

**SERMON TO THE SAINTS GATHERED AT TOPEKA, KANSAS, ON SUNDAY,
AUGUST 2, 2015:**

**“FOR WHOM HE DID FOREKNOW, HE ALSO DID PREDESTINATE TO
BE CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON” Romans 8:29.**

“Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious. Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. *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 Corinthians 3

John 6:63 “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”

John 3:8 “The [Spirit] bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

Just as there are certain verses in the Bible which give us a miniature of the redemptive work of Christ for God's people-such, for example, as Isaiah 53:5 and John 3:16-so in Scripture there are some condensed doctrinal declarations which express in a few words the entire work of the Spirit in reforming, conforming, and transforming God's elect. 2 Corinthians 3:18 is a case in point: "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." This passage supplies a blessed summary of the progressive work of grace which is

wrought in God's elect by the indwelling Spirit whereby the saint is slowly but surely conformed unto and transfigured into the very image of the Lord.

The "glory of the Lord" here signifies His moral perfections, the excellencies of His character. The "glass" in which His glory is revealed and in which those with anointed eyes may behold it, is the Holy Scripture. Our being "changed into the same image" has reference to our sanctification, viewed from the experimental side; that it is here said to be "from glory to glory" suggests it is a gradual and progressive work. Our beholding that glory with "open face" means that the veil of darkness, of prejudice, of "enmity," which was over our depraved hearts by nature, has been removed, so that in God's light we now see light. The Spirit effects this great change by immediately bringing it about, that is, by His direct actions upon the soul and also by blessing to us our use of the appointed means of grace.

"The glory of the Lord." This is his His moral perfections, the excellencies of His character. The best theologians have classified God's attributes under two heads: incommunicable and communicable. (Communicable=able of being transmitted). There are certain perfections of the Divine Being which are peculiar to Himself, which in their very nature cannot be transmitted to the creature: these are His eternity, His immutability, His omnipotence, His omniscience, His omnipresence. There are other perfections of the Divine Being which He *is* pleased to communicate, in measure, to the unfallen angels and to the redeemed from among men: these are His goodness, His grace, His mercy, His holiness, His righteousness, His wisdom. Now, obviously, it is the latter which the Apostle has before him in 2 Corinthians 3:18, for believers are not, will not, and cannot be changed into the "same image" of the Lord's omniscience, etc. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of *grace and truth*." (John 1: 14)-His *moral* perfections.

The "glass" in which the glory of the Lord is revealed and beheld by us is His written Word, as is clear by a comparison with James 1:22-25: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." Yet keep in mind that the Scriptures have *two* principal parts, being divided into the Old and New Testaments. Now the contents of those two Testaments may be summed up, respectively, in the Law and the Gospel. That which is outstanding in the Old Testament is *the Law*; that which is prominent in the New Testament is *the Gospel*. Thus, in giving an explanation of the "glass" in which believers behold the Lord's glory, we cannot do better than say, It is in the Law and the Gospel that His glory is set before us. For a *distinctive* "glory of the Lord" is revealed in each one, and to *both* of them is the Christian conformed (or "changed") by the Spirit. This appears from the immediate context of 2 Corinthians 3:18. The Apostle is there comparing and contrasting the two great economies, the Mosaic and the Christian, showing that the superiority of the one over the other lay in the former being an *external* ministration (the "letter"), whereas the latter is *internal* (the "spirit"), in the heart. Nevertheless, he affirms that the former ministration "was *glorious*" (v. 7), and "if the ministration of condemnation be *glorious*" (v. 9), "for even that which is made *glorious*" (v. 10), "if that which was done away was *glorious*" (v. 11)-all being explained by the fact that the glory of the Lord was shown forth therein.

