

The Right Motive in Sanctification

Scripture: Galatians 4:19

Code: 48-24

I want you turn now in your Bible to Galatians chapter 4, Galatians chapter 4. We are looking at just the statement primarily in verse 19 where the apostle Paul says that he is “again in labor until Christ is formed in you.” This was a profound agony in Paul’s life that believers, true Christians, be sanctified; that is, see the decreasing of sin and the increasing of righteousness. This was on his heart. It caused him no small amount of pain and agony. And we looked at that last time, and we’ll do it again this morning and then again next Sunday as well, because this is such an important verse and an important concept.

I titled this little brief series here “Sanctification: Christ Formed in You.” Between justification, the time when you were declared righteous by faith in Christ, and glorification, the time you enter into His presence, we live in the reality of sanctification. Sanctification means “to be separate,” a continual, progressive separation from sin. We were, in a moment, justified; we will be, in a moment, glorified. But all our life long in-between we are being sanctified. That is the present, wonderful, gracious work of the Holy Spirit on our behalf, and it goes on throughout our life. And it is inevitable; and it is absolutely occurring in every true Christian; and it manifests itself in increasing holiness.

Now, as Paul declared in verse 19 that he was “in labor until Christ is formed in you,” he therefore makes the declaration that Christ already is in you; He already is in the believer. He wants Christ to be fully formed; that is to say to literally take over the believer’s life so that the believer becomes a manifestation of Christ. This is sanctification; this is what sanctification is. It is becoming more holy, which is to become more Christlike; becoming more righteous, which is to become more Christlike. And it reminds us of a profound and wondrous reality.

Earlier in the service I read from Matthew 1 and Luke 1, and I read the truth that the divine miracle of the virgin birth meant that the Son of God in human form lived in the womb of Mary. For nine months the God-Man, Son of God, Son of Man was in the womb of Mary. Mary carried in her body the eternal Son of heaven, the creator and sovereign Lord of life, the Savior and Redeemer of the world as an infant.

There is a wondrous parallel to that in our own lives, and that is this: that we as believers have in us the Son of God, Son of Man, the living Christ. He lives in us; not as an infant, and not for nine months; but He lives in us in all His fullness *permanently, permanently*. If you are a believer you have the Spirit of Christ living in you permanently. It is His presence that is the sanctifying reality.

Galatians has brought this into our minds pretty clearly. If you go back into chapter 1, verse 15, Paul, referring to his own testimony, says, “When God, who had set me apart even from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son *in me* so that I might preach Him among the nations.” Here he says, “His Son is in me.” At the point of salvation the Son of God takes up residence in the believer.

Chapter 2, verse 20, a very familiar verse: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives *in me*.” There explicitly is the statement that Christ is in the believer.

In chapter 3 and verse 27: “All of you who are baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” That is to say, He is in us and He is around us.

Chapter 4, verse 6: “Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” The Spirit of the Son of God, the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of the Son, who is the Spirit of God in the wonder of the Trinity, lives in our hearts, in our souls, in our lives permanently.

The New Testament makes much of this. Colossians 1:27, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Colossians 3:11, “Christ is all, and in all.” Romans 8:10-11, “Christ is in you. His Spirit dwells in you.” First Corinthians 3:16, “You are the temple of God.” Second Corinthians 6:16, “We are the temple of God.” Ephesians 2:22 says, “The believer is a dwelling of God in the Spirit.” Ephesians 3:17, “Christ dwells in your hearts through faith.” First John 4:4, “Greater is He that is in you” – meaning Christ – “than he that is in the world.”

That is the astonishing and gracious reality of life for a believer. God the Son by the Spirit takes up permanent residence in the soul of every believer. He is your life. He is your life. Scripture says, when Christ who is our life, He is the very eternal life: “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” He is that everlasting life. He is the life. As a true believer then, Christ has full residency in your heart, in your soul, in your person.

First Corinthians chapter 6, verse 15, shows us some of the implications of this on a negative side. Listen to 1 Corinthians 6 and what the apostle Paul writes: “Do you not know,” verse 15, “that your bodies are members of Christ?” because He is in you, because He is around you. He clothes and covers you, He dwells in you. Your bodies are members of Christ; you are inseparable from Christ. “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live;” – as we saw in Galatians 2:20 – “yet not I, but Christ lives in me, so that my body is a member of Christ’s.”

