

Part 6 – July 18, 2010

Transformed Into His Likeness—Wow!

Intro

2 Corinthians 3:18

- “Transformation” -- *metamorphoomai* (Gr.) --caterpillars to butterflies: Slave trader to gospel preacher -- Saul of Tarsus to Paul the Apostle
- This process known as sanctification has two stages—two parts. One is instantaneous, known as regeneration, the other is progressive.

Regeneration

Hebrews 10:14

The Two Stages of Sanctification

You can put it provocatively like this: Christ *has* perfected once and for all those who *are being* perfected. Or you could say, Christ *has fully* sanctified those who *are now* being sanctified-which the writer does, in fact say in verse 10, 'By this will *we have been sanctified* through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.' Thus verse 10 says, we '*have been* sanctified.' Verse 14 says, we '*are being* sanctified.'

What this means is that you can know that you stand perfect in the eyes of your heavenly Father, if you are moving away from your present imperfection toward more and more holiness by faith in his future grace. Let me say that again, because it is full of encouragement for imperfect sinners like us and full of motivation for holiness. Hebrews 10:14 means that you can have assurance that you stand perfected and completed in the eyes of your heavenly Father, not because you are perfect now, but precisely because you are not perfect now but are 'being sanctified'-'being made holy.'

You may have assurance of your perfect standing with God because by faith in God's promises, you are moving away from your lingering imperfections toward more and more holiness. Our remaining imperfection is not a sign of our disqualification, but a mark of all whom God 'has perfected for all time'-if we are in the process of 'being changed' (2 Corinthians 3:18).

John Piper, *A Godward Life, Book Two*, pp. 108-09

2 Corinthians 5:17

Titus 3:5

Sanctification

Ezekiel 36:26-27

- When stone becomes flesh, something incapable of growing changes--it can grow, genuine regeneration results in life, and new life will grow. Regeneration (new life) is the beginning of transformation--metamorphosis!

"Likeness to Christ is not a human achievement. It is a growth produced by the creative power of the Spirit. 'For God is at work in you, both to will and to work' (Phil. 2:13). We must work out our own salvation, of course; but all effective action is a response to the creative activity of God in us. We work out what God works in. A plant grows by thrusting forth its twigs and leaves into the light. There are even, according to some scientists, traces of an elementary will. But this activity occurs as a response to the play of the sunlight and the rain to which the plant is exposed. In the soul the likeness of Christ is produced through contemplation of the glory of the Lord. This beholding or contemplation is the essence of worship, whether it takes place in church, where we gather for the purpose, or in our private devotions."
The Interpreter's Bible, Volume 10, pp. 312-13

- This process of transformation, progressive sanctification, is just as much the work of the Holy Spirit as was our regeneration into new life! Our part is the pursuit of holiness.

Philippians 4:13

- This is the principle of "responsible dependence". We are both responsible, and dependant.

The Goal of Transformation

- Christlikeness—to be like Christ!

Romans 8:29

Ephesians 4:24

Two items on the check-list to see if we have experienced regeneration:

- Increasingly hating evil and loving righteousness
- Increasingly doing God's will, not our own

Hebrews 1:9

John 6:38

Psalm 40:8

Becoming Like Christ Is a Lifelong Process

"The change is gradual, from one degree of glory to another. The soul, like a plant, develops by imperceptible changes. The word 'disciple' means 'learner,' and education is always by stages. The process of transformation into Christlikeness is not smooth or easy. Self-discipline is necessary if we are to keep the contact through which the Spirit can change us. The real battles of the soul are fought against the things that keep us from the 'practice of the presence of God.' But the result is sure, for it is produced in us by the power of the Spirit. The knowledge that the Spirit is the power of the risen Christ will keep us humble in victory and hopeful in failure and defeat."

The interpreter's Bible, Volume 10, p. 314

Galatians 5:17

Romans 7:14-25

Is Romans 7 describing the normal Christian experience?

"For the Christian, the recognition that we stray from the God we love is *in and of itself* a sign of faith and the assurance that God is near. For faith is a gift, and even doubt, as Lord Tennyson notes, has a "sunnier side." Whether the Spirit is calling our attention to a faith that could see even more or calling us to remove an obstacle we have placed before the Cross, God is near. Though we wander and doubt, though we attempt to flee from God's presence or settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even here, God's hand upholds the wanderer."

