

CHANGED INTO HIS LIKENESS

Romans 8:28-30—And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose. For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren: and whom he foreordained, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

I John 3:1-2—Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet been made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is.

II Corinthians 3:16-18—But whensoever a man shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit.

Beloved Lord, we are so thankful we are found in Your presence, and we simply want to acknowledge that apart from You we can do nothing. We can, of course, preach, we can use many words, we can outline truths, and it can all be very Biblical. But unless that anointing grace and power is upon the speaking, the translating, and the hearing it will amount to nothing. You have so dearly won for us that anointing through that finished work at Calvary. Now Lord, we stand by faith into it. Let a double portion be upon the speaking, the translating, and our hearing. We do not know how long we have, Lord, before the night comes when no man can work. Will You challenge us? Will You touch our hearts? Will You speak in such a way that we cannot be the same? And we shall be careful to give You all the worship and thanksgiving and praise of our hearts. We ask this in the name of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus. Amen.

I think all of you know, or every true child of God ought to know, that the purpose of God is to conform us to the image of His Son. In simple language, every one of us should be changed into the likeness of the Lord Jesus. Let me make it even plainer; it is that men and women should see the Lord Jesus in us. They should see His grace expressed in us. They should be affected by His beauty in us. It is nonsense to talk about salvation which leaves us unchanged. To be a child of God is to be conformed to the image of His Son.

But we have to be very honest. The stark reality is that for most Christians this is not true. We become religious, we get to know our Bibles, we get to know Christian routine, we break bread, we sing hymns of praise, we study the word of God, we even have a form of evangelism at times, but we ourselves are not changed. There is something horribly wrong when the Spirit of God is not changing those whom God has saved. Then we become a graveyard, a whole number of monuments: “So and so, converted such and such a date; lifeless at such and such a date.” Our Christianity becomes an outward thing. We see all the evidences of this—divisions, factions, superficiality, shallowness, hypocrisy, racism, gossip, backsliding, jealousy, unbridled ambitions, and a thousand other things. What has to happen to change us into the image of His Son? A spiritual

revolution is needed.

THE INVINCIBLE AND POWERFUL PURPOSE OF GOD

Predestined to be Conformed

There are three things I want to say, and the first is the invincible and powerful purpose of God. John says, “We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as he is” (I John 3:2b). This is the invincible purpose of God for every child of God. It is more clearly put in the Roman letter when he says, “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.” Don’t be afraid of that word in English *predestined*. Some people go into a kind of trauma the moment they hear the word *predestined*. “For whom He foreknew He also predestined.” Predestined for what? “Predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that He (the Lord Jesus) might be the firstborn among many brethren.” It is the bringing of many sons to glory. They are not babes, not little children, but sons. A baby cannot run your business, but a son can run your business. There is all the difference between growing up to be a son in the house of God and being a babe.

It is a wonderful thing to have many babes. It transforms any church, any assembly, any fellowship when God saves people. When you are swamped with a whole lot of spiritual babies, all crying, all hungry, all thirsty, all longing for fellowship, it transforms any fellowship of God’s people. But there is something horribly wrong in a fellowship of believers when you have dozens or hundreds of people who have never grown up. They cannot administer anything. They are still babes—twenty years old in the Lord, thirty years old in the Lord, forty years old in the Lord, and even fifty years old in the Lord, but they are still babies. They cannot war the warfare of the service, they cannot intercede in the presence of God. They are babies. When you are a baby, you are nursed, you are rocked, and you are looked after. Everybody circles around you. They give you things for your mouth, toys to hold, things to look at. The whole world circles around you when you are a baby. But that is only one stage. We are meant to grow up. There is something hideous about a thirty or forty-year old who is a baby. But the house of God is filled with such examples.

Yet, the word of God is very clear: “If He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” It is not just that we will have a body like His, not just that we shall have the spiritually, physical attributes, but we shall have the character. It is not just that you will have a body that can go through walls that does not need to eat. You do not have to eat, but you can eat. The Lord ate after He was raised. People say, “Will we recognize one another? Will we wear clothes?” These are all, in one since, symptoms, but the essential thing is character. It is not just having a body like His. To be conformed to His image means that we shall have a character like His. And here you have the invincible, all-powerful purpose of God. It is Romans 8:28: “We know that to them who love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to His purpose.” “According to His purpose”—underline the word *purpose*.