Then Paul asks this question: “Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute?” He said, “Would I join Christ to a prostitute? May it never be! Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, ‘The two shall become one flesh.’ But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.”

If you’re one spirit with the Lord and you join yourself to a prostitute, you have joined the Lord to a prostitute – unthinkable. May it never be! Flee immorality. *Flee!* Why? “Because your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God. You’re not your own, you’ve been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.” Your body is His temple.

Now that brings us back to Galatians chapter 4 – you can look at it again. Christ is in every believer. Christ is in every believer permanently. But Paul’s agony here is that Christ be formed in you, that literally you take on the very person of Christ, so that there is less distinction between you and Him. You are so much like Him. I find this powerful, clear definition of sanctification, to have Christ formed in the believer, so that the believer takes on the shape of Christ, the mind of Christ, the attitudes of

Christ, the words of Christ, the behaviors of Christ. Sanctification is the work by which the Holy Spirit, using the Word of God, shapes the Christian into Christlikeness. And that goes on through your entire life.

Conformity to Christ is a lifelong work of removing sin and replacing sin with thoughts and words and actions of holiness. And it, as I said, is taking place all through our lives, never complete, never complete until glorification. Again, it is the present, continuous work of the Holy Spirit in every Christian on earth between justification and glorification; which is to say that it is *the* dominant work of the Spirit of God in the church among believers. How is it that this critical doctrine, truth, reality, can be so minimized in this contemporary Christian world?

As I told you last week, I am appalled at the indifference to the doctrine of sanctification. I hear a lot about predestination, a lot about justification, and even some about glorification. Rarely do I hear in the contemporary scene much about sanctification, sanctification.

You might say, "Well, what role do I play in the work that the Spirit does? Do I need to know the commands better, more thoroughly?" Yes, you do. "Do I need to have more self-discipline?" Yes. Paul said he beat his body into submission, subduing his flesh consciously by discipline, so that in preaching to others he didn't himself become disqualified.

"Do I need to have accountability?" Yes. "As iron sharpens iron, one person sharpens another." "Do I need more devotion to duty? Do I need to stop wasting time? Do I need to stop indulging myself and turn to things that are eternal?" Yes, all of that. But that is not going to take over your life without a strong motivation, without a strong motivation. And what is the motivation to that kind of diligence? It is love to the Son of God. It is love to the Son of God.

In John 14:21 and John 15:10, Jesus, in the upper room, sort of establishing the patterns of sanctification, said, "The one who keeps My commandments is the one who loves Me." Obedience, self-discipline, accountability, duty, sense of diligence has to be motivated by something. And the legitimate motivation and the only legitimate motivation is love for Christ, love for Christ. Sanctification, holiness, purity of life, virtue, righteousness are the result of loving Christ.

Now Paul is deeply concerned about this. This is the attitude of a faithful shepherd, a faithful pastor. He says in verse 19, "I am again in labor" over this - having birth pains. They're also mentioned, same word, in verse 27, where he speaks of women and their labor; it's the same term. "I'm in labor over this. I am going through excruciating, prolonged pain to see Christ formed in you."

It was never enough for him that people showed up, that they took a seat, that they appreciated his sermon, that they perhaps supported him. That was never the goal of his pastoral ministry. It was that Christ be formed in them, that they become more and more and more like Christ. So dominating was this desire that Paul speaks of prolonged, repeated suffering - agony until his beloved spiritual children are like their Lord and Savior. And their spiritual progress and sanctification had slowed down significantly because they had been infiltrated by false teachers. They had been listening to the false teachers. They had been bewitched. They were acting foolishly. And it affected not only their understanding of the gospel, but their understanding of sanctification.

This passion, by the way, is so rare today, so rare. So many are satisfied just to have the seats filled.

So many are satisfied just to receive accolades, compliments from people. But Paul's satisfaction was tied to Christlikeness. If you're a pastor and your desire is anything less than that, you've fallen short.

Listen to the cry of Paul – just backing up one book from Galatians to 2 Corinthians in chapter 11; and I could take you a lot of places, but this one is close – verse 1: “I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness;” – sarcastically – “and indeed you are bearing with me. I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.” He says, “Look, I betrothed you to Christ, as it were, when I brought you the gospel and you believed, and I want to deliver you to Him as a pure virgin.” This is sanctification language.

But verse 3 says, “But I'm afraid. I'm afraid, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.” There is sanctification. It is simply to be devoted to Christ, purely to be devoted to Christ; that is sanctification. “I want to see that devotion to Christ that results in Christlikeness.”