Carattini, *Slice of Infinity-Prone to Wander*, 7/7/2020

An understanding of these truths, which distinguish the first element of sanctification (regeneration) from the second element of sanctification (progressive transformation) is absolutely essential for us to know, remember, and keep in mind as we pursue holiness by the power of the Holy Spirit Who indwells us.

"We are already 'saved' by grace (*Eph. 2:8*), but there is a sense in which we are 'being saved' through Christ's work within us, and a further sense in which we will not be fully saved until Christ returns and we are transformed into his image. We live 'between the times'. "A vivid illustration of this is often drawn from the events of the Second World War. In biblical teaching, the Cross and its attendant events are D-Day, when the decisive conflict has been engaged and won, V-Day is the day to which we look forward when what was settled on D-Day will become a totally fulfilled reality. The Christian possesses the assurance of victory over all of his enemies, but none the less faces a situation in which minor skirmishes and mopping-up operations are an integral part of life. *** [T]he Christian has died to sin in Christ's dying victory, but sin itself has not yet been destroyed. It remains sin still, and *** must be dealt with as sin. The vital truth enshrined in Paul's teaching is that we have a quite different relationship to sin now that we have entered into the victory of D-Day. But until we arrive at the ultimate destruction on V-Day, we will inevitably be engaged in warfare against it and will find ourselves faced with constant conflicts."

Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Christian Life*, p. 144

Bridges: "Sin will never surrender. It will continue to harass us and seek to sabotage our Christian lives as long as we live."

The Operating Agent in this Transformation

- This "being transformed" ... "comes from the Lord Who is the Spirit". 2
Corinthians 3:18

Art Ward, one more time!

**The Holy Spirit's power becomes available to us in our humility
...when we understand that we cannot, but He can and will.**

What Means Does The Holy Spirit Use?

- The first means that the Holy Spirit uses is "Beholding the Glory of Christ".

"The glory of the Lord has various elements. It includes the moral beauty of Christ, which shines like light by its own perfection. He came in the flesh that we might behold his glory (John 1:14). This glory is seen most vividly in his love and forgiveness, which reach their point of incandescent splendor on the Cross. To bring it vividly before worshipers the walls of many churches are covered with frescoes depicting scenes from his life, death, and resurrection.

"But the glory of the Lord is not confined to his moral beauty. It is also revealed in his triumph over death and in his ascension to the 'right hand of the throne of God.' It consists in the truth that he who was dead is alive forevermore and has the keys of death and of hell (Rev. 1:18). It is not merely his memory we recall in worship, as one recalls the memory of a departed friend. It is a living Lord who reigns and is the power of God's redeeming movement in history and in our individual souls." *The Interpreter's Bible, Volume 10, p. 313*

There is a primary purpose in reading, understanding and meditating on the Word of God. It is not frequent reader points or merit badges. The primary purpose for reading, understanding and meditating on God's Word is to gain a full revelation of God and His marvelous provision for us in Jesus Christ in the gospel--with all that involves.

"One of the most remarkable capacities of the human mind is the capacity to direct its attention to something it chooses. * * * It is an amazing power. * * * Humans have the amazing ability to think about thinking and to choose to dwell on an object of thought. This is a gift from God, part of his image in us. It is an immensely powerful means of becoming what we ought to be. Have you been neglecting this great weapon in the arsenal of your war against sin? The Bible calls us again and again to use this remarkable gift. Let's take it out, polish it, and put it to use. For example, Paul says in Romans 8:5-6, 'Those who are according to the flesh set

their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, [set their minds on] the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.' This is stunning. What you set your mind on determines whether the issue is life or death! We have become far too passive in our pursuit of change, wholeness and peace. In our therapeutic age we have fallen into the passive mind-set of simply 'talking through our problems' or 'dealing with our issues' or 'discovering the roots of our brokenness in our family of origin.' As helpful as these may be from time to time, I think we tend to slip into a passive way of thinking about change-that change may simply happen to me one of these days as I talk through my problems. I see a much more aggressive, nonpassive approach to change in the New Testament. Namely, 'Set your mind...' 'Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth' (Colossians 3:2). 'Enemies of the cross,' Paul says, 'set their minds on earthly things' (Philippians 3:18-19). 'Those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh' (Romans 8:5).