In the "glass" of the Law the Lord gave a most wondrous revelation of His "glory." The Law has been aptly and rightly designated "a transcript of the Divine nature." (Consistent w/1John 5:10-11). In Romans 8:7 we are told "the carnal mind is enmity against God," and the proof furnished of this declaration is, "*for* it is not

subject to *the Law* of God," which, manifestly, is only another way of saying that the Law is a transcript of the very character of God. So again we read, "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Romans 7:12): what is that but a summarized description of the Divine perfections. If God Himself is "holy and just and good" and the Law is an immediate reflection of His very nature, then it will itself be "holy and just and good." Again, if God Himself is "love" (1 John 4:8: "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love") and the Law is a glass in which His perfections shine, then that which the Law requires, all that is required, will be *love*, and that is exactly the case: Matthew 22:37-39. "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Look at this wonderful scene at Exodus 24:16, "And *the glory of the LORD* abode upon Mount Sinai." Yes, the glory of the Lord was as really and truly manifested at Sinai as it is displayed now at Mount Zion. That man in his present state was unable to appreciate the awe-inspiring display which God there made of His perfections, in no way alters that fact, for He is a God to be feared as well as loved. In the "glass" of the Law we behold the glory of the Lord's majesty and sovereignty, the glory of His government and authority, the glory of His justice and holiness. Yes, and the "glory" of His *goodness* in framing such a Law which requires us to love Him with all our hearts, and for His sake, His creatures, our neighbors as ourselves.

But the "glory of the Lord" is further manifested in the "glass" of the Gospel, in which God has made a fuller and yet more blessed revelation of His moral perfections than He did at Sinai. Now the Gospel necessarily implies or presupposes the following things. First, a broken Law, and its transgressors utterly unable to repair its breach. Second, that God graciously determined to save a people from its curse. Third, that He purposes to do so without making light of sin, without dishonoring the Law, and without compromising His holiness—otherwise, so far from the Gospel being the best news of all, it would proclaim the supreme calamity. How this is effected, by and through Christ, the Gospel makes known. In His own Son, God shines forth as the noon-day sun, for Jesus Christ is the brightness of His glory, the express image of His Person. In Christ the veil is rent, the Holy of Holies is exposed to full view, for now we behold "[t]he light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6).

In the Gospel is displayed not only the amazing grace and infinite mercy, but also and mainly the "manifold *wisdom*" of God. (Ephesians 3:10). Therein we learn how grace is exercised righteously, how mercy is bestowed honorably, how transgressors are pardoned justly. God did not deem it becoming to the honor of His majesty to sovereignly pardon sinners without a satisfaction being offered to Himself, and therefore did He appoint a Mediator to magnify the Law and make it honorable. The great design of the incarnation, life and death of Christ, was to demonstrate in the most public manner that God was worthy of all that love, honor and obedience which the Law required, and that sin was as great an evil as the punishment threatened supposed. The heart of the glorious Gospel of Christ is *the Cross*, and *there* we see all the Divine perfections fully displayed: in the death of the Lord Jesus the Law was magnified, Divine holiness vindicated, sin made ashamed, the sinner saved, grace glorified, and Satan defeated.

Though the glory of the Lord is so plainly revealed in the two-fold "glass" of the Law and the Gospel, yet the unregenerate have no appreciation of it. Of the one it is said, "But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart" (2 Corinthians 3:15); and of the latter we read, "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Corinthians 4:4). The unregenerate are blind to the loveliness of the Divine character: not that they have no eyes to see with, but they have deliberately "closed

them" (Matthew 13:15); not that they are not intellectually convinced of the Divine perfections, but that their hearts are *unaffected* thereby. It is because man is a fallen depraved and vicious creature that he is not won by "the beauty of holiness." Matthew 13:15: "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and *their eyes they have closed*; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." Psalm 110:3: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth."

"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Clearest possible proof of this was furnished when the Word became flesh and tabernacled among men. Those who had been "born of God" (John 1:13) could say, "We *beheld His glory*, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). But different indeed was it with those who were left in their natural state-they, notwithstanding their education, culture, and religion, were so far from discerning any form or comeliness in Christ (Isaiah 53:2), that they cried, "Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil" (John 8:48). Yet it is as plain as the sun that the blindness of the Pharisees was due neither to the lack of necessary abilities nor to the want of outward opportunities, but entirely to the perverted state of their minds and the depraved condition of their hearts-which was altogether of a criminal nature. You exhaust yourself reading in the Gospels of the continuous blood-lust to kill our Redeemer; and that lust is unabated to this hour. 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16: "[T]he Jews: Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."