Down in verse 23 he lists for them things he suffered in getting the gospel to them: “Labors, imprisonments, beaten times without number, danger of death, thirty-nine lashes from the Jews, three times beaten with rods” - which the Gentiles did – “stoned, shipwrecked.” He goes through all of that; verse 27, “labor, hardship, sleepless nights, hunger, thirst, without food, cold and exposure.” But then on top of that, “Apart from such external things,” – or above that – “there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.”

That is not administrative concern; that is concern about the sanctification of believers, the daily, internal pressure of concern for the Christlikeness of the saints. And he defines that in verse 29. “What are you talking about, Paul?” “Who is weak without my being weak? I feel your weakness. I suffer through your weakness. Who is led into sin without my intense concern?” My, what a pastor's heart; intense concern over the sin of one of his children in the faith.

As we saw last week – we talked about it a lot – this kind of concern just seems nonexistent today among pastors, or rare for sure. Holiness, godliness, humility, separation from sin, separation from the world are largely of no concern to church leaders. The reality of sanctification is treated with indifference, calls to holiness, and denial of the flesh, and denial of the world and all that is in the world are very rare. But on the other hand, all of the sort of natural, sinful longings of the selfish, sinful heart of man is legitimized, and the world has gone to church and found a home there. Instead of churches confronting these desires as evil, the church has redefined itself as the place you go to get all your desires fulfilled.

For years there has been escalating tolerance of sin, rampant self-centeredness, worldliness; and the church actually offers the sinners the fulfillment of their desires. What you don't hear are the warnings against sin, against self-preoccupation, against worldliness. You don't hear about the truth of divine judgment on such, which is the foundation of the gospel: divine judgment. The wrath of God is the foundation of the gospel. It's why the good news is good news, because it delivers you from that; not from your lack of fulfillment, but from God's wrath.

The last time I was in a conversation with R. C. in a Q & A, he said to me, “Johnny Mac,” – he always liked to call me “Johnny Mac” - he said, “Johnny Mac, I drive by a church that has a sign out front

that says, 'God is not mad at you.' It's a big sign, and I pass it all the time: 'God is not mad at you. God is not mad at you.'" He said, "That's just how far the church has gone. What do you think of that?"

I said, "Well, I would simply quote this scripture: 'God is angry with the wicked every day.' And I think they ought to put that sign up: 'God is angry with you every day,' so that you could then say, 'but there is a glorious and wonderfully loving provision to set aside His anger and allow Him to make you His own child and bring you to heaven.'"

The gospel becomes meaningless without preaching against sin; and if you're not going to preach against sin to a nonbeliever, it's pretty hard to introduce the subject to believers. The church has been shaped by the culture. The culture wants only personal fulfillment, satisfaction, self-promotion, along with the idea that they'd like to think God is on their side.

You have people in some of these contemporary megachurches who are well-known media people, rock and roll singers; and you have the pastors of these places saying they're mentoring these people, whose lives are very sinful, whose lives would make a black mark on a piece of coal.

Where's the confrontation and the call to holiness? The churches of today are eager to accommodate the human desire because they don't believe the Holy Spirit builds the church. They believe they need to do it with their marketing cleverness; so you void out of your message *anything* that is offensive. And calling unbelievers sinners and telling them they're under the wrath of God and on their way to eternal hell is way too confrontive to be useful to build the kind of church they're interested in building. And then once you've got the people, to call them to sanctification would virtually empty the place.

So there's no real intent. There's no real interest in sanctification, holiness, purity, godliness, separation from the world; no preaching on holy living. Many young pastors are manifestly sinful and indulgent in their own lives. This is the situation today; there is no strong preaching on holiness.

Now, I stopped there last time, virtually where I am now, and said there is, however, one point of view regarding Christian living that is acceptable to this contemporary kind of ministry. There is a view of the Christian life that works in a worldly, sinful kind of church, and it is and goes by the name "antinomianism." That's a big name. It's a big theological word.

Let me break it down. *Nomos* is "law" in Greek. *Nomos* is "law." So *anti* is "anti-law." Antinomianism is "against the law." It's an old heresy, but it's very popular today. And even when people don't understand what it is, they're happy to advocate it.

