

CHANGED FROM GLORY INTO GLORY KEEPING UP THE PROGRESS IN OUR SANCTIFICATION (2):

(Sermon Summary)

Reading: 2 Corinthians 3: 1-18.

The Holy Spirit is working in us to make us Christ-like. We are meant to be like Him, the one whose reflection we see mirrored back to us in the gospel. We have a veil over our hearts that obstructs our clear view of Him. When we are converted the veil is removed. Yet still we are hindered in our sanctification because we are still not beholding the Lord as clearly as we need to. Things like false solutions for our slow sanctification actually get in the way of our sanctification. So too false guilt, as we saw last time, interferes with our progress. But there are other obstructions too.

1. Fear.

Fear has the power to skew our judgment and drive away clear thinking. We may fear man, or the future or death, all of which involve a denial of who God is. Fear paralyzes our clear thinking and the exercise of our moral judgment. Paul does not give way to fear when he is clear in his rebuke of Peter at Antioch (Galatians 2: 11-14). Peter, when he denied the Lord three times, was in the grip of fear. He is the grip of fear again when he backs away from the Gentile believers after some people, zealous for the whole law of Moses, visit. He was tied up with the fear of man. We worry too much about what people will say. Paul might have been held back by fear, thinking how his rebuke of Peter might divide the church. But he does not give way to fear. If we are held by fear, we should repent. We see fear at times of crisis and temptation. Too often we fail.

2. The obstacles of internalized injustice.

Past injustices and harms we have suffered can also work unhelpfully in us, making us perhaps angry inside. We can be driven by energies within that of which we are hardly aware. This can actually produce in us a kind of inertia where we cease to care about injustices visited upon other people. We conclude that wrongs do not get righted and this saps our moral strength and power.

Again we should repent and not let this take root in us. We might need to admit the anger within. We might have to admit the hurt that others have caused us. We might have to admit that we did not look for help from the Lord but that we responded

perhaps badly to the harms caused to us. It can also lead back to false guilt, that we feel, wrongly, we are responsible for what happened to us.

Rather we need to have a strong belief in the reality of heaven. We are to believe that the Lord will right all wrongs. We should pray for our enemies. While they may triumph now, their end is not a happy one (Revelation 21: 7-8). We should believe that there will be justice for all on the Day. We should keep alive that sense of justice in the meantime.

3. Whose image is this?

We want clarity of vision to be able to behold, in the mirror held up to us, the glory of Christ. We want to see Him clearly reflected back to us. The end point of sanctification is that we should be Christ-like (see Ephesians 4:24; and Colossians 3: 9-10). The old man, and his ways, has to go. The new man, and his deeds, has to be put on. It is a creative work of God to make us see the image of His Son (2 Corinthians 4:6). God has to command the light to shine and then we are able to see how good Christ is, how wise He is, how loving He is. It is His 'face' we see, not literally, but the face is the most expressive part of the body. We know a person from their face. Is it stern? Is it welcoming?

We can never get enough of beholding Christ's 'face'. We need to come again and again to the Communion Table or to hear Him preached. There is always more to behold. That beholding needs to become more and more accurate. The clearer the portrait, the more we will move towards Him. Enemies to progressive sanctification are enemies to our beholding Him.

4. Taking time to look.

Everything worthwhile in the Christian life will take time to obtain. It was one of the benefits of the pandemic, and associated lockdowns, that we had time to stop and grow. Especially it is important that we pray. Prayer takes time and effort. We need to be conscious of our reliance upon the Lord when we pray. When we pray we should do it with watchfulness and alertness. We remember the privileges we have as adopted children.

5. No secrets allowed.

We can have no non-negotiables in our hearts which we declare to be off-limits in our interaction with the Lord. (See Psalm 19: 12). David wants to know the depths of his own soul. Sin can be working in the soul subtly and irrationally. It mirrors Jeremiah's statement in Jeremiah 17:9. Secret faults, biases and evils lurk within. We are prone to be thrown off course by things within us that can overthrow reason. We need to 'name and shame' some of those inner works of darkness. The Lord actually speaks to Jeremiah's statement in the next verse (Jeremiah 17:10). David wisely prays in the

manner of Psalm 139: 12-13. David is asking the Lord to work upon him in those deep places of the soul. We hear this again in Psalm 51:2. No secrets are allowed. The Lord must have full access and reign supreme in the heart.

We may have to be brought low before we are forced to concede what dwells in us. There are those lusts, that self-serving, reputation-preserving selfishness that made David stoop to the things he did. David is now turning himself over to the Lord for a full audit and inquiry. He stands ready to repent of all offences that might be uncovered. Paul tells us that the Judgment will unearth hidden things in the heart (Romans 2:16). We should feel the weight of that Day in advance and confess our secrets to the Lord now, while there is yet time