

“Transformed from Glory to Glory”  
(2 Corinthians 3:18)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. This morning, I want to bring something of the content of the evening service to this sermon, since there are some here who aren't able to make the later service.
  - a. These are things we all need to hear over and over, because we tend to forget.
  - b. As Peter writes, “Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you *already* know *them*, and have been established in the truth which is present with *you*” (2 Pet. 1:12).
  
2. We've been studying what it means to walk with God, something very important.
  - a. This is our end, our purpose for existing, the reason God made us.
  - b. This is what the Lord calls us to do, His command, His will for our lives.
  - c. This is our safety, our wellbeing, our hope that everything will work out well for us in the end.
  
3. More specifically, I want to address the struggle we may be having in this area and how to overcome it.
  - a. How many of us have tried to draw nearer to God, but have failed to achieve what we hoped for, and then settled down content that we've drawn as close as we're ever going to get?
  - b. Perhaps we've imported the instant gratification philosophy of our society into the Bible, not realizing that sanctification doesn't work this way.

B. Preview.

1. If this is what you think, you need to listen to Paul.
  - a. Sanctification – growing into the image of Christ, becoming more like Him, loving Him with all our heart – is not something that happens instantly: it comes from a life-long process of growth from one level of holiness to the next.
  - b. This is what I want us to consider this morning with the hope that it will encourage all of us to pursue spiritual growth more earnestly, knowing that we can obtain it and how: Paul writes, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit” (v. 18).
  
2. Let's consider two things regarding sanctification:
  - a. First, it begins when the Lord removes the veil of sin and unbelief from the eyes of our souls.
  - b. But second, it progresses gradually – it doesn't happen all at once; it comes by degrees – as we fix our eyes on Christ.

II. Sermon.

- A. First, Paul tells us that sanctification begins when the Lord removes the veil of sin and unbelief from the eyes of our souls.
1. Our faces, as it were, were once veiled.
    - a. They were veiled because of sin – Adam’s sin and our own sin.
      - (i) Paul tells us of the veil that hid the glory that was fading on Moses’ face.
      - (ii) That glory was fading, because it meant to be eclipsed by Christ’s glory when He came.
      - (iii) But the fact He had come, and the Jews had rejected Him, showed that they still had a veil over their own hearts.
      - (iv) Now it represents hardness of mind and heart, something that keeps someone from seeing the glory of God in Christ.
    - b. While our hearts were veiled, we were blind to that glory; but once we were in Christ, that veil was removed.
  2. Now we can see this glory – but only as in a mirror:
    - a. We can’t see it directly – no one can see His face and live (Ex. 33:20) – but we can see it reflectively.
    - b. What can we see? We can see the beauty of His holiness: this is His glory.
      - (i) There is glory in His natural attributes: His power, His knowledge, His presence, His eternity, His immutability.
      - (ii) But there is something that adorns it all – that makes it all beautiful – and that is His holiness, His moral uprightness and perfection.
      - (iii) *This is what we are now able to see in Christ.*
        - (a) This is what Christ reflects – the divine nature of His holiness through His human nature.
        - (b) This is what we begin to see when we are in Christ.
        - (c) This is what actually drew us to trust in Him.
    - c. How do we see it?
      - (i) It’s not something we can see with our physical eyes.
        - (a) It’s not like the Shekinah glory, the luminescent cloud that guided the Israelites by night when they left Egypt or that filled Solomon’s Temple at its dedication.
        - (b) It’s something that’s invisible, and yet very real.
      - (ii) It’s what we see of Christ’s holiness in His ordinances when He reveals it by His Spirit.
        - (a) It’s what God shows us of His holy nature in worship:
          - (1) Through the preaching of His Word.
          - (2) Through the psalms and hymns we sing.
          - (3) Through the prayers we lift to Him.
          - (4) Through the sacraments.
        - (b) It’s also something we see in His people when we spend time together in fellowship.

- (1) Not just when we spend time together, but when we spend time together communing in one another's gifts and graces – when we exercise our gifts to build up one another in Christ.
  - (2) This is what we'll be considering this evening.
- d. We have been predestined to become like Jesus – not to look like Him physically, but to be like Him morally.
  - e. This transformation begins when our eyes are opened to see Him.
- B. But it doesn't happen all at once: it's gradual - it comes by degrees – as we fasten our eyes on the glory of Christ.
1. Sometimes we think if the Lord is going to move in our hearts, He will do it suddenly and completely.
  2. But this isn't how He typically works. Sanctification is a slow and difficult process. It happens by degree.
    - a. There are exceptions:
      - (i) During times of revival, when the Lord wanted His work to move forward quickly, He sometimes put His servants through a very intense process of sanctification to prepare them quickly. George Whitefield was a good example of this.
        - (a) John Gillies, in his *Memoirs of the Life of the Reverend George Whitefield*, writes, “When Mr. *Whitefield* arrived at eighteen, he was sent to the university of *Oxford*, where he was again exposed to the society of the wicked: But remembering his former danger and deliverance, by the grace of God, he resisted all their solicitations, and cultivated an acquaintance with the Methodists, as the only persons that seemed to preserve a sense of religion, through the whole of their department.
        - (b) “Like the other Methodists, Mr. *Whitefield* now began to live by rule, and to improve every moment of his time to the best advantage. He received the communion every sabbath, visited the sick, and the jail prisoners, and read to the poor. For daring to be thus singularly religious, he soon incurred the displeasure of his fellow-students, and felt the effects of it in their unkind behaviour. In the mean time, he was greatly distressed with melancholy thoughts, which were augmented by excessive bodily austerities. And at last, by reading, and perhaps misunderstanding some mystic writers, he was driven to imagine, that the best method he could take, was to shut himself up in his study, till he had perfectly mortified his own will, and was enabled to do good without any mixture of corrupt motives. He likewise imagined, that he must relinquish external duties, and public worship, and lastly, (which was no small trial and affliction to him) that he must deny himself the pleasure of conversing with his religious friends. In this pitiable state of mind, Mr. *Charles Wesley* found him one day, when he went to see him; apprized him of his danger, if he persisted in that way of life, and recommended to him his brother as a person of greater experience; who readily gave him, from time to time, his friendly advice.
        - (c) “Soon after this, however, he carried his abstinence and fasting to such an extreme, that his body was so emaciated, and feeble, that he could hardly walk