There aren't a lot of people – there are some, but not a lot of people - who, over a long period of time, preach antinomianism, because those who preach it usually crash and burn. Because antinomianism is an old heresy that says you do not have an obligation to God to obey His moral law - you don't have that obligation. We are not under the law; we are free from the law, for freedom Christ has set us free, as Galatians 5 says.

So antinomians say, "We're free from any obligation to the law." How can that be? "Because Christ has fulfilled the whole law for us. In His death, He took the penalty for us. In His life, He fulfilled the

law for us. His righteous life is imputed to us; and so when God looks at us He sees the full obedience of Christ. So we don't have any obligation to God to obey His moral law, because Christ fulfilled the law for us." This would mean that holiness, obedience, virtue, righteousness is not necessarily a result of justification in that view.

Sanctification is not an inevitable result of justification. In fact, you can be saved; and since Christ paid the penalty for your sin and fulfilled the law for you, you don't have to worry about being under bondage to anything. Antinomianism is imagined to be the cure for legalism. And those who advocate antinomianism spend so much of their time denouncing legalism. I know of a church where the pastor put an end to all prayer meetings, because he said those scheduled prayer meetings are a kind of duty; they're a kind of legalism. "You're falling back into legalism."

I had a man fly all the way out here from the East Coast - formidable man, leader in that church - to sit down with me with his wife in tears to talk about how the church was being destroyed, because anything that had been perceived as a spiritual duty was being eliminated under the idea that we were free from any kind of duty or responsibility. And if we do those things out of duty they're sinful, they're sinful. So it's sin if you don't pray. But if you pray out of the responsibility to pray, that's a sin; so pick your sin. And it's a whole lot easier to pick the sin of least resistance. Heartbreaking dismantling of that church has continued.

The antinomian thinks that because he's not a legalist he has to completely ignore the law, that antinomianism is the opposite of legalism. To be a legalist is to be bound by law, to be in Christ is to be freed from the law; that's their thinking.

Sinclair Ferguson, in his wonderful book *The Whole Christ*, says, "The wholesale removal of the law seems to provide a refuge for the antinomian. But the problem is not the law, but the heart that remains unchanged."

Now I want you to think this through with me. The antinomian thinks he's free from legalism when he pays no attention to the law. The truth is, he is still bound to the law. His sinful disease has only been masked and not pure. Listen, if you call yourself a Christian and you say, "Because Christ fulfilled the law for me, I don't have to fulfill the law; I don't have any responsibility," and you go on in your sin, you're not transformed. Inevitably these people crash and burn. The most popular advocate of this theology in this country a few years ago, having a tremendous influence on the young people who are growing up in these churches by espousing this idea that you're completely free from the law, did what they all do who advocate that - he became exposed in rampant, far-reaching sin and immorality, and brought down judgment on his own head.

This kind of overreach in freedom is a cloak of maliciousness. It is a covering for lasciviousness. If you, like they always do, define your experience spiritually as being free from the law - and typically they all condemn the law: "You're a bunch of legalists because you do this, because you do that. You're just a bunch of legalists; we're free from the law." If that's how you define your quote-unquote "Christian experience," then you're still a legalist, because you are defining yourself by the law.

You say, "Well, I'm not a legalist." No, but your reaction to legalism and nothing more. It's just a backside of legalism. People who are into this still define their religious life by the relationship they have to the law.

The legalist says, "I must keep the law to please God." The libertine, or the antinomian, says, "I must reject the law to please God." Both are wrong, because they're connecting to the law. Two sides of the same heresy: being attached to the law, or disattached from the law. In other words, the *law* becomes the defining reality. Neither the legalist nor the antinomian has understood the defining relationship of salvation is not your connection to the law, it is your relationship to Jesus Christ. That alone breaks the bonds of legalism and antinomianism.

Legalism undermines the gospel by insisting that believers must add righteous works to faith in order to be justified. The antinomian perverts the gospel by saying, "You don't have to work; you don't have to obey; you're free to go on in sin, because your sin's paid for. Christ's righteous life is accredited to your account, and you're under grace." Antinomians then pervert the gospel by subtracting from the efficiency and the sufficiency of Christ's work. They talk about really a conversion that didn't happen.

Why am I saying that? Because this is one very serious truth. If you have been born again, you not only love Christ, you love His Word and His law. Your life is defined by your relationship to Christ. And you know that the law is a reflection of the holy nature of Christ, and you know that His will for you is consistent with that law. And you know He kept the law perfectly when He was on earth, and He is your example. So it is characteristic of a true believer not to define his relationship, his spiritual life with relationship to the law, but to Christ.

