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The Glory of the Gospel Dispensation.

BY REV. JOHN C. AVERITT OF TEXAS.

3 Cor. 3: 18—"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."

Any information which the Creator may condescend to furnish to his intelligent creatures should be thankfully received and highly appreciated. Everything that God communicates of himself must be of the utmost importance; and therefore to neglect any information which he furnishes respecting his character must be an insult to him and a serious injury to us. The knowledge of his glorious character must be more important than all the theories and discoveries of the most profound philosophers, scientists and metaphysicians; and therefore this knowledge should be earnestly desired by us; and it should be sought with all the intensity which its importance demands. God has revealed himself in his works and in his word. They both manifest God as One, Eternal, Omnipotent, perfectly Wise, and perfectly Good; but the Scriptures go far beyond this, and testify of his character in reference to sin; and reveal those attributes of the divine character which secure the salvation of his people. So far as the works of creation and providence testify, their testimony is in perfect accord with that of the Scriptures. They are both God's witnesses, and hence the one cannot contradict the other. In the works of creation and providence, God clearly manifests himself in respect to a part of his character, but such is the corruption of human nature that no man, without the aid of divine revelation, has ever learned as much from these witnesses as they proclaim. The works of creation declare the glory of God; but they do not teach the way of salvation nor furnish one gleam of hope to guilty sinners. The gospel alone reveals the glorious plan of salvation; it alone manifests Jehovah as a just God and a Saviour; and it alone shows all the divine attributes completely harmonized in the gracious scheme of redemption. The apostle's object in this chapter is to exhibit the glory of the gospel dispensation in a clearer light by contrasting it with that dispensation with which Moses was connected. He shows that if the ministration of death was so glorious that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance which was only temporary, that the abiding ministration of the Spirit must be far more glorious. He also argues that if the ministration of condemnation was glory, that the ministration of righteousness must exceed in glory; and that the glory of the gospel dispensation was so luminous that it overshadowed the former dispensation. In the text he contrasts the unveiled face of those who are looking in the mirror of the gospel with the veiled face of Moses and the veiled hearts of the Jews. The effect is similar whether the face is veiled or the object to be seen.

In the discussion of the subject I shall first notice those who are looking in the gospel mirror—"We all with unveiled face beholding as in a glass."

In the expression "we all," the apostle evidently includes with himself the church at Corinth and all the saints in all Achaia to whom the epistle was addressed, and it is evident that all the saints in every age and nation are virtually included with those specified. They were all by nature the children of wrath; but they are now the children of God by faith in Christ. They were formerly without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world; but now they are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God. In times past, their minds were so blinded by the god of this world that they could not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ; but God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has shined in their hearts and given the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. They were once condemned because they did not believe in the Son of God; but now being jus-

tified by faith they have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. They were dead in trespasses and sins; but having been made alive by the Holy Spirit and having trusted in Christ, they have eternal life. None but those who have been convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit and have experienced repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, can with unveiled face behold the glory of the Lord in the mirror of the gospel.

Secondly, I shall notice the object beheld in the mirror: The glory of the Lord.

What is the glory of the Lord referred to in the text? It is the character of God as manifested in his Son, that is seen in the mirror of the gospel; for the gospel alone reveals the glory of God in the character of his Son. The glory of the Lord which was seen by the eye in every external manifestation of the divine presence before the coming of Christ was only an emblem of this glory. The glory here referred to is a glory of character not to be seen by the eye, but to be seen or perceived by the mind. Here, dear brethren and sisters, we see it only in a mirror, in heaven we shall see it as it is, for we shall there see face to face. This glory is to be seen only in the mirror of the gospel, for there only is the true character of God manifested to the children of men. This face is seen only in the face of Jesus Christ; for God the Father is seen only in his Son, who is the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person. Jesus, therefore, said to his disciples, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also; and from henceforth ye know him and have seen him." The Father and Son are different persons; but if to see the Son is virtually to see the Father, they must be the same God. Christ is the image of God, because in human nature he possessed all the divine attributes and manifested them to the children of men. Christ was the same God with the Father from eternity, but it is only as he is incarnate that he can be the image of God. An image must be seen, but men could not see the invisible God only as it is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ who in the fourth chapter of this epistle and the fourth verse is called the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, in the sixth verse is called the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. From these passages it is clear that the knowledge of the gospel, the knowledge of the Father, and the knowledge of the Son, are all identical; and the glory of Christ is identical with the glory of God; and therefore Christ must be God manifest in the flesh. That the Father and the Son are the same God, and that the Father is seen only in the Son is most clearly seen in the expression, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. A person is recognized by his face; because his features and countenance distinguish him from every other. The face of Jesus Christ which distinguished him from all others was evidently his character. The glory of God did not shine in his face externally, for thousands saw his face in this sense who did not comprehend his character; but the glory of God did shine most brilliantly in his character. This was most beautifully represented by the glory in the face of Moses, the type of Christ. The glory of God shined externally in the face of Moses; and thus the glory of God, in all the attributes of his character shined most illustriously in the face of Jesus Christ. Here, my dear brethren and sisters, we can see the divine glory; nowhere else can it be seen. In the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation, we may constantly with unveiled face behold the glory of the Lord. Inestimable privilege! Golden opportunity! O, that we could more highly appreciate and more faithfully improve them!

