

The Beauty of Holiness Is the Beauty of Christlikeness

by George Ridout

The sermon emphasizes the importance of becoming like Christ, through the inward work of the Spirit of the Lord and the inward cleansing of the blood, and the characteristics of Christlikeness, such as Righteousness, Compassion, and Love.

Scripture: Matthew 5:48, Romans 8:29, 1 Corinthians 11:1, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 4:24, Philippians 2:5, Colossians 3:10, 1 Peter 2:21, 1 John 3:2

Topics: "Christlikeness", "Sanctification"

Description

George Ridout preaches on the importance of striving for Christlikeness, emphasizing that it cannot be achieved through mere morality but requires the inward work of the Spirit, cleansing of the heart, and the stamping of the Divine image through sanctifying grace. Christlikeness involves a combination of righteousness, compassion, and love, leading believers to suffer long for righteousness' sake and walk in honesty and simplicity. It also produces a sweet reasonableness, corrects self-will tendencies, and makes individuals teachable, docile, and considerate of others. The sermon highlights how likeness to Jesus results in patience, endurance in suffering, and a deep desire to be conformed to His image.

Transcript

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me. Christ within me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ in the fort, Christ in the chariot seat. Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me. Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks of me, Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me. -- Ancient Prayer

Much of the Christianity of our day is disappointing because it seems to fall short of real Christlikeness. People naturally expect that we who profess Christ should become like Christ. Paul in Phil. 2:5, says: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." In other words, be Christlike. Christlikeness cannot be attained by the mere effort of morality or moral culture.

The Christlike life can only be achieved by holy men and women. There must be the inward work, first of the Spirit of the Lord in the heart; there must be the inward cleansing of the blood; there must be the stamping of the Divine image upon the heart purified by sanctifying grace. Wesley sings:

"Rest for my soul I long to find; Saviour of all, if mine thou art, Give me thy meek and lowly mind, And stamp thine image on my heart. "

To be Christlike means a holy combination of the qualities of Righteousness and Compassion and Love. When the Spirit descended on Jesus it was in the form of a dove.

The dove hath neither claw nor sting, Nor weapon for the fight, She owes her safety to her wings, Her victory to flight.

Christlikeness in the believer makes him suffer long for righteousness' sake.

When on a certain occasion Archbishop Fenelon, that holy man of France, after having experienced much trouble and persecution from his opposers, was advised by some one to take greater precautions against the artifices and evil designs of men, he made answer in the true spirit of a Christian, "moriatur in simplicitate nostra, " 'let us die in our simplicity. ' He that is wholly in Christ, has a oneness and purity of purpose, altogether inconsistent with those tricks and subterfuges, which are so common among men. He walks in the broad day. He goes forth in the light of conscious honesty. He is willing that men and angels should read the very bottom of his heart. He has but one rule. His language is, in the ordinary affairs of life as well as in the duties of religion, 'My Father, what wilt thou have me to do?' -- this is Christian simplicity; and happy, thrice happy is he who possesses it. , ,

Christlikeness will produce in us a sweet reasonableness and correct those tendencies toward self-will and arbitrariness so common to human nature. It will arrest leanings toward fanaticism. It will make us teachable, docile and considerate for others and their opinions. Dr. Steele, writing of the fanatic which is the creature of loveless light, says:

"He abjures and pours contempt upon that scintillation of the eternal Logos - Human reason. This lighted torch, placed in man's hand for his guidance in certain matters, he extinguishes in order ostensibly to exalt the candle of the Lord, the Holy Ghost, but really to lift up the lamp of his own flickering fancy. He who spurns the spirit will be left to darkness outside the narrow sphere of reason; and he who scorns reason will be left to follow the hallucinations of his heated imagination, instead of the dictates of his common sense. The fanatic degrades the word of God by claiming for himself an inspiration equal to its the opneustic utterances. The fanatic imagines he has a manifestation of God so immediate that he no longer needs the ordained means of grace. He is characterized by acts professedly prompted by the Spirit, but which are contrary to both reason and the Word of God. "

Likeness to Jesus produces his patience and his attitude of soul when suffering and trials come. Madame Guyon has well said:

"Holy souls are without impatience, but not without trouble; are above murmuring, but not above affliction. The souls of those who are thus wholly in Christ may be regarded in two points of view, or, rather, in two parts, namely, the natural appetite, propensities and affections, on the one hand, which may be called the inferior part; and the judgment, the moral sense and the will, on the other, which may be described as the superior part. As things are in the present life, those who are wholly devoted to God may suffer in the inferior part, and may be at rest in the superior. Their wills may be in harmony with the Divine will, they may be approved in their judgment and conscience, and at the same time may suffer greatly in their physical relations and in their natural sensibilities. In this manner, Christ upon the cross, while His will remained firm in its union with the will of His heavenly Father, suffered much through His physical system;

