



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

2 Corinthians 3:17-18

“Freedom and Transformation by the Risen Lord”

TRANSCRIPT

As Mr. Pryor mentioned, we particularly welcome those of you who are visiting the Chapel. We appreciate your coming. We hope you do profit from the ministry of the word. And for those of you who come, maybe on Easter Sunday, and we may not see you again. We want to wish you also Happy Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year. [Laughter] So that's not -- that's not original with me.

When I first was in the insurance business and attended some meetings in the South Highlands Presbyterian Church, because I was urged to do so by members of the family, and heard Donald Ray Barnhouse in that rather fashionable church, that was what he told us that Sunday morning. And so I thought well, here's a fellow that doesn't mind saying what he thinks. So I attended all of the meetings that week, and through that week, I was converted.

We are continuing the exposition of 2 Corinthians, but the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is not something that we celebrate once a year. It's not something that we celebrate once a week, although that's very appropriate. Every Sunday is the Lord's Day. It's something we celebrate constantly if, by God's grace, we are the kinds of believers that God would have us to be, because our God is a living God and, therefore, at all times, we recognize our Lord's resurrection. I think it's appropriate that, once a year, we

give special attention to the event, and we do that, but we, underneath, think of our Lord as a resurrected Savior at all times, and so we call upon Him in that sense.

Now, we are going to continue the exposition of 2 Corinthians, verses 17 and 18, because these 2 verses have a very definite connection with the resurrection of our Lord. But in order to, again, remind ourselves of the context, I’m going to ask you if you will, to take your Bibles and turn to Exodus chapter 34, verse 27 through verse 35, and then we’ll read the two verses that conclude 2 Corinthians 3 for the Scripture reading.

The apostle has been making expository comments, in one sense, on this passage in Exodus, drawing out the significance of it and contrasting the old covenant with the new covenant. And so, in verse 27, the passage that Moses -- in which Moses describes the second giving of the law, Moses writes,

“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.’ So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

It came about when Moses was coming down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the testimony were in Moses' hand as he was coming down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because of his speaking with Him. (that is, with the Lord)

So when Aaron and all the sons of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. Then Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers in the congregation returned to him; and Moses spoke to them.

And afterward all the sons of Israel came near, and he commanded them to do everything that the LORD had spoken to him on Mount Sinai. When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face. But whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would take off the veil until he came out; and whenever he

came out and spoke to the sons of Israel what he had been commanded, the sons of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone. So Moses would replace the veil over his face until he went in to speak with Him.”

We made the comment that Moses spoke with the veil off because he was giving the word of God. And in giving the word of God, it was God speaking through Moses and therefore, appropriate that the veil be off when he spoke to the children of Israel. But when the message of the word of God was over, he put the veil back on his face until he went in to speak with the Lord again on the mountain. Now, in 2 Corinthians chapter 3, the last two verses, the apostle has just written, “but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.” Now verse 17,

“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

May the Lord bless this reading of his word, and we bow together now for a few moments of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we turn to Thee with thanksgiving and praise for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are grateful for this day. We are grateful for every remembrance of the fact that he has been raised from the dead and now lives at the right hand of the majesty on high, seeking to secure and truly accomplishing it, the full salvation of all for whom he has accomplished his atoning work.

And we thank Thee, Lord, that as our great high priest, he is no frustrated high priest but accomplishes all of his purposes in saving the saints. We thank Thee for the petitions that he utters at this very moment for us. We thank Thee, too, for his advocacy

for us when we sin. And we thank Thee, too, for the teaching ministry in which he engages, through the mediation of the Holy Spirit, the illumination that he gives, that we may understand.

We thank Thee for the apostles and the prophets and for others, too, who have been used by Thee to bring the knowledge of the word of God to us. Today, Lord, we worship Thee, the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And we give Thee thanks for a risen Savior, our representative, the mediator of the new covenant by which we have the forgiveness of our sins.

