Changed:
From Glory to Glory

"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."
—II Corinthians 3:18

IN THIS MONTH'S SERIES of "Treasures of the Truth," we will consider the words of the Apostle Paul in our featured text. He wrote to the brethren at Corinth and he told them that we behold the glory of the Lord as with an 'open face' and that we are being changed from 'glory to glory.' From these assuring words, the apostle teaches that the Lord's people are thus being changed into the same image of our Lord Jesus by the wonderful workings of God's Holy Spirit.

A TRANSFORMING WORK

The word 'open' means to uncover, or to unveil (#343, *Strong's Bible Concordance*), and it is in this manner that we have revealed to us the plans and eternal purpose of our loving Heavenly Father. Communion with God and faithfulness to his Word

of Truth is a transforming process of character development, and a growing up into the likeness of our Lord Jesus. The development of these godlike graces of the Spirit may not be immediately apparent from the human standpoint, "for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." (I Sam. 16:7) But, when the heart is filled with the Spirit of God, even the outward development in righteousness may become more discernable.

Regardless of faith, zeal, or the spirit of self-sacrifice, unless our hearts are filled with the spirit of love, and our words and deeds are thus motivated, we can not be well pleasing to the Lord. Love is the sum total of all the Christian graces. It includes love for God, for his Word, and for his ultimate plan regarding his people. An indwelling spirit of love which transforms us into the image of God and of Christ is possible only to the extent that we have become emptied of self.

OVERCOMING SELF

Self-will bars the way to all true Christian growth and fellowship, and blinds us to the true meaning of the Word of God. The Holy Spirit transforms us into our Lord's image, and functions through the Word of Truth. Any measure of self-will, therefore, may cause us to turn a deaf ear to the plain teachings of God's Word, and hinder the wonderful workings of the Holy Spirit of God in our hearts and lives.

If we are striving to be transformed into the likeness of our Lord and his image, 'from glory to glory,' as in the words of our text, it is essential that we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. We are to seek him earnestly and in the spirit of humble

obedience to know and to do his will. It is one of the fundamental works of the Holy Spirit and its operation, but its significance and purpose have often been misunderstood. "We are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Rom. 6: 4) Walking in newness of life means much more than merely living a holy life to attain to the "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."—Heb. 12:14

"FLESHY TABLES OF THE HEART"

When the Apostle Paul spoke of being transformed from glory to glory through the influence of the Spirit of God, we must consider the context from which our featured text—II Cor. 3:18—has been selected. We read, "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." (vss. 2,3) The apostle is here speaking of the work that is presently being accomplished by the Holy Spirit of God. By that Spirit, God is writing the 'epistle of Christ' in the 'fleshy tables' of our hearts.

We note an important difference here from God's promise to establish a New Covenant with the house of Israel during Christ's future kingdom. At that time, God will write his law in the hearts of all the people, as the Prophet Jeremiah wrote. "This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it

in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."—Jer. 31:33

TABLES OF STONE

Paul is making a distinct comparison between the writing of God's law on fleshly tables of the hearts of his people at the present time, and with the writing of his Law Covenant which was written upon literal tables of stone that took place prior to the inauguration of the old law. (Exod. 34:4) The writing of the epistle of Christ takes place during the present Gospel Age, and is upon the antitypical hearts of God's people. This work also precedes the inauguration of the New Covenant that will be made with the house of Israel of which Jeremiah wrote.

This wonderful manifestation of the Spirit becomes more discernable when the apostle explains that those in whose hearts the epistle of Christ is now being written, takes place by the workings of the Holy Spirit of God. "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament [covenant]; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life [quickeneth, *Marginal Translation*]." (II Cor. 3:6) The typical tables of stone that were given to Moses were used by him to teach the people the law of God as we read, "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."—Gal. 3:24

LIVING EPISTLES

The living epistles of Christ that are presently being prepared will serve, when all have been brought together, as the Mediator of the New Covenant together with Christ during his future kingdom.

They are designated the epistles of Christ, and their hearts are being written on by God's Spirit to carry the message of Christ and his atoning work to the people. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; . . . Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."—II Cor. 5:18-20

BASIS FOR RECONCILIATION

The term covenant signifies an agreement, and to be in lasting covenant relationship with God requires being at one with him, enjoying his favor and blessings. The human family, however, is alienated from him through disobedience and sin, and a reconciliation between God and men will be necessary before an everlasting covenant relationship may exist. It was to bring about this reconciliation that Jesus came to earth to die for the people and to satisfy justice.

The perfect man Jesus willingly assumed that obligation, and gave up his perfect humanity in death as a substitute for Adam and the whole human family that had lost life through him. Jesus' sacrificial work constitutes the basis of reconciliation between God and man. (I Tim. 2:4-6) This opened the way for man to be restored to life and to return to God in faith and obedience to his laws of righteousness.