The second thing is “predestination.” First there is purpose and then predestination. And the third thing is “conform.” This is the invincible, powerful purpose of God for every child of God. In I Corinthians 15:49 it says, “As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” Isn’t this purpose of God amazing?

Where does it leave you? Are you being changed? Is there a little more of the Lord Jesus in you than when you were here last year, or are you static? Nothing has happened and you are the same?

A New Creation

In II Corinthians 5:17-18a we read, “Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold they are become new. But all things are of God.” I much prefer the marginal rendering: “Wherefore if any man be in Christ, there is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.” Where have the old things passed away to? In Christ, in the new creation in Christ! I remember Mr. Sparks often used to say that when you have the other version, you can translate the Greek two ways, but when you have the old version you spend your whole time looking inside and saying, “Old things are passed away, all things have become new.” But have they? You become self-centered. You look inward. It is in Christ! *There* is the new creation.

Are you in Christ? If you have been saved by the grace of God, whatever you feel, your position is in Christ. In Christ there is a new creation. The old has passed away. All things have become new, and everything is of God. You and I are part of a new man. Who is that new man? It is the Lord Jesus. How are you and I part of the new man? Through the saving grace of God we have been positioned in Christ. There, we are part of the new man. There, we are in a new creation. There, everything is new; the old is excluded, and everything is of God.

This is where the Lord begins. In John 3:5 He says, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” When you are born anew, a new birth, where are you? You are in Christ. You are born of the Spirit of God. Something tremendous has happened. Your whole position has changed.

In Colossians 1:13 it says, “Who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love.” It is a revolution. We have been delivered from the power of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. Our position is in Him. No wonder the Lord said, “Abide in Me and I in you” (John 15:4). You remain, you dwell where God has placed you. When you abide in Him, you discover the Lord Jesus; He is in you.

Put Off—Put On

Then comes revelation, illumination, and change. Then you are changed into the likeness, into the image of the Lord Jesus. As you abide in Him, then He is in you, and He reveals Himself. The Lord said in Revelation 21:5, “Behold, I make all things new,” and He speaks of all the things that belong to the old—mourning, pain, crying, death. All these things are passed away, and He makes everything new.

Where does He begin? He begins with sinners like you and me. He begins with human blocks of rubbish, debris. You think, “I am not debris; I am a very nice person.” You are rubbish; absolute rubbish, until you are saved and then your position changes. Now you are in Christ, and into what was rubbish God pours eternal treasure. Only God could do this. He takes you, He takes me, and He saves us. He justifies us, He repositions us, He delivers us from the power of darkness, and He transfers us into the kingdom of His dear

Son. There we discover fathomless fulness, unsearchable riches, and incredible resurrection life and power. He begins with you and He ends with a new heaven and a new earth wherein indwells righteousness. He begins with you and He begins with me and the process has started.

In Ephesians 4:22-24 it says, “That ye put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, that waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit; and that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.”

Put off, put on. Christians often say to me, “How do I put off the old man?” First of all, it is God’s doing. He took you out of the old and put you into the new. That is the meaning of your new birth. But you have a responsibility; you have to accept that putting off of the old man. It is the same thing in Colossians 3:9, “Lie not one to another; seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man.”

Let me illustrate this. Years ago, I was on one of those tours called “In the Steps of Saint Paul.” It was not one of those marvelous ones that our brother Christian leads, but one of the more worldly ones. We had a wonderful old professor, but she did not know the Lord or the Bible, but she knew everything about Greek history. We were going through Corinth, and she said, “I suppose you have noticed the number of statues that have no heads.”

“Yes,” I said, “I have.”

She said, “I thought so; since you are Jewish you notice these kind of things. Did you notice the hole?”

“Yes, I did.”

“Well,” she said, “in one period of history so many of the kings were assassinated. In every town square there had to be a statue of the emperor or the king, and it took a couple of years to carve a statue. So after a while they thought they could not do it anymore. Then someone had a very bright thought, ‘Why don’t we make a fine body and put a hole in it, and we will change the head whenever the king is assassinated. It won’t take us so long to make the head and put it in.’”