up stairs. His tutor therefore thought proper to call a physician, and it appeared by the event, he had rightly judged in doing so: for it pleased God to make the physician's care and medicines successful to his recovery.

- (d) “His bodily health being restored, his soul was likewise filled with peace and joy in believing on the Son of God. This joy was so great for some time, that go where he would, he could not help praising God continually in his heart, and with some difficulty restrained himself from doing it aloud. As he was urged to go into the country for confirming his health, he returned to his native air at *Gloucester*, where (his mind being now happily enlightened) he preferred the sacred writings to all other books, and read them with constant prayer; in which exercise he found unspeakable delight and benefit. But inclination conspired with duty to hinder him from confining his religion to himself: Having a heart formed for society and friendship, he could not think of shutting himself up in his closet; but made it his business to converse with young persons, about his own time of life, in order to awaken them to a sense of religion. God was pleased soon to give success to his endeavours this way; for several of them joined with him, and notwithstanding the contempt they knew it would bring upon them, met together from time to time for religious exercises. He also there read to some poor people in the town, twice or thrice a week, and read and prayed with the prisoners in the county gaol every day” (7-9).
- (ii) Sometimes, the Lord would do this overnight.
- (a) Dr. Martyn-Lloyd Jones tells us of one such man in his book *Preaching and Preachers*.
- (b) “There was a great Revival in the USA in 1857 which spread over to Northern Ireland in 1858 and to Wales in 1859. Revivals have generally happened simultaneously in a number of countries. This was true in the eighteenth century as well as the nineteenth, a most interesting fact in itself. But I am thinking in particular of the man who was most used of God in Wales in that Revival, whose name was David Morgan, and particularly of one aspect of his amazing story. There was a Welshman in the USA at the time, a Humphrey Jones, who came powerfully under the influence of the Revival. Having entered into this new life, and being filled with the Spirit of joy and rejoicing, he said to himself, ‘I wish my people at home could experience this’. This became such a burden to him that he went home to Wales. Having arrived he just began to tell the people of his home country about what he had seen and experienced. He went round and spoke in the chapels, and the ministers and people would listen to him. David Morgan had listened on a number of occasions to Humphrey Jones, and gradually became interested and began to feel a longing for Revival. One night Humphrey Jones was speaking with exceptional power and David Morgan was profoundly affected. He said later, ‘I went to bed that night just David Morgan as usual. I woke up the next morning feeling like a lion, feeling that I was filled with the power of the Holy Ghost.’ At that time he had been a minister for a number of years. He was always a good man, not outstanding – in fact just an ordinary preacher. Nothing much happened as the result of his preaching. But he woke up that

next morning feeling like a lion, and began to preach with such power that people were convicted and converted in large numbers followed by rejoicing; and additions to the churches followed. This went on for over two years; wherever this man went tremendous results took place” (321-322).

(iii) I bring these up only to remind us there are exceptions, and we should pray that the Lord would grant more of these exceptions.

b. Typically, though, this is not the case.

(i) Usually, sanctification is slow, difficult and lifelong.

(ii) It moves forward as it begins: our eyes are opened first to see the glory of the Lord in conversion; then our eyes must be fixed on Him from that moment on through the means of grace that we might grow in grace.

### III. Application. What should we learn from this?

A. First, we should see the importance of the new birth.

1. The new birth is that act of the Spirit that opens our eyes – that takes away the veil from our souls so that we can see Christ’s glory. This is what brings about faith in our hearts: the removal of the veil.
2. If you can’t see the glory of Christ in the Word, in the worship, in prayer, in the sacraments, or in the fellowship and communion of the saints – if you don’t love these things or desire communion with Christ through them, you need the Spirit of God to remove the veil.
3. Pray and ask the Lord to grant you His mercy so that you might.

B. But second, if you do see His glory and long for communion with Christ, but wonder why you’re not growing any faster than you are into His likeness, realize your eyes may not be as fixed on Christ’s glory as they should be.

1. The process is slow, but it will virtually stop and go the other way if you fix your eyes on anything else but Christ.
2. We need to pray that the Lord would take away the divisions that exist in our hearts and give us a perfect heart – one that loves Him most of all.
3. Once our hearts have a single purpose, once our eyes are fixed on His glory, then we will see growth, then we will see His will being done in our lives.
4. This is as much the work of the Spirit as the removal of the veil.
  - a. This is what Paul means at the end of verse 13 by, “Just as from the Lord, the Spirit,” or better, “Just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”
  - b. He is the One who does this work.
    - (i) He is the author of holiness.
    - (ii) He fixes our eyes on Christ and reveals His glory to us, so that we might grow in His image.
    - (iii) Christ gave His life so that He might give you His Spirit: all you need to do is ask. Pray and ask the Lord to fill you with His Spirit.
    - (iv) Let’s all do this now in a moment of prayer.