Thirdly, I shall notice the effect of the beheld glory on the beholders; "are changed into the same image from glory to glory."

The glory of the Lord is not only to be seen in the mirror of the gospel; but the beholding of this glory transforms the beholder into the same image. This is a transformation so wonderful that there is nothing in nature that resembles it. No other object changes those looking at it into its own likeness. In the figure chosen in the text to illustrate this truth, there is in this respect no resemblance, but rather a contrariety. The image in a mirror is formed by the object before the mirror; and it is changed or modified as the object is changed or modified; but in the thing to be illustrated the image seen in the mirror gives its own likeness to the one looking at it; and in proportion as the image in the mirror is clearly discerned, the beholder becomes more and more like it. The like conformation between the beholder and the image is seen both in the figure and the thing to be illustrated by it; but the regulating principle of likeness is reversed. In the figure the regulating principle is the object before the mirror; but in the thing to be illustrated, the regulating principle is the image in the mirror. In the mirror there is an image that conforms itself to the object before the mirror; but in the gospel there is an image of Christ that conforms the beholder to itself. The glory on the face of Moses clearly illustrates this subject. When Moses beheld the divine glory, his face became glorious; so when any one beholds Christ in the gospel mirror, he is transformed into the likeness of his glorious character. A very important fact brought to light here is that the children of God must, even in this world, become in some measure like their Heavenly Father; and

hence he says to them "Be ye holy, for I am holy." How, dear brethren and sisters, can the children of the prince of this world who have all the features of their father become the children of our Father in heaven? It can be effected only by beholding the glorious character of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ in the mirror of the gospel. That the glory of the Lord seen in this mirror is a manifestation of his glorious attributes is evident from the fact that a distinct view of it in the mirror changes the beholder into the same image. It is evident that the contemplation of the divine glory in the mirror produces no external glory, therefore, the image conferred must be an image of character. The first view of the image of the glory of God in Christ leaves its impression on the soul of the beholder. If the gospel is so imperfectly presented to the mind, the image will be clearly discerned, and the impression made will be clear and distinct. By seeing God as he is manifested in Christ in the gospel we are new-created in the image of God in knowledge, in righteousness and in holiness. This gracious transformation is not complete at first; but the conformation to the divine image is a progressive work. It is a progressive assimilation to the image of Christ who is the image of God. This is clearly taught in the text in the expression, "are changed into the same image from glory to glory." If, dear brethren and sisters, it is our high privilege, with unveiled face, to behold the glory of the Lord in the gospel and to be changed into the same image from glory to glory, will it not be injurious to us if we do not daily grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? Therefore, we should earnestly strive to obey the precepts and to imitate the example of our blessed Lord and Master, and pray fervently for divine assistance to enable us to labor faithfully and efficiently in his cause.

Fourthly, I shall notice the almighty Agent by whom this gracious transformation is effected, "as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Though the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines luminously in the face of Jesus Christ, and the gospel clearly displays that glory, yet no one has ever seen it, without the enlightening and life-giving power of the Holy Spirit. If the gospel is light which cannot be seen without being known, and if it contains its own evidence, why do not all see and embrace it? The apostle gives the answer in the next chapter, "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God should shine unto them." Why do not the blind see the sun? The blindness of unbelievers is, doubtless, willful blindness, but it is not less intense on this account. The power of the Holy Spirit must attend the word of truth in order to manifest the glory of God in the character of Jesus Christ. It is the province of the Holy Spirit to give both light and life. The eyes of unbelievers are so completely blinded by sin, that unless they are opened by Almighty Power, they will not see the light though it should shine before them with seven-fold intensity. The Holy Spirit through the gospel opens their eyes, enlightens their understandings and renews their minds. One point of the utmost importance in the text is, that it is by contemplating the image of God in Christ in the gospel that men become like him, so it is always by the energy of the Holy Spirit that the gospel has the effect. Human wisdom errs on both sides of this awful truth. Some contend that the Spirit sometimes produces this transformation without the gospel. This is a great and fearful error. The Holy Spirit always effects this gracious change through the instrumentality of the gospel; for the gospel alone exhibits the character of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ. Others contend that the word of God alone is sufficient to effect the transformation without the agency of the Holy Spirit. This is a fearful and fatal error. Perhaps, they imagine that they honor the Scriptures, by alleging that they, without the teaching of the Spirit, can effect this change in conversion. This view, however, makes a god of the Scriptures and dishonors the Lord God of the Bible. The word of God is mighty for pulling down strongholds, but it is mighty only through God. The word of God is the sword of the Spirit, but the keenest blade is harmless without a living agent to wield it. There is a difference between the sword and the soldier who wields it; and there is such a difference also between the word of God and the Holy Spirit in the conversion of sinners. Can anything but divine power give life to those who are dead in sin? Did not divine power accompany the command, "Lazarus, come forth!" Does it not require the same power to give spiritual life to those who are spiritually dead? It requires the same power to create anew that created the world; and hence Paul says, "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." If, dear brethren and sisters, we are permitted, with unveiled face, to behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord and to be changed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord, how earnestly and intently should we look into the mirror of the gospel that we may daily become more conformed to his glorious character. Dear brethren in the ministry, if the views which I have presented are Scriptural, it is evident that we cannot cause sinners to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ in the mirror of the gospel. This is the work of the Holy Spirit; and it is beyond