We pray for the church of Christ today and ask, Lord, that we all may have the sense of Thy presence and the sense of all of the blessings that are ours through him who loved us and gave himself for us. We thank Thee for all of the means of outreach today, not simply by the Chapel, but by the whole church. May Thy blessing rest upon them Lord. We pray for our country. We pray, Lord, Thy blessing upon it in these critical days for it. And we pray for the sick and the ill and the troubled and perplexed, the weak, the bereaved, those particularly who have requested our prayers. Lord, bless and supply the needs that exist. We thank Thee for our elders, deacons, the members of the Chapel and the friends and the visitors who are here. Lord, may this day be a significant day for each one of us.

We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

[Message] Our subject for today in the continuation of the exposition of 2 Corinthians is “Freedom and Transformation by the Risen Lord.” The apostle in this great passage on the ministry of the word has been discussing the surpassing glory of the new covenant ministry, that it has been his privilege to be given to proclaim. And we made reference in one of the messages a couple of weeks ago to the fact that it is characterized by a new covenant, which is an unconditional covenant. That is, it’s a covenant that depends upon God’s initiative and God’s power in accomplishing its intended results.

And, furthermore, it represents, because it is an unconditional covenant, a covenant in which God does realize all that he intends to realize. Therefore, we worship a non-frustratable deity.

The second thing about the ministry is that its priesthood is a priesthood with our High Priest, a priest after the order of Melchizedek. And, therefore, our priesthood is an eternal priesthood. And the things that Jesus Christ has accomplished in his atoning work are things that he lives forever, to guarantee, to secure for those for whom they are made. We also pointed out that characteristic of the new covenant ministry is its sacrifice. Instead of the many sacrifices which could never take away sin, we have the one sacrifice offered once and for all by which we have forgiveness of sins and all of the other blessings that God has determined that we should have by the new covenant. So its priesthood, its covenant, its sacrifice, these are the things that characterize the ministry that Paul preached, and I, for one, can easily see why the apostle was so excited to be able to proclaim this ministry. It’s no wonder that he spoke of himself with joy, with exaltation, as being a minister of the new covenant. And I take great pleasure myself in being one of those who minister the new covenant.

Now, he has found in Exodus chapter 34, verse 27 through verse 35 an enacted parable of the failure of the old covenant, due to the people’s iniquities. We notice that, for example, when he said he chapter 3 in verse 7 that the old covenant ministry was a ministry of death. And then we saw that in the 9th verse, it was a ministry of condemnation. And finally, in the 11th verse, Paul points out that it is a ministry that fades, “For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory.” It was a temporary ministry, so the law covenant was a ministry of death. It was a ministry of condemnation. It was a temporary ministry that began on the day when Moses received the law on Mount Sinai, and it concluded at the time our Lord suffered on Mount Calvary and the veil of the Temple was writ in twain from top to bottom, and that ministry was done away.

Now, the apostle has been drawing on that incident in Exodus 34 to make certain climactic contracts, showing the more glorious ministry of the new covenant. For example, just to take the thing that Paul emphasizes here, the new covenant ministry transforms sinners into the image of God by the power of the Lord, the Spirit. Moses’ ministry of the old covenant could never do that. It could only condemn. It set before men an impossible dream. Obtaining of righteousness by works, if one was to obtain it through the new covenant, was in impossibility. The law only revealed man’s sin. Of course, in certain aspects, it looked forward to the coming of Christ and pictured it in the form of the Levitical cultists, but the law was unable to give life. “If it had been able to give life,” Paul says, “then Christ would not have had to suffer for sin.” It’s as simple as that.

So the new covenant ministry provides forgiveness of sins. It provides, also, transformation of sinners into the image of God. And that raises the often-neglected ministry of the risen Christ in salvation and sanctification through the word of God with which he confronts us. And so we’re talking, really, about something that has definite reference to Easter; the holiday, the festival, that we celebrate at this time.

If there is anything that this country needs, it is to recognize some of the truth of which Paul refers to here, the ministry of the Lord Jesus in salvation and in sanctification through the word of God. That is the great failure of the world and of the United States of America today. Our country’s decline, in my opinion, is traced specifically to their decline of the knowledge of the word of God and of the truth that is revealed in the Scriptures.

