

CHANGED INTO HIS IMAGE

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The most solemn responsibility of man, which he must answer for himself, is whether or not he is a Christian.

Being a Christian puts you on entirely different ground from others. It recognises that the only way to God, and to obtain salvation is through a Mediator. This is what God has taken up, namely the cause and needs of man. God has implicated Himself. God became a man. The Eternal Word became a person, became flesh and dwelt among us at a specific time.

Upon becoming a Christian, we enjoy the liberty of grace although in ourselves we remain imperfect and failing. The definition of a Christian is that he is a

'living epistle' of Christ. Yet the true Christian will say, "I do not see Christ in me. All I see is myself."

And, rightly so. We ought not to see it.

Moses did not see his own face shine, but others did. The glory of the Lord as seen in the face of Moses alarmed the people. They could not bear that glory. A true believer in the company of non-believers or shallow believers may not realise the glory and witness he is giving and others may not be able to bear such an individual. Yet every believer should behold the glory of God as seen in Christ and not be the least afraid.

This is liberty, comfort and joy. This is knowing what is right by gazing upon the Lord. It is only by fixing our eyes upon Him that we can remain secure on that entirely different ground, since that is the foundation of faith in Jesus Christ.

We first saw the glory of the Lord when we were converted. Had that not been the case, we would have been afraid. Like Israel in their sin, we may have said, "Let not God speak to us". (Exodus 20.14) or, like Adam with a guilty conscience, have sought to hide away (Genesis 3. 8)... but now, as a Christian, I want to hear His Voice.

Yet I cannot see anything of the glory of Christ without knowing that I am saved. And salvation is made much more real because Christ came to earth and mixed with men including publicans and sinners and, indeed, was the Friend of such. Christ choose such to be His companions. He was not uneasy in their presence nor they in His. He was here amid all circumstances. He was not aloof even from those who had bad reputations. He was among those whose sins he would put away by going to the Cross and bearing the sins of those who were to trust in Him.

He is now risen from the dead and in the glory of heaven. I cannot see the glory He now enjoys. The glory I can see is in the fact of my redemption which is not a bright light or some visible manifestation, but it is the awareness that my sins are covered by His Blood and no longer seen. That is glory. That is glorious. My sins were laid on the Mediator. Where are they now? Once confessed and repented, they are buried in the deepest sea. Gone. Completely gone.

And this is another glorious truth. The right of Christ to be at the right hand of God is because He has finished the work God gave Him to do. (John 17.4). That work was the work of salvation. Christ is accepted in Heaven because of the success of His work. As a believer therefore, I am part of that successful work of redemption. I am one of the Lord's successes, yet aware of my imperfection and failings.

Once my sins were upon me, but they are put on Christ. Once they were found upon the Head of that

Blessed One but now they are gone, never to be found.

So I am not afraid to look at Christ in the sense of recognising the glory of His finished work. But had He not risen again, things would be different. I would not look upon Him. Like Adam, I would want to hide and have nothing or little to do with God. But Christ, being victor over sin and hell, and alive in the Presence of God and my acceptance of His glorious feats means that I am like Him in that I agree with His work and purpose. I am changed into His likeness. It does not mean that I look like Him physically or have Divine personality. That could never be. I am to be fully like Him when, with an open face, I shall behold Him and see the glory of the Lord.

At the moment I look in the mirror and see myself. But I can look into God's Word and understanding the work of the Mediator I can identify with Him. This is the root meaning of being changed into His image. I delight in Christ and love Him. He is my model. No one else is. It is He whom I admire. I become a 'living epistle' of Christ. I do not want to be rich since in Christ I have unsearchable riches. I do not want the pleasures of the world; at God's right hand are pleasures for evermore.

And yet I still say, "I cannot see anything of Christ in me. I am not a living epistle of Him".

No.

But you can see Christ by faith and that is far better. It is not looking at myself that achieves much, if anything. It is looking at Christ which is the meaning of my growing into His likeness. Moses was with God and his face shone but he did not know it. In Acts 7, Stephen facing martyrdom could look into heaven and anticipate the glory of the Lord and, as a result, his face shone. Dying, he said, as did the Lord Himself, "ay not this sin to their charge". It did not matter who contributed to Stephen's death for a glory awaited him.

The soul at perfect liberty with God looks peacefully at the glory of God as seen in the face of Jesus Christ and knowing that glory lives their life with confidence.

Liberty with Christ cannot be liberty with Satan. Christ is honoured and glorified. Satan is dreaded and despised and, although still active, is a defeated foe.

The true Christian feels at home in the presence of Christ. In the presence Satan, there is both evil and worldly things with which the Christian could not agree.

Being changed into the image of Christ is the opposite of conformity to the world.

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