From what has just been pointed out, then, it is plain when the Apostle declares, "but we all, with open face *beholding* as in a glass the glory of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18), that a miracle of grace had been performed in them. As spiritual blindness consists in an absence of desire for holy beauty-which blindness is capable of being greatly increased and confirmed through the exercise and influence of the various corruptions of a wicked heart, and which Satan increases by all means in his power-so spiritual sight is the soul's delighting itself in Divine and spiritual things. In regeneration there is begotten in the soul a holy taste so that the heart now pursues after God and His Christ. This is referred to in Scripture in various ways. It is the fulfillment of that promise "And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart *to love* the LORD thy God" (Deuteronomy 30:6).

This new desire for spiritual things which is born in the soul by the immediate operations of the Spirit is also the fulfillment of, "[a] new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26); and of, "I will give them an heart to know Me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be My people" (Jeremiah 24:7). So also, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped" (Isaiah 35:5). Of Lydia we read, "Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul" (Acts 16:14). To the Corinthian saints the Apostle wrote, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, *hath shined in our hearts*" (2 Corinthians 4:6). In consequence thereof, the happy subjects of this work of Divine grace perceive and have a hearty appetite for the holy character of God and are captivated with His perfections, "in the face (or image) of Jesus Christ".

"But we all": that is, all who have been supernaturally brought from death unto life (John 5:24), and out of darkness into God's marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). "With open face," or "unveiled face," as it is in the Greek and as the Revised Version translates it: that is, with hearts from which "the veil" of prejudice (2 Corinthians 3:15) has been removed, from which that "covering cast over all people" (Isaiah 25:7), the

covering of enmity against God, has been destroyed. ("Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." (Ephesians 2:15-16)). "Beholding"-note carefully the present tense, for it is a continuous action which is here in view; "as in a glass" or "mirror," namely, the twofold glass of the Law and the Gospel; "the glory of the Lord," that is His communicable perfections, His moral character; "*are changed into the same image*," this clause it is which we must now view closer.

To be changed into "the same image" means that the regenerated soul becomes conformed unto the Divine character, that answerable principles and affections are wrought in his heart, bringing him into harmony with the perfections of God. This *must* be the case, for since Divinely enlightened souls have such a taste for holy beauty, for *such* beauty as there is in the character of God, then it necessarily follows that every Divine truth as it comes into their view will appear beautiful, and will accordingly generate and stir up holy affections corresponding with its nature. Or, more specifically, as the heart is occupied with the several perfections of God exhibited in the Law and in the Gospel, corresponding desires and determinations will be awakened in and exercised by that soul.

The carnal mind is enmity against God: resenting His authority, disliking His holiness, hating His sovereignty, and condemning His justice: in a word, it is immediately opposed to His glory as it shines in the glass of the Law and the Gospel. But one who has been Divinely enlightened loves the Truth because he has a frame of heart answerable thereto-just as the unregenerate soul loves the world because it suits his depraved tastes. The regenerate discerns and feels that the Law is righteous in requiring what it does, even though it condemns him for his disobedience. He perceives, too, that the Gospel is exactly suited to his needs and that its precepts are wise and excellent. Thus he is brought into conformity with the one and into compliance with the other.

Universal experience teaches us that characters appear agreeable or disagreeable just as they suit our taste or not. To an angel, who has a taste for holy beauty, the moral character of God appears infinitely amiable; but to the Devil, who is a being with a contrary taste, God's moral character appears just the reverse. To the Pharisees, no character was more odious than that of the Lord Jesus; but at the same time Mary and Martha and Lazarus were charmed with Him. To the Jewish nation in general, who groaned under the Roman yoke, and longed for a Messiah to set them at liberty, to make them victorious, rich and honorable-a Messiah in the character of a temporal prince, who had gratified their desires-such an one had appeared glorious in their eyes, and they would have been changed into the same image; that is, every answerable affection had been excited in their hearts. "For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him." Isaiah 53:2. (That's why the Catholic church monstrosity dresses itself up in all royal colors.)