If you read the newspapers at all and if you read the periodicals, you cannot help, if you’re a Christian, and a thinking Christian -- and there are lots of Christians who are not thinking Christians. If you’re a thinking Christian, you cannot help but see that in our society. Our society is fast drifting away from the things that influenced us so much in the early days of our history. We’ve never been a Christian nation, but there was a strong

sense of the truth of Christianity among the people. And it was reflected in the life of this country, but, today, the ignorance of the word of God means continued drift. We do need revival. We need tremendous revival. We need a great movement of the preaching of the word of God and a response through the convicting and converting ministry of the Holy Spirit so that many of our Americans come back again to understand the truths of Scripture.

Of course, if you listen to me, you know the kinds of literature I read. I do read some of the liberal periodicals. I take some of them to know what my enemy is doing these days. And I find that very interesting and very fruitful. But I do also read some of my conservative friends, too, and recently, in the National Review there was a letter in Mr. Buckley’s notes and asides that I thought was interesting. “Dear Mr. Buckley. In the course of conversations at my son’s twenty-fifth birthday party, a recent girl graduate of Yale in Economics, queries, ‘What are the Ten Commandments? I’ve never heard of them.’ I’m writing this at the insistence of the birthday boy (obviously, her son) who resists my probings concerning current Dartmouth doctrine.” And Dartmouth, if you’re acquainted with what has happened up there over the past few years, has been a campus, strongly liberal in its thrust. Really, in many ways, anti-American, but there has arisen among the student body, some conservatives who are seeking to do what the liberals did and are finding it difficult to do in a liberal institution.

Mr. Buckley replies with his usual sense of humor, “Dear Mrs. Thompson. I’m told the rare book room of the Yale Library has a copy, but I can’t vouch for it. Cordially.” Well, one month later (that was in March) in the present issue, there is another letter to Mr. Buckley. It says, “Dear Mr. Buckley. Let’s not get too down on the recent girl graduate of Yale in Economics who asked, “What are the Ten Commandments? I’ve never heard of them.” A few years back, I was touring a local art museum while a museum staffer was instructing another middle-class matron on how to conduct tours of the museum. They stopped in front of an etching by Jacques Cousteau entitled, “The

Israelites Crossing the Red Sea.” “What’s that?” asked the novice. The museum staffer stared at the etching, read the title and said, “I don’t know. It has something to do with the Jews. Know what I mean?” So Don Shrink of Allentown, Pennsylvania says. “Dear Mr. Shrink,” said Mr. Buckley. “Yes, but I wish I didn’t. Cordially.”

To think that an individual could graduate from the University of Yale -- to be a Yalie -- one of our premier institutions -- some even think those Yalies the premier institution, and never have heard of the Ten Commandments. It’s astonishing.

Well, some years ago, I was a speaker at the Founders Conference of the Moody Bible Institute, and one of the attenders of the conference was Dr. Wilbur Smith, well-known evangelical whose library was the envy of all preachers. He had over 25,000 volumes in his library, and they now repose -- most of them, not all of them -- in the Fuller theological Seminary in California, a few of them are in the Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Dr. Smith, near the end of his life, sought to renege on his giving of the books to Fuller because he felt the institution was turning a bit liberal. But Fuller defended themselves and still maintain the books as part of their library. Dr. Smith was one of the speakers at the same conference I was one of the speakers at, and he told an interesting story. Now, I remember him as a man, about eighty years of age at the time, but still active. He said he had a min -- a man, who was a friend of his who was a believer, who had his doctorate from Harvard in the days when as he put it, “When that meant something in the field of psychology.” He was a man who was friendly to Dr. Smith and a Christian man. And like Dr. Smith, had been a Presbyterian minister all of his life. In his later years, he had a stroke. And he had a small church which had stayed small while he had been there for many years, so Dr. Smith said. He visited his friend, Dr. Smith said, when he had a stroke, and he was sitting in chair before a bookshelf with his scholarly books before and behind him in the bookcases, and a Bible was on the table right by his side. In the course of the conversation with Dr. Smith he said, “Wilbur, my

only wish is that I had read those books less and this book more,” putting his hand on the Bible.

