Restoring the Image of God in Man

Man has been given a very great grace: the opportunity to work in God's workshop as an apprentice, alongside Him, so that he may grow up in all things until he comes to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Because His plan is for us to be conformed to the image of His Son, and everything is subordinate to this great plan, God sent His Son, who in turn sent His disciples to describe to us what He is like. Only if we know His features will we be able to shape ourselves after His image. (For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Romans 8:28-29)

God's Work of Perfecting Us

Just as no sculptor in the world, however talented, can carve a person's likeness without having seen that person's face, so no one will be able to work at bearing the image of Christ without knowing the features of His face.

No one in this world could imagine a sculptor reproducing the likeness of Nero if he had never once laid eyes on Nero.

A sculptor at work always has as his model the face of the person he is going to reproduce in stone. He keeps an image of the model in his workshop, looks at it constantly, and reproduces every feature with great care, until the stone takes on the likeness of the model.

God's work with us is much the same. From the moment of the new birth, the Holy Spirit, like a sculptor, is the One who works together with us and transforms us step by step until Christ is formed in us.

Being Shaped into His Image

At the beginning, His image is found in the seed of God sown in us, which carries God's own genetic code. The Holy Spirit makes this divine seed sprout and works together with us in this transformation. To that end He sets the model before us, that is, the image of the Lord, which we can behold as in a mirror, as the Holy Scriptures tell us. Then we work under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, step by step, until we come to bear the image of Christ, until all His features are imprinted on our hearts.

We all look as into a mirror in which we see all the features of the Lord, and we keep polishing until there is no longer any difference between us and our Model. (But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:18)

The Lord's outward appearance cannot be seen, but His inward likeness can: what His heart is like, what is in His heart. And this we can see with the eyes of our heart. (That... the Father of

glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened. Ephesians 1:17-18)

There is an inner part of the heart in which we can come to resemble God, a part that can be seen only with the eyes of the heart, yet most people pay it no attention. (For this people's heart is waxed gross... and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Matthew 13:15)

The Character of the Lord

When Moses wanted to know Him, he did not ask to see His outward appearance. He asked Him to show him His ways, His manner of being, that is, the features of His heart. (Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee... Exodus 33:13)

So God revealed to him the hidden face of His heart, that is, the qualities or features of His heart. (The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. Exodus 34:6; The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. Psalm 145:8; God is love. 1 John 4:16; A God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he. Deuteronomy 32:4)

When God tells us that His image must be formed in us, He is really telling us that our heart must be changed to be like His heart. His qualities, the features of His heart, must be imprinted on us.

When we look with the eyes of our heart, we must see the features of His heart as in a mirror, and we must let ourselves be worked on and shaped after these features of His, so that by the end of the Spirit's work our heart will be like His. (The LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart... 1 Samuel 13:14)

He is at work restoring His image in us, and He guides us by the Holy Spirit to clothe us with His qualities, which will be the fruit of the Spirit's work in us. (Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering. Colossians 3:12)

In the Gospel we find the features of the Lord Jesus' heart, by which He draws all people to Himself. (And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. John 12:32)

Yet we can see that, for most people, Satan has blinded the eyes of their heart, so that they do not see the gospel of the beauty of Christ, who is the image of God, shining out, and do not see in the mirror the Model after whom they are to be changed. (But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4)

The Mystery of Christ's Character

A great many of us do not see the image of Christ and stop at knowing a few facts about the Lord Jesus.

Many know which healings the Lord Jesus performed, they know about His sacrifice on the cross, where He walked, what miracles He did, when He prayed and where He prayed, and that is as far as their knowledge of the Lord Jesus goes. But what is essential, what they must know for their salvation, they do not know.

We need to understand that we will never come to resemble Him, to be like Him, unless we seek to discover the beauty of the features of His heart (His ways) and unless we long to have a heart like His. (Shew me now thy way, that I may know thee... Exodus 33:13)

The question each of us should ask is this: What can move me to look into the mirror and work together with the Holy Spirit so that the image of the Lord is born in me? Is there something in particular? Is it the fear of hell? Is it the promise that He will take us to heaven? Or is it the beauty of His heart?

This article is taken from the booklet Transformed into the Image of Christ, available free online in PDF format.

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