Now it is this moral transformation in the believer which is *the evidence* of his spiritual enlightenment: "beholding," he is "changed." Where a soul has been supernaturally illuminated there will issue a corresponding conformity to the Divine image. But in so affirming, many of us are likely to feel that we are thereby cutting off our hopes. We are ready to exclaim that *my* character resembles the likeness of Satan far more than it does the image of God. Let us, then, ease the tension a little. Observe, troubled souls, this transformation is not effected instantaneously, but by *degrees*: this great "change" is not accomplished by the Spirit in a moment, but is a gradual work. This is plainly signified in the words "*from glory to glory*," which means, from one degree of it to another. Only as this fact is apprehended can our poor hearts be assured before God.

This expression "from glory to glory" is parallel with "the rain also filleth the pools: they go from strength to strength" (Psalm 84:6,7), which means that under the gracious revivings of the Spirit, believers are renewed again and again, and so go on from one degree of strength to another. So in Romans 1:17 we read of "from faith to faith," which means from little faith to more faith, until sometimes it may be said, "your faith groweth exceedingly" (2 Thessalonians 1:3). So it is with this blessed "change" which the Spirit works in believers. The first degree of it is effected at their *regeneration*. The second degree of it is accomplished during their progressive (practical) *sanctification*. The third and last degree of it takes place at their *glorification*. Thus "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth *more and more* unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18). 1 John 3:2: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

For the benefit of clarity let's summarize our previous exposition of 2 Corinthians 3:18. The "we all" are those that are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The "with open face" signifies with minds from which their enmity against God has been removed, with hearts that are reconciled to Him. "Beholding" is a *repeated* act of the soul, which is the effect of its having been supernaturally enlightened. "As in a glass" refers to the revelation which God has made of Himself in the Law and in the Gospel. The "glory of the Lord" suggests His character or moral perfections. "Are changed into the same image" tells of the transformation which is effected in the believer by the Spirit. The "from glory to glory" announces that this great change of the heart's reformation and conformation to the image of God is produced gradually.

When the Spirit deals with an elect soul, He first brings him face to face with God's Law, for "by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). He reveals to him the perfections of the Law: its spirituality, its immutability, its righteousness. He makes him realize that the Law is "holy, and just, and good" (Romans 7:12) even though it condemns and curses him. He shows that the Law requires that we should love the Lord our God with all our hearts, and our neighbors as ourselves; that it demands perfect and perpetual obedience in thought, word, and deed. He convinces the soul of the righteousness of such a demand. In a word, the one with whom the Spirit is dealing beholds "the glory of the Lord"-His majesty, His holiness, His justice-in the glass of the Law. Only thus is the soul prepared and fitted to behold and appreciate the second great revelation which God has made of His moral perfections.

Next, the Spirit brings before the soul the precious Gospel. He shows him that therein a marvelous and most blessed display is made of the love, the grace, the mercy, and the wisdom of God. He gives him to see that in His eternal purpose God designed to save a people from the curse of the Law, and that, without flouting its authority or setting aside its righteous claims; yea, in such a way that the Law is "magnified and made honorable" (Isaiah 42:21) through its demands being perfectly met by the believing sinner's Surety. He unveils to his wondering gaze the infinite condescension of the Father's Beloved, who willingly took upon Him the form of a servant and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross (Philippians 2:8). And the Spirit *so* works in his heart that, though the Cross be a stumbling block to the Jew and foolishness unto the Greek (1 Corinthians 1:23), it appears to him to be the most wondrous, blessed, and glorious object in the universe-and by faith he thankfully rests the entire interests of his soul for time and eternity upon the atoning sacrifice which Christ offered thereon unto God. (Isaiah 53:10: "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.")