Some years ago, H.A. Ironside was -- who came to Dallas frequently to minister the word of God, taught at the seminary here as a visiting lecturer -- in the later years of his ministry, he was one of the best-known of the Bible Conference speakers of the earlier part of this century. Dr. Ironside, in his later years, became blind. That is, blind enough so that he couldn’t read the Bible. He still could preach. He knew the word so well, that he was able to preach without reading the word. He was able to quote extensively from Scripture -- in a moment, I’ll tell you why -- but he was able to do this. He was a very intelligent man, although he had never gone to a theological institution. He just had been taught by the Holy Spirit through the reading of the Word. But at any rate, when he came blind, he asked Ray Stedman to be his chauffeur and to read the Bible for him. And so, Ray Stedman -- he’s well-known among evangelicals -- graduated from the seminary and became his chauffeur. And chauffeured him around the country and in the meetings, when Dr. Ironside would stand up to speak, Ray would read the text, and then sit down and Dr. Ironside would do the preaching. He said he remembered Dr. Ironside holding up his Bible in one of his meetings near the end of his life and him saying, “My only regret is that I’ve not read this book more and other books less.”

Now, that was very striking because Dr. Ironside came to Dallas Seminary many years ago for a month of meetings, as he used to come once a year. He sat down and he read through the Talmud in that month, one of those months. But the other thing about Dr. Ironside was this, that he read through the Bible -- I want to say religiously -- he read through it spiritually. He read through it with zeal, at least once every year. And yet, at the end of his life he can say, “My only regret is that I’ve not read this book more and other books less.”

Now, that’s one of the reasons why we, as a church, are suffering today. We’re not reading the Bible. Christians are not reading the Bible. Evangelical Christians are not

reading the Bible. All you have to do is to hear a discussion among evangelical Christians and know they’re not reading the Bible. In fact, the average evangelical Christian thinks that he can obtain the information that he knows by appealing to some preacher. But if you’re in preachers’ gatherings, you know they’re not reading the Bible either. Oh, they’re reading some parts of the Bible, but they’re not reading the Bible.

Now, if that’s true, then we can understand some of the things happening in our country and some of the things happening in our churches and some of the things happening to us individually. For Paul says, “we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.” So if we’re not reading the Word and we’re not beholding him -- as he mentions here -- as in a mirror, then we are not being transformed into the image of the Lord from glory to glory. So what Paul has to say here is of great significance for us, but we don’t want to skip verse 17 in the exposition. It contains some interesting things and so we’ll begin with verse 17, and then we’ll draw out some of those contrasts that Paul mentions in verse 18 for the message this morning.

The apostle has just stated in verse 16, “But whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.” And it’s very plain that the Lord here, is a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. The context makes that quite plain. It gives us an understanding of how Paul read the Old Testament, incidentally.

But then he says in verse 17, “Now the Lord is the Spirit.” That’s a very difficult statement. In fact, I think anyone expounding the statement would have to say that it is so difficult that it’s impossible for us to say dogmatically that we understand everything about it. Theologians have misused it, as you might expect. Christianity rests upon a Trinitarian doctrine of God, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. Three persons who subsist in one essence. We believe in one God. But we believe in one God who subsists in three persons. That’s the historic Christian position. That’s my position. And, I assume, it’s the position of you who are in this audience. But you can see from

this, “Now the Lord is the Spirit,” that there would be some textual basis for a person saying, “There really are only two persons in the Trinity, the Father and the Son.” For the Lord is the Spirit and thus, instead of a Trinitarian doctrine, we should have a binatarian doctrine. Well, you could almost read the Bible today, and you can speculate that certain heresies must have arisen in the past and then study the history of Christian doctrine and find them. And that is precisely what has happened. In the history of the Christian church, there have been binatarian doctrines propounded.

Now, that is not the way to read this text. On the other hand, it’s possible to read the text this way, “Now the Spirit is the Lord.” If one looks at the original text, that’s a legitimate rendering of the passage. That is, it’s a possible rendering. It’s a possible grammatical rendering. “Now the Spirit is the Lord.”