Antinomianism: living without regard for the righteousness of God as if you didn't care that this offended God, living with indifference to the holiness of Christ as if He didn't care about that. This is horrendous.

Look what Paul is saying here. Paul doesn't even come close to saying, "Okay, we're in Galatians. For freedom Christ has set us free. You're free. You're free. Go do whatever you want." But he doesn't define what God wants by the law, he defines it by Christ. So instead of saying, "I am in labor until you all obey the law," he says, "I'm in labor until you become like Christ."

All this, of course, to say that the current church culture is a breeding ground for antinomianism. You can call yourself a Christian and be immoral, be anything, be worldly, be sinful, be authentic. You can even be LGBTQ; churches are happy to accommodate that. And because they want this generation to come, not be offended in their self-actualization, they show no interest in sanctification, separation, holiness, virtue, purity, love of obedience, worship, submission, hatred of sin. They're just interested in what people want.

So how do we then regrip this great truth of sanctification? We couldn't be in a better place than where we are. Back to verse 19; here it is: "Christ formed in you." "Christ formed in you." That's what Paul wanted: "Christ formed in you."

Back in verse 11 of chapter 4, he said, "I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain." He talks a lot about laboring. "I fear that all this has been for nothing."

And then down in verse 19: "I'm again in labor until Christ is formed in you." "My children, my children." That's endearing. They're true believers. "I am in labor again. I'm like a birthing mother."

The first preaching of the gospel to these Galatian pagans was a painful work, as he confronted sin and righteousness and judgment, until they were born into new life, delivered out of the realm of darkness and they were saved. Now here he is suffering all over again until they come to the full character of Christ, until Christ is *morpho*, “formed in you.” Refers to a sensual nature, not outward shape.

“There’s no antinomianism here. I want you to be like Christ, who loved God perfectly, served God perfectly, obeyed God perfectly. You couldn’t ever define Christ as one who violated any command that God gave. He was holy, harmless, undefiled; and He’s your model.” A pastor could never be content with anything – any kind of sin, or certainly any exploitation of grace. This is baffling to Paul.

“I could wish to be present with you,” he says in verse 20. Now, “I need to be there to work on this and to change my tone,” because he’s very upset as he writes the letter. “I’m perplexed about you,” *apore*, “to be puzzled,” “to be uncertain,” even “grieved,” or “at wits end.” “I don’t know what to do about you.”

They had begun so well at salvation. He said earlier, “You’d begun so well. Who hindered you?” Look, this is the goal of sanctification: Christlikeness. So instead of gritting your teeth and saying, “I’m going to have to obey the law, so we need to get all the laws lined up, and work really hard to obey the law,” what you want to do is become like Christ. This is the objective: He kept the law. The closer you approximate Him, the more you will do the same.

Listen to Paul and his commitment to the realities of Christlikeness as essential to the believer’s experience. Listen to Romans 8:28, where we know that “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”

Now, what’s His purpose? “For those He foreknew, He predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son.” Those whom He predestined, “He predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son.” That is the purpose of God in redemption to make us like Christ. That’s been the purpose since we were justified.

Listen to 13 of Romans, verse 14: “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.” That says it all. “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.” Another way of saying it: “Let Christ be formed in you; make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.” Deny yourself; focus on becoming like Christ.

In Ephesians chapter 4, instruction is given to apostles and prophets and evangelists and teaching pastors, and, verse 12, “they are to equip the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature that belongs to the fullness of Christ.” That’s why we have pastors in the church, so that they can edify the saints until they come to the fulness of the stature of Christ, to a mature man.

Philippians 3, verse 13: “Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do, one thing: forgetting what lies behind, reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” One thing he does, one thing: he

presses to the goal.

What is the goal? The goal is the prize of the upward call. What is the prize when we're called up? "We'll be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

So that's the prize, at glorification. In the meantime, "I do one thing: I press on. I pursue that goal in this life. I'm going to be like Christ when I'm glorified; I pursue that now in my sanctification."

Colossians 2:6, "Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in Him."

Colossians 3:10, "You've put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the one who created Him." You were recreated by the power of Christ, and now as you have put on the new self in Christ, you are being renewed into His image. That's sanctification.

Salvation brings a person into union with Christ. He takes up residence in our life – and we'll say more about this next time – and we are to become more and more like Him. How does that happen? Let me take you to a final passage: 2 Corinthians 3:18, very definitive, and one that I have made much of through the years.