Not only does the Spirit give that soul to behold "the glory of the Lord" as it shines first in the "glass" of the Law, and second in the "glass" of the Gospel, but He also causes him to be "*changed into* the same image," that is, He begets within him corresponding principles and affections, to the one and to the other. In

other words, He brings his heart to a *conformity* to the Law and to a *compliance* with the Gospel. He causes the believer to "set to his seal" (John 3:33) to the whole Truth of God. He brings him to a full acquiescence with the Law, consenting to its righteous claims upon him, and working in him a desire and determination to adopt the Law as his rule of life or standard of conduct. So, too, the Spirit causes him to gladly embrace the Gospel, admiring the consummate wisdom of God therein, whereby the perfect harmony of His justice and mercy are blessedly exhibited. He brings him to renounce all his own works, and rest alone on the merits of Christ for his acceptance with God.

"Beholding as in a glass" is literally "in a mirror." Now the mirrors to the old days, unlike ours, were not made of glass, but of highly burnished metal, which reflected images with great brilliancy and distinctness, corresponding to the metal. If the mirror was of silver, a white light would be the result; if of gold, a yellow glow would be suffused. Thus an opaque object reflected the rays of the sun, and so became in a measure luminous. Here the Apostle makes use of this as a figure of the Spirit's transforming the believer. The Law and the Gospel display various aspects of "the glory of the Lord," that is, of God Himself, and as anointed eyes behold the same, the soul is illuminated thereby and an answerable change is wrought in the soul.

As the soul by faith, with *broken* heart (and not otherwise), beholds the glory of the Lord, in the mirror of the *two* Testaments (and not in the New without the Old), he is by the continual operations of the Spirit in him (Philippians 1:6) "changed into the same image." The views thus obtained of the Divine character excite answerable affections in the beholder. Rational argument may convince a man that God is holy, yet that is a vastly different thing from his heart being brought to *love* Divine holiness. But when the Spirit removes the veil of enmity and prejudice from the mind and enables the understanding to see light in God's light, there is a genuine esteem of and delight in God's character. The heart is won with the excellence of His moral perfections, and he perceives the rightness and beauty of a life wholly devoted to His glory. Thus there is a radical change in his judgment, disposition and conduct.

In the glass of the Law there shines the glory of God's holiness and righteousness, and in the glass of the Gospel the glory of His grace and mercy, and as by the Spirit's enablement the believer is beholding them, there is wrought in him a love for the same, there is given to him an answerable frame of heart. He cordially owns God as righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works. He acknowledges that God is just in condemning him, and equally just in pardoning him. He freely confesses that he is as evil as the Law pronounces him to be, and that his only hope lies in the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Christ is now "The Fairest of ten thousand" to his soul. He desires and endeavors to *exercise* righteousness and truth, grace and mercy, in all his dealings with his fellows. Thus a personal experience of the transforming power of the Law and the Gospel brings its subject into a conformity to their temper and tendency.

This being "changed into the same image" of the glory of the Lord, is but another way of saying that the Law of God is now written on the heart (Hebrews 8:10: "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people"), for as we have said previously, the Law is a transcript of the Divine nature, the very image of God. As the Law was written in indelible characters on the tables of stone by the very finger of God, so at regeneration and throughout the entire process of sanctification, views and dispositions in accord with the nature of the Law become habitual in the heart, through the operations of the Holy Spirit, according to the measure of grace which He supplies. The genuine language of the soul now becomes, "How reasonable it is that I should love with all my heart such an infinitely glorious being as God, that I should be utterly captivated by His divine excellence. How

fitting that I should be entirely for Him and completely at the disposal of Him who is Lord of all, whose righteousness is perfect, whose goodness and wisdom are infinite, and who gave His Son to die for me!"