Now, what use would the reading of the passage in that way make? Well, it might make this use. Let’s suppose there are people who doubted the deity of the Holy Spirit. But as no doubt about the deity of the Son; no doubt about the deity of the Father, but should we say the Spirit is God? Well, this would be a good text for someone to cite. Now, the Spirit is the Lord, and that would support the deity of the Holy Spirit. And then if we look back in church history for those who propounded this text as support for the deity of the Spirit, could we find them? Well, you could speculate, “Yes, we would be able to find them.” And of course, we are. This text has been used as an evidence of the deity of the Holy Spirit.

What does the text mean? “Now the Lord is the Spirit.” I don’t want to be dogmatic and say this is the only way to look at this text. I just suggest that this is one way. Now, what Paul is talking about, is that there is an identity of essence and power between the second and the third persons of the Trinity. In other words, they are the same being but not the same persons. If there is one God, then it would be possible for us to say, “Now the Lord is the Spirit.” As a matter of fact, Paul calls Jesus Christ, in 1 Corinthians 15, verse 45, a life-giving Spirit. So the same way that the Father and the Son

are one is the way in which the Spirit and the Son are one. They are one in essence, one in power, but they are not one in person. The Spirit is the communicator of all life, truth, power, holiness, glory. And to turn to Christ is to turn by the Spirit to have the veil lifted to possess life. These two, the Son and the Spirit, are one in action. And in that sense, Paul writes, “Now the Lord is the Spirit.” One in action.

He’s been talking about that up above. He said in verse 6, “For example, who also made us adequate as servants of the new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” So with a little bit of question about the ultimate meaning, it’s one of those texts. There are three that I have that I’m going to ask Paul about. We will turn to the rest of the verse.

Notice, he says, “Now the Lord is the Spirit. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” Now, what Paul is saying all along is, that in the new covenant, which he ministers, the Spirit of God replaces the authority of the written external Law of Moses, with the law written in the heart. That is the law of God. Now, he has stated that up above. We don’t have time to go over it again. Thus, as a result of the fact that the new covenant has been replaced by the Spirit’s work in the heart, therefore, there is no bondage to fear. We’re not under the Law of Moses. We have no bondage to fear. We serve in love and in freedom from the Mosaic Law and its condemnation. We are freed from the dominion of sin. We are freed from the power of Satan.

Now, when we say, “Freed from the dominion of sin,” we do not mean we are sinless. But we do mean, that we are freed from the dominion of sin. We do not have to serve sin. There may be times in our lives when we do serve sin. There are times in our lives constantly when we sin. But with the coming of the new covenant is the promise of freedom from the dominion of sin. Paul expounds it in detail in Romans chapter 6 and Romans chapter 7. But, furthermore, we are freed from the bondage of corruption. In Romans 8, Paul tells us, “Not only are we freed from sin. Not only are we freed from the

dominion of sin and the power of Satan, we are freed from the bondage of corruption.”

There is coming a day when we are going to be resurrected.

This body -- I know I look marvelous today. I’m right in the prime of life as you understand, but, nevertheless, there are the signs of age. I had thirty-four more hairs than this, forty years ago. And various other things I might expound on, but I won’t. But as a result of the fact that we all grow old because of what happened in the Garden of Eden, there comes the inevitable signs of corruption. But we are freed from the bondage of corruption. We may die. We just rode down the highway, just about thirty minutes ago, and someone was lying face down. Just over here. Just where the Hillcrest turnoff of LBJ is. Looked like it might be dead. An accident. Martha looked over and said, “He looks like he’s dead.” Lying flat on his face. But for believers, corruption has its end in the glorification of the resurrection when we receive a new body.

So we have been freed, therefore Paul says, “Now the Lord is the Spirit. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” That’s what we celebrate through the Gospel of Christ. We are free. Free from these fears. Free from this dominion, sin and Satan. And we are free from ultimate corruption. We look forward to the resurrection body which the Lord Jesus will give us, who have believed in Jesus Christ.