our ability and outside of our commission. But our blessed Lord and Master who, according to his boundless love and amazing grace, has called us to preach the gospel, does require us to hold up clearly and distinctly before lost sinners the gospel which reveals the glory of God in Christ. How important our work! How fearful and weighty its responsibilities! All human expedients to convert sinners are disgraceful to the gospel of Christ; and are not only useless but exceedingly injurious. It is right for us to denounce the terrors of the law against sinners, to show them their guilt, condemnation and helplessness, and to employ every motive which may influence their minds in order to attract attention to the gospel; but in order that sinners may be converted to God, we must clearly, earnestly and affectionately preach the gospel which manifests the glory of God in Christ, and shows how all the divine attributes, in their highest perfection, harmonize in the glorious scheme of redemption, relying alone on the power of the Holy Spirit for success. For however clearly we may expound the truths of the gospel, and however forcibly and tenderly we may impress them, they will not have the desired effect on the minds and hearts of the hearers, unless accompanied by the energetic, convicting and converting power of the Holy Spirit. My dear brethren and sisters, how our hearts ought to glow with love and gratitude towards our Father in heaven for his matchless love manifested in the gift of his beloved Son to redeem us with his own precious blood; and toward the Son who is the image of the Father, because he has through the Holy Spirit revealed his Father to us. If, dear brethren and sisters, it is our privilege to behold the divine glory in the mirror as the gospel, and to be changed into the same image by the Holy Spirit, how intently should we view that image, and how earnestly should we study his character as it is revealed in the gospel, and how fervently should we pray that the Holy Spirit may illuminate our minds, that we may daily become more and more assimilated to his perfect character. This conformity to the likeness of Christ will not be complete in this world; but it will advance from glory to glory until it finally terminates in an exceeding and eternal weight of glory, when we believed the Holy Spirit sealed us as an earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession to the praise of the glory of divine grace. The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God, and in consequence of this relationship we are heirs of God and joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh! boundless love! Amazing grace! O, that we could fully appreciate his love and mercy, and faithfully improve our opportunities! In view of our relation as children of God, the Apostle John says, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God; therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

Dear brethren and sisters, we live among the children of this world and daily associate with them, but they know us not, because they are ignorant of God, and hence they often regard us as fanatics; but the Good Shepherd knows his sheep and they follow him. It does not appear in our state of humiliation and imperfection what we shall be; but we fondly anticipate the time when we shall awake in his likeness. Though now, dear brethren and sisters, as soldiers of the Cross, we are engaged in a sore conflict with the world, the flesh and the devil, we shall not be defeated; for the Holy Spirit is our guide and comforter, and the Lord Jesus Christ is our Captain, and therefore though we may have to pass through many fearful battles, we shall gain a complete victory, for our Captain will surely triumph; and through the greatness of his power and the riches of his grace, he will bring us off more than conquerors. When he shall come in his glory attended by all the holy angels to raise the dead and judge the world in righteousness, then shall he change these bodies of humiliation and fashion them like his own glorious body. Then will our spirits which have been changed into his image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord, be reunited to our glorified bodies; and then shall we see him as he is, and the result of the glorious vision will be that we shall be like him. Then in consequence of our relation to him as the bride, the Lamb's wife we shall be exalted above all other created intelligent beings in the universe. Then shall we stand with that innumerable multitude of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues, arrayed in robes of spotless purity, with palms of victory in our hands and crowns of glory on our heads, before the throne of God and before the Lamb, and without one discordant sound or one jarring note swell the glorious anthem of praise unto God and unto the Lamb who has redeemed us with his own precious blood, for ever and ever. Amen.