Suddenly it came to me: put off the old man and put on the new man! People always say, “How can I do it?” It is a change of management. When the Lord Jesus is Lord, you will be changed into His likeness. All the circumstances in your life, all the relationships in your life, all the problems in your life, and all the tribulations in your life will be used by the Spirit of God to fashion you, to produce spiritual character when you are under the headship of the Lord Jesus. When you have your own head, there is no change. When He is Head, there is glorious change because the Holy Spirit will use everything in your life, your family, your business, and your church life to change you. When you are your own boss, though you should be living in the new, you are still living in the old.

FACING REALITY WITH FAITH AND OBEDIENCE

Spiritual Character

The second thing I want to underline is facing reality with faith and obedience. It is a tremendous thing to be able to face reality. Every time a child of God or a servant of God saw the Lord, he fell down as one dead. It was as if by seeing the Lord he realized how different He was. And you will notice in so many cases the Lord or an angel had to lift

them up. You will never grow in the Lord; you will never be changed into His likeness unless you face essential reality.

The heart of the matter is spiritual character. It is not facade, it is not just window shopping, it is not that you have dressed everything to look good, but it is facing reality. There is no magic wand. Everything in this country is instant—instant coffee, instant cream, instant this and instant that. People want instant holiness; they want to be instantly changed into the likeness of the Lord Jesus, but there are no short cuts to spiritual character. You can have a crisis which could be for an hour or two, and in that moment you face reality. But to produce spiritual character takes much time. Praise the Lord, the Holy Spirit is in charge of this business! He is the One Who supervises and manages the changing of us into the likeness of the Lord Jesus.

Spiritual Sight

Second Corinthians 3:18 says, “But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit.” “Beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord,” means you are beholding Jesus. That has something to do with your spiritual sight. It is something to do with the eyes of your heart.

Remember the prayer of the apostle Paul in Ephesians 1:17-19, “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe.”

This is all to do with being changed, and it all comes back to the eyes of our heart. If we are not seeing the Lord, there is no chance of being conformed to His image—“Transformed into the same image.”

Here is something else: “Beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord with unveiled face.” If you look at the context of this, it is all to do with the Jewish people. The apostle says that when they read the word of God, there was a veil over their mind. Then he speaks of “we with unveiled face.” Dear brothers and dear sisters, there are many Christians who like the Jews have a veil over their eyes. There is a veil that comes between them and seeing the Lord. If anyone reading this message has that veil, listen to this: “When a man or a woman turns to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.” What brings a veil upon the face of a believer? It can be sin, dishonesty, cheating, fraudulence, gossip, backbiting, jealousy, rivalry, and many other things. These are the things that bring the veil back. Then the reading of the word of the Bible is just a religious exercise. It is not a seeing of the Lord.

Spiritual Capacity

“But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory.” In other words, there is a progress. I think it is wonderful that the apostle Paul, by the Spirit of the Lord, said, “from glory to glory.” I am sure your experience is mine. It is from affliction to affliction, from tribulation to tribulation, from one problem to another problem. Why did Paul say, “from glory to glory”? It is because it is the capacity for glory that is being worked.

It is in the same letter that Paul said: “For our light affliction, which is for the

moment... while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen” (II Corinthians 4:17a-18a). It does not seem to be “but for a moment;” it seems to be so long, so impossible. But the word of God says, “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us an eternal weight of glory.” If you look at the weight of glory compared to the light affliction, the light affliction is nothing. Do you think we are all going to arrive one day in the presence of the Lord and say, “Oh, Lord, how we suffered! We suffered so much, Lord. You should be so pleased with us. We went from affliction to affliction, from tribulation to tribulation, from one difficult set of circumstances to another difficult set of circumstances, from one impossible person to another impossible person. It was continuous, Lord. You should be very glad for us. We did it all smiling.”

No, we will not even remember most of it. We will say to the Lord, “Could that light affliction which was but for a moment have worked such a weight of glory in me? This is Your doing, Lord. I worship You. I cannot but worship and praise You.”

“Now the Lord is the Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (II Corinthians 3:17). It is not bondage, but liberty, freedom. Changed, transformed into the same image from glory to glory even as from the Lord the Spirit. In other words, the Holy Spirit is the One Who is in charge of our being transformed. Is there a veil on your spiritual eyes? Turn to the Lord, and He will remove it.