He felt the painful longing of thirst, the presence of the thorns and the agony of the spear. He was deeply afflicted also for the friends He left behind Him, and for a dying world. But in His inner and higher nature, where He felt Himself sustained by the secret voice uttered in His sanctified conscience and in His unchangeable faith, He was peaceful and happy. "

One who had entered into spiritual rest and was experiencing a great passion for being like Christ thus describes some soul sensations passed through:

"It is by looking to Jesus, " or "looking at Jesus, that we are changed into his image. " It struck my mind with peculiar force, and produced such a thrill of holy joy as I cannot describe. I was then looking at Jesus. He seemed standing before me, arrayed in glory and beauty that surpassed all I had ever before conceived of, and looking upon me with a look of tender regard, benignant love and divine complacency, seemed to claim me for His own. My soul was so captivated with the charms of the adorable Redeemer, that when my leader spoke of being changed into his image, I felt such a transport of bliss, as nearly overpowered me. Oh! thought I, to be assimilated to His glorious likeness -- to be a partaker of His nature -- to be "one with Him!" What ineffable felicity - what overwhelming glory -- what amazing exaltation! for an abject worm of earth, to be changed into the image of Jesus! And this is my privilege! I, who am "less than the least of all saints. " I, who am the most unworthy of so distinguished a favor, thus honored, thus blessed of God! Heretofore my heart has borne but the mere outlines of that glorious image; but now, I am to receive the full impress! Yes, now, while I am looking at Jesus! now, He is molding me and fashioning me after His own lovely likeness! My soul is in His hands, passive as clay in the hands of the potter. Jesus is making me all glorious within! I shall be like Him! I have fixed my eyes upon Him, never more to remove them thence, and it is by looking at Him that I am to be conformed to His likeness! O! such a fullness of love and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. I seemed, indeed, "filled unutterably full of glory and of God. " As I came home, Jesus seemed walking with me, and communing with my heart by the way. When I retired to my chamber, His presence accompanied me, and His glory appeared to fill the room! For several hours, I could not sleep. My heart was in such raptures of joy, that I could not become sufficiently composed to sleep. At length exhausted nature sank into repose; but still my mind was occupied with the same glorious object. Often I would awake in ecstasies, exclaiming "Jesus! O, thou art my Saviour, 'my Redeemer from all sin' -- my happiness -- my heaven!" I have since, enjoyed the same delightful consciousness of His presence, who is the life of all my joys, and am still enabled to keep my eyes unwaveringly fixed upon Him. I see clearly that this is the way, and the only way to abide in His love, and to have the continued victory over the world, the flesh, and Satan, to keep looking at Jesus.

A certain seeker said, "While entreating God for a clean heart my mind was led to contemplate 'the image of Christ' as the single object of desire. To be Christlike, to possess 'all the mind that was in' the blessed Saviour; and this became the burden of my earnest prayer. "

And the thought occurred to him. why not take that image, and take it now? He said:

"Give Him your sin and take His purity. Give Him your shame and take His honor. Give Him your helplessness and take His strength. Give Him your misery and take His bliss. Give Him your death and take His life everlasting. Nothing remains but that you take His in exchange. Make haste! Now, just now, He freely offers you all, and urges all upon your instant acceptance. " He adds: "Suddenly I felt as though a hand omnipotent, not of wrath but of love, were laid upon my brow. That hand, as it pressed upon me, moved downward. It wrought within and without, and wherever it moved it seemed to leave the glorious impress of the Saviour's image. For a few minutes the depth of God's love swallowed me up; all its billows

rolled over me. "

Cecil has said, 'The union of saints results from union with Christ, as the lodestone not only attracts the particles of iron to itself by the magnetic virtue, but by this virtue it unites them to one another. " This attachment to Christ furnishes the soul a great incentive to be true and steadfast in all circumstances. The Christian devoted to Christ can sing:

"Though I am now on hostile ground, Christ for me! Christ for me! And sin beset me all around, Christ for me! Christ for me!

Let earth her fiercest battles wage, And foes against my soul engage, Strong in His strength I scorn their rage, Christ for me! Christ for me!

"And when my life draws to its close, Christ for me! Christ for me! Safe in His arms I shall repose, Christ for me! Christ for me!

When sharpest pains my frame pervade, And all the powers of nature fade, Still will I sing through death's cold shade, Christ for me! Christ for me!"

Consecration

"The body with all its members; the mind with all its faculties; the soul with all its affections, tastes and appetites; the substance with all its gains and uses, including business pursuits and social relations, recreations, education, thought and reading, embracing all our advantages natural and acquired; indeed, our whole life, together with our death, grave and memory, must be given to Christ and placed under contribution for His glory.

"Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore or die we are the Lord's.

"Living, dying, suffering, rejoicing, resting, toiling, we are the Lord's, entirely His for time and eternity. "

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