Three days of uninterrupted company in a vehicle will make you better acquainted with another than one hour's conversation with him every day for three years.—*Lecturer.*

A life that will bear the inspection of God and of men is the only certificate of true religion.—*Johnson.*

The Ministry Overloaded.

There was a time when the cry of the church to the great Lord of the harvest was, "Send forth more laborers into the vineyard." It is doubtful whether that prayer is needed now. The ministerial market is glutted. The supply has outstripped the demand. At least in the Eastern States there seems to be a preponderance of preachers. A church is no sooner vacant than forty men spring up ready to take the empty pulpit. We hear every day of men of pure character, large experience and fine education who cannot get settlements. It is poor encouragement to study for the ministry when, after long courses of education, so many gifted men fail to find churches to preach to which seems a duty.

The trouble lies largely with ordaining councils and unscrupulous churches that allow the poorer quality to glut the market. A smart insurance agent, or a ready-speaking carpenter, or a gifted house painter thinks he could be useful in the ministry and keep on with his trade, and a foolish church calls a council to ordain him. The work is done, and the man with a glue pot or a paint-brush in one hand and a limp Bible in the other crowds out the man who has had a dozen years of hard study in the academy, the college and the theological seminary. A young man who has never expended a dollar in text books, and who never has been able to earn over a dollar a day in self support, is willing to preach in his way for a small salary, and churches that believe in cheap preaching are willing to accept such a man as pastor, because less money will be needed to square accounts at the end of the year. They may be sure that the quality of the preaching is not just what it ought to be, but they solace themselves with the thought that the preaching is as good as the pay, and are content. Glibness is often mistaken for learning, and a man who knows little, who never had an idea of exegesis or biblical interpretation, is often more glib than a college graduate. He is not hindered by homiletics, nor pained by exegesis, nor restrained by delicate shades of meaning in the holy word. He can slap and dash, where a theological professor would pause and think. There is no Greek Testament in his way, and he has no sense of the propriety of the thing. He can preach a sermon and make nothing of it. His race is generally short, though there are men, exceptions of course, who stay, and rise to eminence without training or preparation. But they are extraordinary men. They are not examples. The Principal of Louvain said to the son of the Vicar of Wakefield: "You see me, young man; I never learned Greek, and I don't find that I have ever missed it. I have had a doctor's cap and gown without Greek; I have ten thousand florins a year without Greek; I eat heartily without Greek; and in short, I don't know Greek; I do not believe there is any good in it." If a young man says: "There is the Principal of Louvain who got cap, gown and ten thousand florins a year without Greek and I'll eschew Greek," he is a dunce. Adam Clarke once said: "I never study out a sermon until I come to its delivery. Were I before the King or the University I should do the same." A less man than Adam Clarke who should try that would be a simpleton. What Adam Clarke or Charles H. Spurgeon could do, would be blank miserable failure with other men.

But it will be said, if the man with the glue-pot can crowd out the college graduate, let him do it, for he must be "smarter." Ah, that is just the trouble, the man who is able to teach, who would wear like iron, who would prove a workman needing not to be ashamed, does not possess the "smartness." He comes with ability and not show. He is a burning fire and not a skyrocket. The skyrocket eclipses the evening star. The insane ambition of the churches for "smartness," irrespective of what is under it, is the curse of our day and the ruin and death of our churches.

We do not argue that every minister must be educated in a college. We do not say that the "short-cut" is not sometimes commendable. We are well aware that some of our ablest preachers and finest pastors never had a sheepskin. But for all that, and for all the honor we would do that class of men, we protest against overloading the ministry with materials that can only render it permanently and fundamentally weak. An ecclesiastical council has no right before God to ordain a man to the ministry unless he is fitted therefor. It is treason to Christ, disloyalty to the church, and an injury to the candidate. What if the church in Scrubtown say they want him! What if the little 7x9 house was crowded on the Sunday when he was advertised to preach on the "Witch of Endor!" What if his aged father is a pious deacon who would be offended if his son should fail to pass! What if his pastor with church pride begs that he may be ordained! No candidate should be put into the ministry unless he is mentally, morally, and theologically qualified for its work. A council has no more right to do it than it has to alter the terms of salvation or drop out one of the ten commandments.—*Christian Inquirer.*

If thou seek rest in this life, how wilt thou then attain to the everlasting rest! Dispose not thyself for much rest, but for great patience. Seek true peace—not in earth, but in heaven; not in men, or in any other creature, but in God alone.—*Thomas Kempis.*