granted you life and all its blessings to be enjoyed forever on condition of its proper use; but now, since you have abused my favor, I take it away and you shall return to the dust from whence you came.

True, in the process of dying and of bringing forth a dying race to share the penalty, the mercy of God is not so manifest to the unthinking; but those who see the plan of God, discover in all this, not the decree of a merciless tyrant, but a merciful wisdom, but faintly disclosed in the promise that the seed of the woman shall in due time crush evil effectually – bruise the serpent's head – and deliver the entire race once generated in sin, by afterward regenerating all who will to life and all its blessed privileges. And in this mercy, in all its multiplied forms, we see the verification of the statement that "God is love." Thus we learn to be loving and merciful and kind both to the thankful and also to the unthankful.

We mark also our Heavenly Father's bountiful providence and his tender care for all his creatures; for even the sparrows are clothed and fed, and the unconscious lilies are arrayed in glory. Here we learn precious lessons of divine benevolence and grace. And thus, through all the catalogue of the moral and intellectual graces which go to make up a glorious character, we see in the mirror of the divine Word the model for our **[R3656 : page 330]** imitation; and in contemplation of all that is lovely, as embodied in him, and of all that is pure and holy and beautiful, we are changed little by little in the course of years to the same blessed likeness – from glory to glory. So be it: let the good work go on until every grace adorns the spotless robe of our imputed righteousness, received by faith in the blessed Son of God, whose earthly life was a perfect illustration of the Father's character, so that he could say – "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Let us, therefore, mark well the love of Christ, the gentleness, the patience, the faithfulness, the zeal, the personal

integrity and the self-sacrificing spirit. Mark well, then imitate his example and shine in his likeness.

The Apostle adds (2 Cor. 4:7) that the fact that we thus hold this treasure of a transformed mind in these defective earthen vessels proves the excellency of the power of God, and not of us. And so, by constant yielding to the influences of the Spirit of God, we may show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Pet. 2:9.) Oh, let our efforts and prayers continually be that these poor earthen vessels may more and more show forth the praises of our God! Let them be clean in body and mind; let no evil communications proceed out of the mouth; and let no actions unworthy of the sons of God dishonor these living temples of the holy Spirit. True, on account of our deformities we may very imperfectly perform good works; but, by the grace of God, let us at least refrain from known evil.

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