This being "changed into the same image" of the glory of the Lord, is also the same as Christ being "formed" in the soul (Galatians 4:19: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you"). It is having in kind, though not in degree, the same mind that was in the Lord Jesus. It is being imbued with His Spirit, being brought into accordance with the design of His mediatorial work, which was to honor and glorify God. In a word, it is being at heart the very Disciples of Christ. This being "changed into the same image" of the glory of the Lord, is to be "*reconciled* to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."). Previously, we were at enmity against Him, hating His sovereignty, His strictness, His severity; but now we perceive the surpassing beauty of His every attribute and are in love with His whole Person and character. No greater change than this can be conceived of: "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord" (Ephesians 5:8). This great change is to "come unto" God (Hebrews 7:25), causing us to diligently seek daily supplies of grace from Him. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Hebrews 7:25).

"Mine eye affecteth mine heart" (Lamentations 3:51). We are influenced by the objects we contemplate, we become apparently similar to those with whom we have much intercourse, and we are molded by the books we read. This same law or principle operates in the spiritual realm: "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 Corinthians 3:18)-beholding, we are changed. Here, then, is our responsibility: to *use* the means which God has appointed for our growth in grace, to be daily occupied with spiritual objects and heavenly things. Yet *our* study and contemplation of the Truth will not, by itself, produce any transformation: there must be a *Divine application* of the Truth to the heart. Apart from the Divine agency and blessing all our efforts and use of the means amount to nothing, and therefore is it added "We are changed . . . *by the Spirit.*"

Just as surely as Christ's all-mighty power will, on the morning of resurrection, transform the bodies of His people from mortality to life and from dishonor to glory, so also does the Holy Spirit now exert a supernatural power in morally transforming the characters of those whom He indwells. The great difference between these two-the future work of Christ upon the bodies of the saints and the present work of the Spirit upon their souls-is that the one will be accomplished instantaneously, whereas the other is effected slowly and gradually. The one we shall be fully conscious of, the other we are largely unconscious of. This being "*changed* into the same image" of the glory of the Lord is a progressive experience, as the "from glory to glory" plainly suggests-from one degree of it to another. It is begun at regeneration, is continued throughout our sanctification, and will be perfected at our glorification.

Now that which deeply exercises and often sharply distresses the sincere Christian is that as he seeks to honestly examine himself he discovers so very little evidence that he is being "changed into" the image of the Lord. He dare not take anything for granted, but desires to "prove" himself (2 Corinthians 13:5). The moral transformation of which we have been treating is that which supplies proof of spiritual illumination, and without at least a measure of it, all supposed saving knowledge of the Truth is but a delusion. How may this transformation be identified?

First, where the Spirit has begun to transform a soul *the Divine Law is cordially received as a Rule of Life*, and the heart begins to echo to the language of Psalm 119 in its praise. Nothing more plainly distinguishes a true conversion from a counterfeit than this: that one who used to be an enemy to God's Law is brought understandingly and heartily to love it, and seek to walk according to its requirements. "Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments" (1 John 2:3). He who has been born again has a new palate, so that he now relishes what he formerly disliked. He now begins to prove that it is not only the fittest, but the happiest thing in the world, to aspire to be holy as God is holy, to love Him supremely and live to Him entirely. Leviticus 11:45: "For I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy."

Second, *a life of self-loathing*. The regenerated soul perceives that complete and constant subjection to God is His due, and that the gift of His beloved Son has laid him under lasting

obligations to serve, please, and glorify Him. But the best of God's people are only sanctified in part in this life, and realizing the Law requires, and that God is entitled to sinless perfection from us, what but a life of self-aborrence must ensue? Once we are supernaturally enlightened to see that "the Law is *spiritual*," the inevitable consequence *must be* for me to see and feel that "I am *carnal*, sold under sin" (Romans 7:14). And therefore there must be a continued sense of infinite blame, of self-loathing, of godly sorrow, of broken-heartedness, of hungering and thirsting after righteousness; of watching, praying, striving, or mourning because of frequent defeat.

Third, *genuine humility*. In view of what has just been pointed out, it is easy to see why humility is represented all through Scripture as a dominant feature of those who are quickened by the Spirit. An hypocrite, being experimentally ignorant of Divine Law-never having been slain by it (Romans 7:9, 11)-then, the more religious he is, the more proud and conceited will he be. But with a true saint it is just the opposite: for if the Law be his rule of duty, and his obligations to conform thereto are infinite, and his blame for every defect is proportionately great-if the fault lie entirely in himself, and his lack of perfect love and obedience to God be wholly blameworthy-then he must be filled with low and mean thoughts of himself, and have an answerable lowness of heart. "For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. ... For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me." (Romans 7:9,11).