Now, the apostle comes to the 18th verse and here, talks about our transfiguration. For that word, “transformation,” is the same word used of our Lord’s transfiguration. Now, he says, “We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.” Obviously, this hymn of change, as it has been called by Arthur S. Way, it’s in rhythmic form. Obviously, the apostle is writing out of exalted emotion. I hope, that as you read something like this, you’d know something of the way Paul felt when he wrote it. It’s obvious, he was writing emotionally over the magnificent blessings of the new covenant and the privilege of proclaiming this, which Paul felt.

Now, notice the contrasts and, again, think of Exodus chapter 34. He says, “But we all,” that is, not Moses alone is able to enter into the presence of the Lord, not even apostles only. For Paul’s words -- almost all commentators agree -- go far beyond the apostles here. “But we all.” There is no laity today. There is no such thing as clergy and laity, we’re all priests of God. We all have access into the presence of God. There are differences of spiritual gifts. Some have utterance gifts. Some have nonutterance gifts. Some, who do not utter anything have utterance gifts that should utter -- utter. But, some think they have utterance gifts when they ought to be quiet and use their other gifts, which God has given to them. But we all have gifts, and we all have priestly office. And there is no such thing as clergy and laity. Search the Scriptures through. You won’t find it. That’s why we don’t recognize that distinction in Believer’s Chapel.

Paul says, “We all, with unveiled face.” We’re able to pass through the fence around the law of the Old Testament. We’re able to ascend the mount of vision, higher than Sinai, and we’re able to enter into the presence of the Holy of Holies in spirit and there, converse and have fellowship with the Lord God of heaven. What a privilege.

And so how do we take advantage of our privilege? We get the Wall Street Journal every day, and we spend two or three hours reading through it, or the National Review or whatever economists, or whatever it may be. I look out and I see someone gave me the Economist, and I know he reads it too. So, anyway, that’s how we take advantage of our magnificent privileges. We neglect them. We don’t do what we should do. It’s no wonder we’re not be transformed at the rate that we ought to be being transformed. He says, “With unveiled face.” The Lord, the Spirit has removed the veil. When we, by His Grace, turn to the Lord, the veil was removed, the darkness of alienation is gone. There is no fear of fading glory like Moses. For the glory that we see in the word of God is the glory of the new covenant, which is a glory that increases in its degree of intensity as the years go by.

“Are being transformed.” Let’s use “transfigured.” As he was transfigured on the Mount of Transfiguration, so we progressively are being transfigured through the ministry of the Holy Spirit using the word of God. Moses’ face had skin-deep brightness. You remember three times it’s stated, “the skin of his face shone.” This word *metamorphoo* is a word that involves participation in the *ousia*, or the essence. In other words, it has to do with the change of a person’s essential being. When the Lord Jesus was transfigured, it was not simply the skin of his face, but it was something that touched the whole of his body and person. In other words, what we have here is not imitation, but transformation. We are being transformed. That is, the transformation that is taking place is not simply outward. We’ve got a lot of that in our Christian churches. People who come in, give you a mouthful of teeth and a handshake and you think, “My, what a spiritual person. He can really smile. And a handshake. Spiritual man.” No, no. This is something deeper than that. This is something that touches the inmost being of an individual. We are being transformed through the ministry of the Spirit and the word of God. So we enjoy increasingly deep assimilation to the character of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Many years ago I traveled through New Hampshire. And when I came to Mount Washington -- I think it was, it’s been a long time -- I remember reading in some of the literature that I was reading as I was traveling about Hawthorn’s story of the great stone face. Hawthorn tells the story of a lad who lived in a village below the mountain -- I think he was referring to Mount Washington in New Hampshire -- and there on the mountain was that image of the great stone face. And I looked off, and I remember seeing it about thirty years ago. And this face looked down so solemnly, so seriously upon the people of a small town. And as Hawthorne tells the story, there was a legend that someday, someone was coming to that village that would be the means of great blessing. The story gripped the little boy, and this little boy used to walk out of his village, and he would stand and get a place where he could see the great stone face. And there he would stand or sit and look at the great stone face for hours upon end. The

young boy, the little lad, grew to a young man. He continued to do just that. And when the young lad became a man, he still continued to do it. He loved to go out and look. And all through his life, even to old age, he would stand and look at the great stone face. And one day, when old age had come, he walked down, walked through the village and someone looked at him and exclaimed, “He’s come! The one who’s like the great stone face.” He had become what he had contemplated.

