

## The Attributes of a Disciple: Sermon series

### (2) The Attributes of a Disciple: Christ-likeness or Like-Christ.

Read 2 Corinthians 3: 12 - 18.

#### Introduction

We are today in the second in the series on “The Attributes of a Christian Disciple”, and last time we studied “What does it mean, biblically, to be a Christian?”

From the scriptures we deduced that a Christian is a:

- Disciple of Jesus
- Follower of Jesus
- Learner of Jesus

Therefore we should then listen to what Jesus says a disciple should be about.

- John 8: 31 - someone who obeys Jesus teaching and His word.
- John 13: 35 - someone who loves other disciples and everyone.
- John 15: 5, & 8 - someone who must remain in Christ, and if they do they will bear fruit, the “Fruits of the Spirit”, witness to other people and see them becoming Christians.
- Luke 9: 23 - Someone who denies themselves for the sake of Christ.
- Matthew 28: 19 - 20 - People who will seek to make, not people who merely believe in God, or spectate at church, but disciples.

We saw Jesus challenge us to put him in front of everything else - the need to look at our priorities, the cost involved and to live authentic Christian lives.

Today, we look at another attribute of Christian disciples: Christ-likeness or being Like-Christ.

When the missionary wife of missionary Adoniram Judson was told that a newspaper article likened him to some of the apostles, Judson replied:

**“I do not want to be like Paul, or any mere man. I want to be like CHRIST!! I want to follow Him only, copy His teachings, drink in His Spirit, and place my feet in His footprints - OH TO BE MORE LIKE CHRIST!”**

What is God’s purpose for His people? Once we have been converted, once we have come to know Christ, once we have received salvation and forgiveness - that is a glorious miracle within itself - but, what is next?

This: God wants his people to become like Christ - for CHRISTLIKENESS is the will of God for the people of God. Amen!

In Romans 8: 29 it says:

***“God has predestined his people to be conformed to the image of His Son.”***

Conformity to the image of God means to be like Jesus, and Christ-likeness is the eternal purpose of God for his Church.

And in 2 Corinthians 3: 18, as we have just read, it says:

*"We, all who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed (or changed) into His image, with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."*

In 1 John 1: 6, it says, in what I find to be one of the most challenging scriptures for Christians:

*"Whoever claims to live in Him, must walk as Jesus did."*

In 1 John 3: 2, it says:

*"But we know that when he appears, WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM".*

Jesus says to His disciples: "Follow me, follow me, and imitate me, in my Power." Past, present, future - it is God's eternal purpose, it is God's historical purpose - we are being changed, transformed by His Holy Spirit. And God's final eschatological purpose - we will be like him.

These all combine towards the same end - Christ-likeness, for Christ-likeness is the purpose and will of God - for the people of God.

So let us now turn to the passage I would like us to reflect on today, 2 Corinthians 3: 12 - 18, and in particular v 16 - 18.

In this passage Paul contrasts the Old and New Covenants. Paul again takes up his exposition of Exodus 34: 33 - 35. Let us read this together.

We are told here of how Moses removed his veil when he went in before the Lord. In the Old Covenant only one man Moses, gazed with an unveiled face on the divine glory and it says in v. 35:

*"They saw that his face was RADIANT."*

Now, what Paul is saying in the New Covenant, in the gospel age, is this is the blessed privilege of all who belong to Christ. To gaze by faith into the gospel, is to behold Christ. Like Moses then Paul and all believers approach God in confidence, and freedom with an unveiled face. What was unobtainable in the Old Covenant - the Holy of Holies, for normal people to come into the presence of God, with an unveiled face can now be done because of Calvary. As we look at the communion elements before us this morning, the bread and wine symbolising the body and blood of Jesus, we can approach and behold/reflect upon/contemplate on the Lord's glory!

If we were to ask Paul in what way believers behold the glory of God, his answer would be that they do so as the "veils" are removed from their minds, so that the TRUTH of the gospel is no longer hidden from them. And when does this happen, we see in v. 16:

*"But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away, and we begin to behold the glory of the Lord."*

"Behold" can mean "reflect upon", "contemplate on", but is a definite practicing of the presence of the glory of Christ, to look

upon the glory of Christ. What does Paul mean by this? He means coming into the presence of Christ:

- On our knees, humbly in prayer.
- In Worship
- Within the ministry of God's words
- Within the ministry of the Gospel, which affirms that Jesus Christ is the image of God
- Then the knowledge of God is imparted to us
- We must therefore set our priorities, remember from the first in the series, to be a follower of Jesus, Jesus commands us to place him first above all else
- This means to place ourselves under the ministry of the gospel, through a commitment to the local church
- By personal and group bible study.
- With a commitment to personal and corporate prayer.

**"TO BEHOLD THE GLORY OF CHRIST"**

**PERSONALLY AND CORPORATELY WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE LOCAL CHURCH WHICH GOD PLACES US - WE CAN'T DO IT OTHERWISE!**

Paul also summarises this in Romans 12: 1 - 2 (Read)

AND what is the resultant effect of the veil being removed, of beholding the glory of Christ? Those whose minds are veiled from the glory in the old covenant do not change or progress. On the other hand, and listen, those who are unveiled, "behold the glory of Christ" are **WHAT???**

***"TRANSFORMED INTO HIS LIKENESS WITH EVER INCREASING GLORY"***

***Hallelujah!! What amazing words!!!***

So one of the attributes of a disciple are - CHRISTLIKENESS or shall we say being LIKE-CHRIST!