There is no greater proof that a man is ignorant of the Truth savingly, and a stranger to Christ experimentally, than for spiritual pride to reign in his heart. "Behold, his soul which is *lifted up* is *not upright* in him" (Habakkuk. 2:4). The graceless Pharisee, blind to the real character and purpose of the Law, was ready to say, "God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men"; while the penitent Publican, seeing himself in the light of God, dared not lift up his eyes to Heaven, but smote upon his breast (the seat of his spiritual leprosy) and cried "God *be merciful* to me, the sinner." (Luke 18:10-14). The proud religionists of Christ's day exclaimed, "Behold, we see" (John 9:41); but David prayed, "Open Thou mine eyes, *that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy Law*." (Psalm 119:13). Thousands of deluded people who profess to be Christians talk excessively and pointlessly about their religion, victories, and personal achievements; but the Apostle Paul said, "I count not myself to have apprehended" (Philippians 3:13).

Fourth, *a growing understanding on a direct and immediate level of the Divine goodness*. The more a soul that has been quickened with Christ (Ephesians 2:5) sees himself in the light of God, the more he discovers how much there still is in him which is opposed to His Law, and in how many respects he daily offends. The more clearly he perceives how very far he comes short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), and how

unlike Christ he is in character and conduct, the deeper becomes his appreciation of the grace of God through the Mediator. The man who is of a humble, broken and contrite heart, finds the promises of the Gospel perfectly fitted to his case. None but One who is "*mighty* to save" (Isaiah 63:1) can redeem such a wretch as he knows himself to be; none but the "God of *all* grace" (1 Peter 5:10) would show favor to one so vile and worthless. "Worthy is the Lamb" (Revelation 5:12) is now his song. "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy Truth's sake" (Psalm 115:1) is his hearty acknowledgment. It is the Spirit's continued application of the Law to the believer's conscience which prepares him to receive the comforts and consolations of the Gospel.

When the mind is thoroughly convinced that God can, consistently with His honor, willingly receive to favor the most naked, forlorn, wretched, guilty, Hell-deserving of the human race, and become a Father and Friend to him, he is happier than if all the world was his own. When God is his sensible Portion, everything else fades into utter insignificance. (Psalm 16:5, Psalm 73:26; Psalm 119:57; Psalm 142:5) The fig tree may not blossom, nor any fruits be in the vine, yet he will "joy in the God of his salvation" (Habakkuk 3:17-18). The Apostle Paul, although a prisoner at Rome, not in the least dejected, cries, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice" (Philippians 4:4). When God is chosen as our supreme Good, all earthly idols are rejected, and our treasure is laid up in Heaven. In proportion as grace flourishes in the heart our comforts will remain, let outward things go as they will; yea, it will be found that "[i]t is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." (Psalm 119:71).

Here, then, are some of the principal effects produced by our being "changed," or reformed, conformed, and transformed by the Spirit of God. There is a growing realization of the ineffable holiness of God (ineffable—incapable of being expressed or described in words) and of the righteousness and spirituality of the Law, and the extent of its requirements. There is a deepening sense of our utter sinfulness, failure and blameworthiness, and the daily loathing of ourselves for our hard-heartedness, our base ingratitude, and the ill returns we make to God for His infinite goodness to us. There is a corresponding self-abasement, taking our place in the dust before God, and frankly admitting that "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant." (See and read the circumstances where Jacob makes this sincere declaration at Genesis 32:10). There is an increasing appreciation of the grace of God and of the provision He has made for us in Christ, with a corresponding longing to be done with this body of death and conformed fully to the lovely image of the Lord; which longings will be completely realized at our glorification. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? ... There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Romans 7:24-8:1). "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (Philippians 3:20-21).

I love you. Amen.