

CHANGED FROM GLORY INTO GLORY

KEEPING UP THE PROGRESS IN OUR SANCTIFICATION (3)

(Sermon Summary)

Reading: Romans 5: 1-11.

We have been looking at some of the hindrances to sanctification. This has included things like false guilt, fear, and internalized injustices. We then went on to see that the image we see reflected to us in the mirror, and into which we are to be transformed, is that of the Lord Jesus Christ. Prayer, coupled to a walk with the Lord where we do not hang on to guilty secrets, is vital to our progress.

1. Do not attempt this on your own.

Our being open to the Lord's scrutiny is not a cheerless exercise. We are not inviting someone who is unsympathetic to be our partner in this. We know that whatever is found, the Lord Jesus has accounted for it all at the cross. We also undergo this process with great hope because our Lord is full of love for His people. He is the best Physician of Souls. We are able to undertake work for Him with all our imperfections because He is merciful and forgiving. He was certainly able to understand the hearts of His enemies. He knew what was in man (John 2:23-25; and John 8:37). So He also knows the hearts of His friends. He does not put us through some needless process but is careful and wise in His dealings with us (John 15:1-2). He is not haphazard in what He does but has aims in view for our sanctification.

Too often it is not the true Christ we are relying upon. We imagine Him to be angry fault-finding. Rather we should know that He does take pleasure in His people. We can be fully pleasing to Him without being perfect (Colossians 1:10)..

2. No deceit was in His mouth.

Our Lord is our Helper in our sanctification. He is also the model of what we aim to become. In His life He did more than simply avoid sin. He was positively virtuous. One way we see this is that He was always truthful, straightforward and clear in what He was saying. He did not hide from people what they needed to hear, even if it was not what they wanted to hear.

Shortly before our Lord's death, we see how the religious leaders tried to catch Him out in what He was saying (Mark 10:13-14). They were right that the Lord did not care

about the opinions and thoughts of any. The Pharisees did all they could to keep their status and their privileges (Matthew 23:5-7). They were susceptible to flattery but our Lord was not. There was no deceit in His mouth. It is a poor testimony if we are known for being shifty and dishonest. It does not speak well of leaders in the church when they behave like this. Too often it is fear that lies behind this behaviour. We should study our Lord's behaviour if we want to do better than this.

3. Holiness and love.

These are not opposites of each other. Love is the first-mentioned fruit of the Spirit. The love that the Spirit produces is holy love. Our Saviour's holy love is remarkable. Our Lord desires the good of people who really only deserve His wrath. He loves despite there being nothing lovable in us. He loved us despite what we were (Romans 5: 6-8). When He died on the cross for His people we realize how deeply He loved His enemies.

We are also to love our enemies. This is harder and harder to do as our culture becomes more and more opposed to the truth. Despite the efforts of these people to get Christians into trouble, we have to love them still. Remember how our Lord reacted when He approached Jerusalem and wept for the city, despite knowing they would put Him to death (Luke 13: 41-42). This was holy love indeed, weeping for people who would cruelly treat Him.

We are to follow our Lord and show such love too. This is not something you will find in Islam. They do not weep for Christians (or indeed Jews) because we do not share their faith. Too often they plan violence and harm, rather than weep for people of other faiths. Atheists do not show much evidence of weeping for us. They are very often angry and arrogant in their words and attitudes.

We are to behave differently towards those who oppose us. This does not mean that we do not have some tough things to say to such people. There are times when we have to leave them alone (Luke 10: 10-12; and Matthew 7: 6). We need discernment that our love might be holy and wise (Philippians 1:9).

Finally we have to resolve that nothing is to get in the way of us becoming more holy. Progressive sanctification is a lifetime's work. It requires repentance and soul-searching but we have a Friend alongside us to help us. The challenges of this day require us to be sanctified. The world and our churches need sanctified people in their midst.