

Reflect Fully

#0119

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—March 21, 1975

Our text this evening is found in 2 Corinthians 3:18. I'm impressed more and more with the importance with being *certain*—certain of truth; certain of our own experience with God; certain that God is going to give us souls in the kingdom as the result of our partnership with Him; certain of His soon return; certain that when He comes, He's coming for us, and that we'll be ready to meet Him.

Now in 2 Corinthians 3:18, we have a beautiful example of the expression of this assurance, and also a clear presentation of how this change is to be brought about that gets us ready for His coming:

“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.

It scares some people to hear that God expects us to be like Him. I'm so glad that this command is a promise. Wouldn't it be too bad if the Gospel should fail in accomplishing its objective—the restoration of man to the image of God? Man was made in God's image (Genesis 1:26–27). Through sin, that image was marred—lost.

“For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son...” Romans 8:29.

Paul tells us in Romans 8. The apostle John adds:

“...when He shall appear, we shall be like Him...”
1 John 3:2.

All that was lost through sin is to be restored. We are to become like Him in mind and character.

I'd like to read this verse, our text tonight, as given in some of the other translations:

“We all with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into His likeness from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit”
2 Corinthians 3:18 (*Revised Standard Version*).

Notice the present progressive tense, which is a very accurate translation here. Paul says we are being changed. That's a progressive work, and this thought of progress and of it being a progressive experience is clear as he goes ahead. We are being changed into His likeness from one degree of glory to another. There it is.

No matter how far we came yesterday, there's another journey ahead up the Pilgrim path today, friends. And no matter how far we've journeyed today, there's something more tomorrow. Our vision becomes clearer. And as our vision becomes clearer, our experience is to be more like His. Of course, keep this in mind—this is vital all the way through—that God counts us as fully His and fully accepted *all* the way along. From the beginning of the Christian life all the way through, we are justified by His grace, justified by faith, justified through His blood.

As Steps to Christ puts it in that marvelous passage:

“He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned”
Steps to Christ, page 62.

You can't get any better acceptance than that, can you? Just as if you had not sinned. Why? Because Christ's character stands in *place* of your character. You get in on His card, His name. You are accepted because *He's* accepted. He died in your place that you might be accepted with all of His merits. But the next sentence says:

“More than this, Christ changes the heart” *Ibid.*

It is this change that we are looking at in particular tonight. Its goal is the full restoration of the image of God in man.

Phillips translates our verse:

“We are transfigured in ever increasing splendor into His own image” 2 Corinthians 3:18 (*Phillips Translation*).

Isn't that beautiful? Transfigured, changed—transformed into His own image. Thank God.

Some of you are thinking of that beautiful passage in *Early Writings*, page 71, which says that those who receive the seal of the living God and are protected in the time of trouble must reflect the image of Jesus fully. Did that ever frighten you? Well friends, I hope that when we leave this chapel tonight, every one of us will be cheered with what this is talking about; not to frighten us, not to scare us at all. It's to cheer us and encourage us. Those who receive the seal of the living God and are protected in the time of trouble must reflect the image of Jesus fully. And that's just saying in different words what we've been reading here in these texts, you see, to be like *Him*; we're changed into His image.

But that expression: “Reflect the image of Jesus fully”—to be like Him. I got some real help on this not long ago as I was thinking about the moon. In a few nights, we're going to see the full moon. It happens to be the Passover moon or the

Easter moon this spring. Why do they call it the full moon? Because it reflects the sun fully. If the little clouds should clear away this evening and you go out, you will see a moon which is getting each night closer to being full. We're in the waxing stage of the moon.

In Christian experience, we're always to be waxing, never waning. We are to be advancing in our reflection of the rays of the Son of Righteousness until we reflect that light, that character, that image *fully*. In other words, each of us is to be a full moon. That's what we're dealing with.

But , oh wait a minute: does the full moon look like the full sun? Oh, no. Not by a good deal. So what do we mean when we say "a full moon"? We mean that the moon is reflecting all of the sun that it *can*. That's exactly what God is telling us in this matter of reflecting the image of Jesus fully. Now turn to 2 Corinthians 8:12 and we will prove it from the Word of God:

"For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not"
2 Corinthians 8:12.

What does God want me to serve Him with? All I have. I have two hands, so He wants me to serve Him with both hands, right? Did you ever see a person with only one hand? Well, he can't be accepted, can he? God requires *two* hands. But what does God expect of the man with just one hand? One hand service, right? Did you ever see somebody with no hands? Oh, yes. Occasionally somebody's born without hands. More often people lose their hands or arms in accidents. Can they be accepted? Sure. "If there be first a willing mind it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." Isn't that clear? Isn't it beautiful?