SHARING WITH CHRIST

Members of the faithful body of Christ will be the "ambassadors" for Christ in carrying forward the work of reconciling the world to God. (II Cor. 5:20) Members of the church do not give their lives as a

ransom for the people. This basic feature of the work of reconciliation was accomplished alone by Jesus. As members of the fallen race they could not possibly give their lives as a ransom to God. "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him."—Ps. 49:7

The faithful church is invited to participate in a sacrificial service that is associated with the work of reconciliation, as Paul writes, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."—Rom. 12:1

It is the privilege of sacrifice that the followers of Jesus are even now engaged as servants or ministers of the New Covenant. (II Cor. 3:6) The matter of being "able ministers" of that covenant is a wonderful prospect. It is illustrated by the type, for Moses as the Mediator of the old Law Covenant served in that capacity. He offered sacrifices prior to the actual inauguration of the covenant. This work included the slaying of the sacrificial animals and filling the basins with blood. This was later used for sprinkling, both the book and all the people.—Exod. 24:5-8

In the antitype, Jesus served in this same manner when he laid down his life as a sacrifice. He referred to his own blood as the blood of the New Covenant, and said, "This is my blood of the new testament [covenant], which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matt. 26:28) The work of sacrifice is still being carried out in preparation for the inauguration of the New Covenant. Paul explains that this work was not fully accomplished at Calvary.

"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church."—Col. 1:24

ALIVE UNTO GOD

The Apostle Peter teaches that the church of Christ is a priesthood. "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (I Pet. 2:5) The faithful members of the church are thus dying with Christ unto sin, even in the same manner as did Jesus as an offering for sin. Paul said, "If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." (Rom. 6:8) He further explains, "In that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."—vss. 10,11

As shown in the type, until this sacrificial and preparatory service of the New Covenant has been completed, the covenant cannot be inaugurated with those for whom it is now being prepared to bless. God's promise is to "make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah." (Jer. 31:33) The purpose of that covenant, made with Israel and the world of mankind, will be to reconcile them back to God during the thousand-year Millenial Age. At the close of that age, they will be fully at one with him.

BETTER SACRIFICES

There are various steps in the making of that covenant. The necessary sacrifices, referred to as the

"better sacrifices" of this present Gospel Age must be completely offered. (Heb. 9:23) When this part of the process has been finished, then will come the inauguration of the covenant with the living generation of Israel and mankind at the beginning of Christ's kingdom. Following this, and throughout the thousand years of the kingdom, the work of education and reformation of all who will then be awakened from the sleep of death will be judged accordingly. "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."—Rev. 20:12

The church shares in this work of making or bringing to pass the covenant, but they do not share in the work of ransoming the people from the power of death, nor are they themselves developed under that covenant. Paul's reference to Christians as 'able ministers of the new covenant' means that even now they are helping to make that covenant by participating in the necessary sacrificial work prior to its establishment. Therefore, it is important to note that the New Covenant is not now functioning on behalf of Israel or the world, and cannot be established until the sacrificial work of the present Gospel Age is completed.

MINISTRY OF GLORY

The sacrificial work associated with making the covenant will be followed by a ministry of glory during the future administration of that New Covenant. Paul speaks of this saying, "If the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children *(Continued on page 35)*

(Continued from page 31) of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory."—II Cor. 3:7-9

Paul recalls that when Moses came down from the mount bearing the typical tables of stone on which the old law was written, there was a brilliant glory upon his countenance. "Not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished." (vs. 13) It is to this 'vail' that Paul refers when speaking of the glory that is associated with this work.

It was only after the law had been written upon the typical tables of stone that the glory of that ministration appeared. In a similar sense, it will not be until all of the antitypical tables of the law, the epistles of Christ, shall have been written. Then it will come to pass, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." (Col. 3:4) This will not occur until the full end of this present Gospel Age of sacrifice has been completely accomplished.

The apostle says, "Even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth." (II Cor. 3:10) Futhermore, he says, "Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech." (vs. 12) The glory of which Paul speaks is yet but a hope in our hearts, but we may still share in the ministry of the New Covenant. The fact that we now have only a hope

of glory as able ministers of the New Covenant clearly shows that the inauguration of that covenant is still future. We are still living during the age of sacrifice of that ministry, inspired to faithfulness in laying down our lives with Jesus with the hope of being associated with him as his bride during the time of his future kingdom of glory.

WITH UNVEILED FACE

In our featured text, the expression 'open face' [unveiled face] means that we behold 'as in a glass the glory of the Lord,' and are thereby being changed into the same image. This is very revealing, for Moses found it necessary to put a veil upon his face to hide the glory of God when he appeared before the people. But when he went into the presence of the Lord he removed the veil, so it was with an open face that he entered into the presence of God.—Exod. 34:29-35

The Apostle Paul thus places the church in the same relationship to the New Covenant as was Moses to the old Law Covenant. It was Moses who wore the veil when he appeared before the people, but when he was in the presence of God he removed the veil. This points to Moses as being a servant of the old Law Covenant, and so too are we servants of the future New Covenant.