Second Corinthians 3:18, but I want to back up to verse 17 for a moment: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." All right, so an antinomian would love to hear that. "There's liberty; there's freedom." But how do we live within that freedom? Chapter 3 talked about the bondage of the old covenant.

The old covenant was written in ink, not with the Holy Spirit; written on tablets of stone, not on the heart. It was a covenant that *killed*, not a covenant that gives life. It was a covenant that faded away, not one that was permanent. It was a covenant of bondage, not freedom. It was a covenant that hid, that veiled things - did not reveal them.

"But now," he says, "we turn to the Lord," verse 16, "we turn to the Lord, and the veil is taken away" - the veil, what obscured the truth in the Old Testament. He uses the illustration of Moses who had a veil over his face, and the people were looking at a fading glory that he had picked up from seeing the Lord in the mountain. But he had a fading glory, and he covered his face with a veil.

Now we turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away. And now we're at liberty; we're no longer under the bondage of the old covenant. But what do we do? Verse 18 - here's the key - "But we all" – without exception – "with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror." Mirrors were made out of metal, flattened out, and polished; and you could bring one close to your face, and you could see clearly.

Now we have the veil off our face, and we have an intimate, close, clear look at what? "The glory of the Lord," "the glory of the Lord." Where is that? Where is this clear, intimate revelation of the Lord's glory? It's the New Testament - Scripture.

So we look at Scripture with an unveiled face; nothing obscures, nothing obstructs. We have full glory on display. John 1:14, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

We have this clear vision of Christ. “And as we, with unveiled face, are in the process of looking at that revelation of His glory, we are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.” There it is, there’s sanctification. We gaze at the revelation of the glory of the Lord and the pages of Scripture, and the Holy Spirit changes us into His image from one level of glory to the next, to the next, to the next.

This is an amazing portion of Scripture. It is a progressive transformation from glory to glory to glory. It’s the verb *metamorpho*, “metamorphous.” This is the work of the Holy Spirit. When Moses gazed at the glory of God, that was on his face for a little while, and then it decreased. It faded away, as verse 13 of chapter 3 puts it.

But we gaze at the glory of the Lord; and in Moses’ case, it decreased; in our case, it increases. This is the work of the Lord who is the Spirit. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. John 16, Jesus said, “When the Spirit comes He’ll speak to you of Me. He’ll reveal Me.” Well, He does that, not in a vacuum, not in your imagination, but through the pages of Scripture.

We’re not passive in the work of sanctification; we’re active. And what are we actively doing? We’re actively being caught up in the glory of Christ. This is how you work out your own salvation, because it’s God who works in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure (Philippians 2:12-13).

So what is the believer’s responsibility? To gaze at Christ and to be lost in His glory; and the Spirit changes us into His image. So whether you’re a legalist or an antinomian, you’ve got it all wrong. You’re not changed; you’re not transformed; you’re not saved, because you’re still defining your life by the law. When you define your life by your relationship to Christ, you will love Him, and you will love what He loves. And He loves mostly what is holy, just, and good; and so will you. And you will never say, “I am free to sin.” You will never say that.

Legalism and antinomianism are not opposites. They’re both against grace; they’re both against love. The antinomian may be the worst legalist, because he’s a rebellious legalist; he’s a revolutionary legalist. But he doesn’t understand love and grace. Now, there’s so much more to be said about this union we have in Christ, so I will make that the subject for next Sunday.

We have been enriched greatly this morning, Lord, to sing and pray and listen to Your wondrous truth. We’ve been so blessed to fellowship with each other. And now to have these great realities clearly embedded in our minds sets us on a course to truly honor You, truly honor You.

Lord, You not only need to save the legalist, You need to save the antinomian who thinks he’s saved by rejecting the law, when one can only be saved by trusting Christ and loving Christ, and sanctified by continually gazing into His glory. And as the revelation of His life unfolds on our minds and hearts, the Holy Spirit changes us into His image. May this be our constant experience. And we know it’s dependent on seeing His glory. We don’t see it in the small afterglow like Moses did on the mountain in Exodus 33. We see it in its fullness on the pages of the New Testament in the full revelation of Christ. As we gaze at that glory, change us so that we find Christ formed in us. That’s our prayer, Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2018 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<https://www.gty.org/about#copyright>).