Now let me read some thoughts as expressed in the inspired commentary that will help us with this:

"All should copy the Pattern as closely as possible. While they cannot possess that consciousness of power which Jesus had, they can so connect with the Source of strength that Jesus can abide in them and they in Him, and so His spirit and His power will be revealed in them" *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 5*, page 254.

Jesus could walk on the waves. Does that mean all of us must walk on the waves to be like Him? No. Jesus could stand at the tomb of Lazarus and call forth a man who had been dead four days, and the man came forth. Does that mean that to reflect the image of Jesus fully, all of us must demonstrate that same power? No. That could happen in any individual experience if God so willed it. But never think that we will equal the Pattern in His infinite fullness. We can *reflect* His character fully according to our capacity.

Another statement:

“You cannot equal the copy; but you can resemble it and, according to your ability, do likewise” *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 2*, page 170.

Isn't that reasonable, and isn't that wonderful, friends? Why? The love of God is like the ocean. I can never be that big, but I can have a teacup full. And if I'm full, I'm full. Can you get any fuller than full? No. And when we say that we're to be like Jesus, we do not mean that we are to be as great as He is. He is God. We do not mean that we are to be as wise as He is. He knows all things. We do not mean that we are to be as strong as He is. He is omnipotent; all power in Heaven and earth is given to Him. We do not mean that we will have that infinite love that He has. Think of it: His love takes in everybody in the universe and deals with each one as if that one were the *only* one. Can you do that? Never, friends, never.

Thank God, each one of us can be a little moon reflecting according to our ability and our capacity the great light of the Son of Righteousness. We can love those that God bids us love within the circle of our influence. We can love those that God gives us to love *with* the love that He gives us. We can reflect the image of Jesus fully, but that fully relates to our *capacity*, not to His *infinity*, or else we would all become infinite, you see, and this is impossible.

Another statement:

“He [Christ] is a perfect and holy example, given for us to imitate. We cannot equal the pattern...” *Ibid.*, page 549.

We cannot equal the pattern. “Well,” somebody says, “What’s the use then of even trying?” Ah, what did we read in 2 Corinthians 8:12?

“If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not”
2 Corinthians 8:12.

As I keep seeking to imitate the pattern, two things happen. One: God is covering me with the perfect righteousness of Christ so that I'm accepted just as if I were as righteous as Jesus is righteous. Two: As I behold that righteousness and seek to become like Him, He is working out in my life those changes which will bring me at last to a full capacity of reflection. Never equaling the pattern in immensity, in infinity, but in my sphere, thank God, I can be like Him.

“[Christ] is a perfect and holy example, given for us to imitate. We cannot equal the pattern; but we shall not be approved of God if we do not copy it and, according to the ability which God has given, resemble it” *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 2*, page, 549.

We're to resemble it, not duplicate it, friends. The moon resembles the sun. It's an object of light there in the sky at night like the sun is in the daytime. As Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness has left this world and gone back to Heaven, He is shining

upon His chosen people that each of them like a little moon may reflect the light from the Heavenly Sanctuary, shining from the mercy seat the glory of the Son of God.

Oh friends, what a blessing to be a moon. And, listen, if you can't be a moon, be a star, a planet like the evening star, you understand—like Venus or Mercury or Mars or Jupiter. The children like to sing, “I’m a star, a happy little star,” a star for Jesus. But remember, we shine with reflected light.

I have another one here in *Volume 2*:

“[Christ] had a mighty influence, for He was the Son of God. We are so far beneath Him and so far deficient, that, do the very best we can, our efforts will be poor. We cannot gain and possess the influence that He had; but why should we not educate ourselves to come just as near to the Pattern as it is possible for us to do [so]?”
Ibid., page 617–618.

How encouraging these truths are. “Well,” somebody says, “then Christ must have had a great advantage over us in being good, an advantage we don't have.” No. No. Let's turn to Hebrews and let's get that idea out of our heads before it gets very far:

“Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted”
Hebrews 2:17–18.

He was made in all things like whom? His brethren. That's you and me. What for? So that He could be a merciful and faithful high priest, and make reconciliation for us. So He took our nature, you see.

Again:

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” Hebrews 4:15.

He took our nature and overcame to show us how to overcome. But that doesn't mean, thank the Lord, that we have to become infinite as He is infinite. He willingly, voluntarily restricted Himself in the battle with sin in our nature to the power that you and I can get. Don't forget that.

In the little morning watch book, *Our High Calling*, page 48, I read concerning this:

“Christ's overcoming and obedience is that of a true human being. In our conclusions we make many mistakes because

of our erroneous views of the human nature of our Lord. When we give to His human nature a power that it is not possible for man to have in his conflict with Satan, we destroy the completeness of His humanity. He came not to our world to give the obedience of a lesser God to a greater, but as a man to obey God's holy law. And in this way He is our example. The Lord Jesus came to our world not to reveal what a God could do, but what a man could do through faith in God's power to help in every emergency. The Lord now demands that every son and daughter of Adam through faith in Christ Jesus serve Him in human nature which we now have" *Our High Calling*, page 48.