So "transformed into His likeness" what does this mean? The verb that is used is "metamorphumetha" which means "are being changed". The present tense indicates the continuous nature of the change, while the words "with ever increasing glory" stress its progressive nature.

It is important to note then that changing into Christ-likeness takes place, not at one point in time, but as an extended process, as our knowledge deepens, the Holy Spirit helps us to change. Clearly the process of transformation, while spiritual is not mystical, and is educational in character.

It is vital that day by day, hour by hour, that we live within this framework so that in everything we do or think we promote the growth of Christ-likeness within our lives. The process of transformation into the image of Christ is none other than the restoration of the image of God, which was marred through the

fall of man. In Christ mankind is allowed to see not only the radiance of God's glory but also the true image of man. Into that image God's people, are now, or should be, being transformed. As Calvin said;

***"That the image of God, which has been defaced by sin, may be repaired within us."***

So practically, we must continually reflect of the glory of Christ, His person and His work and seek to imitate Him, to walk as Jesus did - how might this work in practice?

1. We are to be like Christ in His incarnation.

In Philippians 2: 5 - 11, Paul starts by saying

***"Your attitude should be the SAME (not just like or similar) SAME AS THAT OF CHRIST JESUS ...who made himself nothing... and became obedient to death, even death upon a cross."***

We are called to follow the example of Christ in His great humility.

As we go through this study on discipleship, I believe the Spirit of God challenges us to say "How am I doing?" Are we willing to set aside what we want, to discover what God wants?

2. We are to be like Christ in His service.

In John 13: 1 - 16, we find Jesus;

***"Poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples feet...Now that I, your Lord and teacher have washed your feet, you should also wash one another's feet... I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."***

Are we Christ-like, are we willing to serve our fellow brothers and sisters, in menial tasks as well as important ones?

3. We are to be Christ-like in His love.

***"Live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us."***

**Ephesians 5: 2**

To love, in other words, with a Calvary love! Paul is urging us to be transformed into Christ-likeness

- To become like the Christ of the incarnation.
- To become like the Christ of the foot washing.
- To become like the Christ of the cross!!

There are so many more, but in human terms, probably enough for today. But even in our interactions with each other today, can we be more Christ like - in His power. When we go next door with the children in Sunday School, will it just be a rush for a cup of tea, or will we show interest in the children, put an arm round a busy Sunday School Teacher and say - "I really appreciate what you do in serving us" Will we show Christ?

And this brings me to my final point, a Hindu professor, identifying one of his students as a Christian said:

**“If you Christians lived like Jesus Christ, India would be at your feet tomorrow.”**

How true, but oh, how so challenging for us today, isn't it? Maybe for some of us today, it is overwhelming, and maybe for some of us seems like too high a mountain to climb.

**“HOW CAN I EVER BE LIKE THAT?”**

**HOW IS IT POSSIBLE?**

And the key to this issue is because immediately we “Behold the Glory of Christ” we turn to OUR OWN RESOURCES, which let's face does not amount to much; WE ATTEMPT TO BECOME MORE LIKE CHRIST, IN OUR OWN STRENGTH.

However, if we look at v 18 b, it says:

*“Being transformed into His likeness with ever increasing glory which comes from (where?)*

***THE LORD, WHO IS THE SPIRIT***

God's purpose is to make us like Christ, and he does not want us to try to do it ourselves - God's way is to fill us with His Holy Spirit - this means that it is not us that is doing the working - but God's Spirit within us!! This means that God, under the New Covenant is present, and must be EXPERIENCED by believers, and so thus be transformed!

The Spirit's activity is the major characteristic of the new covenant and the transformation of believers - whose veils are taken off, who come under the ministry of the gospel, and His word - is attributable to the Holy Spirit's work in their lives.

*“Apart from me you can do nothing”*

*John 15: 5*

*“But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away the Counsellor/Helper/The Spirit will not come, but if I go, I WILL SEND HIM TO YOU.”*

*John 16: 7*

As we continue through this study series on Discipleship, I believe God, through His inspired word will highlight areas that we need to focus on. In session 1 we were more about biblical knowledge, which is vital, but today I believe God shows us, that He wants us to encounter Him, to experience Him, the experiential, the inner work of the power of the Holy Spirit. To bring heart

transformation, which equips us to become more and more like Christ.

When we looked at Moses today in Exodus, we read *“His face was radiant”* Of course it was, he beheld the *“Glory of the Lord”*

When we behold the glory of Christ, can we radiate what he has shown us - His love, His grace, His forgiveness, His compassion:

- In our eyes?
- On our face?
- With our arms, legs, feet?
- In our actions?

What do people see?

It is because He lives in us, that we have no excuse, but to be Christ-like, like Christ - more and more!!

And to conclude the theologian Hughes says, in relation to what we have been reflecting on today,

**“Turning to the Lord; every veil that might hide Him must be removed; it is His glory and no other that is reflected. When these three things are secured by continued study, reflection and of the Lord’s glory - Christians are transfigured into the very image of Him whose glory they have caught and retained, and step by step -**

**THE LIKENESS BECOMES MORE AND MORE COMPLETE - UNTO THE FULL MEASURE OF THE MATURITY OF THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST”**

May this be so, in our lives, for His sake and for His glory. Amen.

Gary Torbet

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