Our emotions are governed in large measure by what we 'consider'-what we dwell on with our minds. For example, Jesus told us to overcome the emotion of anxiety by what we consider: 'Do not be anxious.... Consider the ravens.... Consider the lilies' (Luke 12:22, 24, 27, RSV). The mind is the window of the heart. If we let our minds constantly dwell on the dark, the heart will feel dark. If we open the window of our mind to the light, the heart will feel the light. This is what Paul meant in Philippians 4:8, 'Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.' Above all, this great capacity of our minds to focus and consider is meant for considering Jesus: 'Holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus.... Consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart' (Hebrews 3:1, 12:3). This is the path toward change. We are called to take it and not wait passively while our minds are drawn away with all kinds of passions that wage war against our souls (1 Peter 2:11). It is when we focus our minds on the glory of Christ that we are transformed from one degree of glory to another (2 Corinthians 3:18). ...[R]esolve that you will be intentional about what your mind considers. It will dwell on something, and what it dwells on, it becomes like."

John Piper, A Godward Life, pp. 228-29

"Considering, focusing on, setting our minds on Jesus Christ and His gospel is something very different than self-examination."

"Looking at self never caused, or even helped, our transformation."

"It is ever the Holy Spirit's work to turn our eyes away from self to Jesus; but Satan's work is just the opposite of this, for he is constantly trying to make us regard ourselves instead of Christ. He insinuates, 'Your sins are too great for pardon; you have no faith; you don't repent enough; you will never be able to continue to the end; you don't have the joy of His children; you have such a wavering hold of Jesus.' ALL THESE ARE THOUGHTS ABOUT SELF, and we shall never find comfort or assurance by looking within. But the Holy Spirit turns our eyes entirely away from self: He tells us that we are nothing, but that 'Christ is all, and is in all.' Remember, therefore, it is not *your hold* of Christ that saves you-it is Christ; it is not *your joy* in Christ that saves you-it is Christ; it is not even faith in Christ, although that is the instrument-it is Christ's blood and merits; therefore, don't be fixing your eyes so much on your hand with which you are grasping Christ, as on Christ; don't be looking at your hope, but to Jesus, the source of your hope; don't be looking to your faith, but to Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith. We shall never find happiness by looking at our prayers, our doings, or our feelings; it is what *Jesus* is, not what *we* are, that gives rest to the soul. ... Simply keep your eye on Him; let His death, His sufferings, His merits, His glories, His intercession, be fresh upon your mind; when you wake in the morning look to Him; when you lie down at night look to Him."
Spurgeon,
Morning and Evening, June 28m

How highly do we think of Christ? What can elevate our view? What is our part? Preaching the gospel to ourselves every day means to consider Jesus Christ and all He has done for us, His brothers and sisters--those He advocates for to Father God

"Unless we see the Lord as glorious, we will not be 'transformed into the same image from glory to glory.' When affliction comes, we will fall away. What holds us is prizing the surpassing value of Jesus (Philippians 3:8)."

John Piper, *Future Grace*, p. 206

"To help lift your thoughts of who Christ is, remember the esteem in which Christ is held beyond the skies, where things are measured by the right standard. Think how God esteems the Only Begotten, His unspeakable gift to us. *** Consider what those who are washed in His blood think of Him, as day without night they sing His well-deserved praises. Elevated thoughts of Christ will enable us to act consistently with our relations towards Him."

Charles Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening*, Nov. 5e

**IF WE ARE GOING TO "BEHOLD THE GLORY OF CHRIST" WE MUST SIMPLY TAKE THE
TIME TO LOOK, THINK ABOUT, AND PREACH THE GOSPEL TO OURSELVES.
EVERY DAY!!**

"Bunyan's picture of the burden falling from Christian's back while he gazed at the Cross is a vivid illustration of this passivity of worship in which God acts. 'Then he stood still awhile to look and wonder. ... He looked, therefore, and looked again, even till the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks.'

"This contemplation is transforming. We are changed into his likeness. It is a well-known principle that we become like what we look at. Our qualities of spirit are an unconscious reflection of those we admire in others. The inward change may even be revealed in our outward appearance."

The Interpreter's Bible, Volume 10, p. 313

P.S. by John Piper

"Christians are not fatalists. We do not believe that heredity and environment are the only components that shape us. We believe in God. We believe in the Holy Spirit. We believe in change from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18). The most powerful worship will be among people whose minds **linger** in the light of truth and whose hearts--whose emotions--**are as near the fire of God as they can be without being consumed.**"

John Piper, A Godward Life, pp. 69-70

NEXT WEEK'S ASSIGNMENT

- (1) Meditate on Matthew 22:36-40
- (2) Read and Absorb, Chapter 7, *Discipline of Grace*