THE GLORIOUS PROVISION

Predestinated Grace and Power

“For whom he foreknew, he also [predestined] to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29). This glorious provision is so important to the Lord, that all of His grace and all of His power are put at the disposal of the child of God. People always say, “Oh, if you only knew my background you would understand why I have such difficulty. If you knew the kind of home I was brought up in, if you knew the kind of relationships I have suffered, you would understand.” I suppose every one of us consider our self to be unique.

God has predestined you to be conformed to the image of His Son. Do you mean to tell me that He is like some civil servant that has not taken into account your particular problems? If you have an awful background, He has exactly the grace commensurate with your awful background. If you have obstacles, huge mountainous problems that seem to stop you from going on, God has provided the power commensurate with the mountainous problem. All the predestinating grace and power of God is behind you. He wants you to be conformed to the image of His Son. The problem is whether you are prepared for Him to be Lord. That is where we need faith and obedience. If you are prepared for whatever the Lord will bring into your life and use to change you into His likeness, then the whole predestinating power and grace of God is behind you. Every problem you have, God has foreseen. Everything that you could imagine that might stop you is all known to Him, foreknown, and He has made provision. Is this not amazing? It leaves us without excuse. If we are not changed into His likeness, it is certainly not His fault. This means that you and I need to face reality.

Prophetic Glimpse

Dear brothers, dear sisters, I believe we are entering into one of the most troubled

periods in the history of the world. It cannot be long before the antichrist appears. There are only two obstacles I see against his coming. The first is militant Islam, and I have no doubt that God is going to break its back, even though this may do terrible things. This may even involve the United States. Nevertheless, I believe God will use little Israel to break the back of militant Islam. While Islam is in place, the antichrist cannot come. But when it is removed, the whole world will say, “We cannot go on like this. We had World War I, later World War II, and then war after war after war. We have to have a world leader, a world government, and a world security force.”

The second obstacle is the United States. There is yet in the United States a residual Christian conscience. That Biblical conscience has to be exterminated before the antichrist can come. I do not want to get into this too fully, but all I am saying is that if I were an American, I would have taken note of the physical disasters that have come to the United States—the worst fires in recorded history, the worst floods in recorded history, and hurricanes that have destroyed cities. When God is bringing judgment, He always begins gently, and He waits. Is there a response? If there is none, there are more severe judgments. Then He waits. Is there a response? If none, they are more severe, until in the end, it becomes catastrophic. I believe the Lord will touch the affluent economy of the United States, and it will come suddenly. You and I need to be prepared.

Now is the Time

We have one small life, and in that one small life, God has to do something in us. He has to produce this spiritual character in us. He has to change us into His likeness. It takes time. He can compress it and make it more intense, but nevertheless it takes time. You cannot produce spiritual character instantaneously. Listen to me: if you are deaf, if you have a veil over your eyes, this thing will happen, and you will panic. Now is the time to get right with God. Now is the time for the Lord to sweep away the veil. Now is the time for us to behold the glory of the Lord with unveiled face. This is the grace of the Lord, and we need to hear His voice; not mine. You do not have to worry about my voice. The voice of the Lord behind the human voice is the voice you need to hear.

I have said it a number of times but I say it again. In my view (only in my view) the United States is like the Titanic—invincible, magnificent, everyone enjoying themselves, eating, singing, dancing, and music—until it hit an iceberg. When the captain said, “Even God cannot sink this ship,” it sank within an hour. Am I wrong? Or am I right? If I am right, you need to get right with the Lord. Those of you who have bitter quarrels with other Christians need to get them right. Those of you who have been fraudulent or dishonest in business need to come clean. Those of you who have been playing about with sex need to get it settled with God. Whatever it is, it is not worth hanging onto. Let the Lord challenge you, and let Him do a work in your heart. We have so little time left.

Shall we pray:

Beloved Lord, will You speak to our hearts? You know every one of us, and you know the condition that we are in. Lord, speak to us. Don't let us escape. We want to be changed into the likeness of the Lord Jesus. We want You to do in us the work that is required. Lord, it is Your grace that will do this. Do work in us, and we ask it in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.