Some folks are thinking that someday by some mysterious power, some strange, miraculous sudden act, they will be given a nature which will make it possible for them to be like Jesus. My dear friends, whether we look to the time when He appears the second time and makes us immortal, or whether we look to some date before that, wherever we fix the date, we're missing the point. God has made the provision for us to serve Him in human nature that we have right now. True, we need to be born again. But as we receive this born again nature we still, and can't we all testify to it by experience, have this old nature to battle with, to struggle with.

Christ has shown us how to meet the clamors of the flesh, the temptations of the Devil. He overcame by quoting the Scripture. He overcame by getting power through prayer. He overcame by faith in His Father's promises. And He offers us the same precious power to get victory over sin that He exercised.

Well, you say, "Brother Frazee, how does all this fit together? I thought you said we couldn't equal the pattern." We can't; we've covered that. We can't be infinite as He is. We can't have that infinite love that He has, that infinite wisdom He has, that infinite power He has. But friends, we can *reflect* the image of Jesus fully—fully in the sense that every choice of our hearts responds to His will. That's all He asks. That suits Him. That pleases Him. Praise God!

"When it is in our hearts thus to obey Him, and efforts are put forth to this end, He accepts that disposition and effort as man's best effort, and He makes up for the deficiencies with His own divine merit" *Selected Messages*, Book 1, page 382.

What a wonderful assurance it is. Constantly God is laboring to make up man's deficiencies. Isn't that a precious promise? In *Heavenly Places*, page 221: "Constantly God is laboring to make up man's deficiencies." Do you know why He has to labor constantly for me along this line? Because I'm showing deficiencies all the time. In fact, while I'm only awake—we'll say 16 hours—He's got His angels working 24 hours a day making up my deficiencies. If any of you need that kind of help, He's got some more to help you. Praise His name!

But as we keep beholding, He keeps changing us, transforming us, that we may reflect the image of Jesus fully.

I'll tell you a little secret about that, friend. The moon doesn't look at itself. Do you know what the moon looks at? It looks at the sun all the time. Don't take time off from looking at Jesus to so look at yourself so that you become either discouraged or proud. If you look at yourself, you'll do one or the other. You'll either in ignorance get proud, or in desperation, you'll get discouraged. The only way we can keep reflecting is to keep beholding. The only way this work of transformation can continue is for us to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

Now, in closing this little study, let me read you what I think is one of the most majestic and inspiring passages from the book *Acts of the Apostles*, page 566. You remember that Jesus, when He was asked, "Which was the first and great commandment?" said what? Love God with what? All the heart, all the mind, all the soul, and all the strength. That's reflecting fully, isn't it?

"He asks for a whole heart; give it to Him; it is His, both by creation and by redemption. He asks for your intellect; give it to Him; it is His. He asks for your money; give it to Him; it is His. 'Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price.' 1 Corinthians 6:19–20. God requires the homage of a sanctified soul, which has prepared itself, by the exercise of the faith that works by love, to serve Him. He holds up before us the highest ideal, even perfection. He asks us to be absolutely and completely for Him in this world as He is for us in the presence of God" *The Acts of The Apostles*, page 566.

Isn't that beautiful? Let me read that last sentence again:

"He asks us to be absolutely and completely for Him in this world as He is for us in the presence of God" *Ibid*.

That's it. He stands for me there; I stand for Him here. He speaks for me there; I speak for Him here. He's my representative there; I'm His representative here. And my deficiencies? He covers them and makes them up. He's changing me day by day, and I know:

"That He which hath begun a good work in me will [finish] it..."
Philippians 1:6.

"...when He shall appear, we know that we shall be like Him..." 1 John 3:2.

Oh friends, what a wonderful thing. I was telling somebody the other day about an experience I had in one of our academies. I was talking to the students about this matter of the Christian life. I said to them, "Now think of it means to be sure. Suppose the principal of this school should say to every one of you students, no matter how slow you are in your studies, no matter if somebody thinks they are plain dumb, if you just stick with him, I'll guarantee to get you through and graduate you." Wouldn't that be wonderful? Wouldn't it take away a lot of tension, a lot of worry, a lot of fear?

Oh friends, this is what the great Teacher guarantees. We've entered the school of Christ. Thank God, we're not going to be dropouts, neither are we going to just sit there in tension and wonder if I'm going to make it. No, friends. Jesus is going to make you and make me like Him, as we cooperate with Him from day to day.

For this, He came to earth. For this, He lived. For this, He died. For this, He rose. For this, He ascended. For this, He pleads. For this, He has given His whole life. Let's give Him our whole lives. How many of us tonight want to send Him the word tonight that we choose to be all for Him as He is all for us?

[Elder Frazee and congregation sing, "Have Thine Own Way, Lord."]

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