We read in the scriptural account that Moses entered into the presence of God. (Exod. 34:34,35) Paul also says that we behold God's glory as in a glass. The glory of the Lord is mirrored to us through his Word and it is a reflection of God's glory. This is the transforming work of the Holy Spirit of God, from glory to glory. It is being accomplished by the

same spirit that is writing the epistle of Christ upon the fleshly tables of our hearts. These scriptural illustrations bring to our attention from different standpoints the same work of grace in our hearts that is preparing us for the future work of glory with Christ in his kingdom.

HEAVENLY GLORY

The account tells us that Adam was created "a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour." (Ps. 8:4-6) We also learn that there is a glory of the terrestrial, and another glory of the celestial. (I Cor. 15:40) The apostle explains that the church class who have borne the image of the earthly glory shall also be changed in the resurrection to bear the image of the heavenly glory.—I Cor. 15:48,49

When Jesus was made flesh to become the world's Redeemer, he was crowned with the glory and honor of the perfect human nature. He had laid aside the glory as the Logos which he had with the Father before the world was created. (John 17:5) When he was raised from the dead, he was exalted to a still higher glory of spiritual nature, even the Divine nature, being made "the express image" of the Father's person. (Heb. 1:3) Concerning Jesus' high exaltation, we learn how very high it truly is—"Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."—Eph. 1:21

God has promised that Jesus' faithful future bride will share this glory with him, as declared by the apostle, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding

great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (II Pet. 1:4) In view of this "high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14), how true are Paul's words, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Rom. 8:18) At another time, he also said, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."—II Cor. 4:17

THE GLORY OF OFFICE

In addition to the glory of the Divine nature to which we are called, and for which we are now being prepared, the Scriptures also show a high degree of official glory to which the church is now being called. This glory of office is reflected in the many titles that are ascribed to our Lord Jesus.

The revelator said, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints [nations, or ages, *Marginal Translation*]." (Rev. 15:3) Our Lord will be the great Judge in the world's coming judgment day. "I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war." (Rev. 19:11) Jesus will be the Mediator of the New Covenant, "Now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." (Heb. 8:6) Further, the New Covenant will be inaugurated with the house of Israel.—vs. 8

MINISTERS OF RECONCILIATION

The glorified Christ, head and body, will be the Mediator of the New Covenant, and this title reflects the official glory conferred upon Jesus by his Heavenly Father. It was this particular aspect of his glory that was typified by the shining countenance of Moses when he descended from the mount bearing the two tables of the law. But the typical glory was insignificant as compared with that excelling glory, and we have the hope of sharing also in that glory. The glory of the office of Mediator is indeed a part of that "exceeding and eternal weight of glory" promised to the body of Christ.—II Cor. 4:17

The work of a mediator is that of bringing about reconciliation between those who are estranged. The entire human race is alienated from God, and a reconciliation is to be effected. In accomplishing this great work, Jesus will be the Mediator together with his body members—his bride—who will share the privileges of that work as ministers of reconciliation with him.

Paul wrote, "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." (I Tim. 2:5,6) From this scripture we learn that there are two phases of the work of Mediator, first the giving of the ransom, and then later testifying the knowledge of this certainy to all. It should be made very clear that Jesus alone provided the ransom as a corresponding price for the sin of Adam.—I Cor. 15:21,22

The church will share with Jesus in the work of Mediator of the New Covenant (Gal. 3:19), as part of the seed of promise. (vss. 16,29) If faithful, we

will have the privilege as the epistles of Christ to testify to all mankind the knowledge of our Lord Jesus. We will then have opportunity to testify to his ransom sacrifice, love, mercy, and righteousness. These wonderful graces of the spirit are also now being written in the fleshy tables of our hearts by the indwelling Spirit of God.

FROM GLORY TO GLORY

While the epistle of Christ is being written in our hearts more particularly in preparation for our work with the Mediator in the next age, we should not hide the message from the world today. What a blessed privilege and foretaste of future heavenly joy. If the epistle of Christ is really being inscribed upon the fleshly tables of our hearts, we will have no greater joy than that which results from showing forth the Truth. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."—I Pet. 2:9

We are being changed from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. Let us yield ourselves more fully each day to the molding and transforming power of the Spirit, that later we may be counted worthy to rule as kings with our Lord Jesus. Let us be just and loving, that we may be worthy to share with him in administering justice to the world in the future day of judgment. May we be faithful witnesses of the grace of God that has been made available to us through our dear Redeemer. May we also, as ministers of God's wonderful plan of reconciliation, have the blessed privilege of testifying to the Truth

and share in the uplifting process that will be made available to the whole world of mankind.

This wonderful scene has been well described by the Prophet Habakkuk when he wrote, "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."—Hab. 2:14 ■