Now psychologists, a few years back -- I have to be careful because there are psychologists in the audience -- back, talked about integrate; that is, that there is a marked tendency for mutual assimilation between persons who love each other, who are continually in each other’s presence, and under each other’s influence. I’m sorry Martha, but nevertheless, that’s true psychologically. [Laughter] And, in fact, to support this, there was photographic society in Geneva, we are told, that took photographs of seventy-eight married couples out of an equal number of adult brothers and sisters. And on careful inspection, it’s been found by them, that the married couples show more likeness between the one member and the other than do brother and sister of the same blood to each other. A lot of sad-looking women in this audience, right at this moment. [Laughter] But we’ve all seen happily married people who have shared life together through many years exhibiting this assimilation, this mutual approximation, this integrate, have we not? It’s a fact that if you spend time in the presence of someone over a lengthy period of time, you will have a measure of assimilation.

Well, this, of course, is not just a psychological thing. What Paul is talking about is the real thing. He is saying, “We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory.” Now, when he says, “into the same image,” that’s a figure derived from the image of God in Genesis chapter 1. That is, the Lord Jesus is the image of God, as we shall read even in this epistle and in Colossians. He’s the image of God. The image of God was marred when man sinned in the Garden of Eden. And it’s the work of sanctification to restore us

to the image of God. Read Colossians chapter 3 in verse 10. So, what Paul is saying is that, as we behold in a mirror, “as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord, we are transformed into the image of God from glory to glory.” In other words, the restoration of the image marred by the fall through the feeding upon the word of God and the beholding, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord, from one stage to another stage. And that is accomplished from the Lord, the Spirit, the ones who are one in substance and power.

Now, I’d like to close because we are four minutes from the end -- according to the clock back there -- on a note of responsibility or opportunity. I didn’t say anything about this word, “beholding,” and I’m not going to try to debate how it should be translated. Just simply to say, I think it should be translated, “beholding.” We, therefore, retain the contrast of the Christian believers with the unbelieving Israelites, and I want to say this, that it’s clear from Paul’s writings that our duty to behold Him, as in a mirror, through the word of God. It’s God’s duty to change us. In other words, as we behold, by His Grace, He performs the transforming ministry.

When I went to theological seminary, Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer was the president of the institution here, and Dr. Chafer had a music degree. He didn’t have any theological degree. He was a self-taught man. As a matter of fact, he led singing for great Bible teachers. But he heard enough Bible teachers in the Bible Conference movement, to learn a little bit of theology. He became interested in it. He had a mind that was suitable to that, but he never lost his interest in music.

And in the chapels of the seminary, in the earlier days, he came out, he had a little music stand -- I have the music stand at my house right now. It was given me by the general manager of the seminary. And he used to come out, and he’d pick up a little wand like a fellow directing a choir and he would walk over to that stand -- they have a great big elaborate pulpit now. It hasn’t improved the preaching one bit, so I’m told [laughter] but, nevertheless, they have this great big pulpit now, but then they just had this little stand -- he would come over, and he’d tap it twice like this. Immediate quiet of the

men. And then they would sing, and Dr. Chafer, usually once a month, would teach then an old classical hymn of the Christian church. And no one -- I didn’t think -- could teach like Dr. Chafer. We really could sing those hymns. In fact, so much so that many people used to come in just for the Chapel services in the area round about, to hear the men sing. I’m sure, not to hear the preaching but, nevertheless, to hear the men sing. Mr. Landrum, who used to write a column in the *Dallas Morning News* used to come in, too, to hear them sing. Well, he all had having a wild ministry. He was about seventy-two years of age in the prime of life, and he would -- he would give little anecdotes about certain hymns, but he also would introduce them in such a way that we felt right at home with them. He occasionally would have us sing, “Take time to be Holy.” And always, he would say, “Now let’s sing the next stanza not, not take time to be holy, but take time to behold Him,” and relate it to this particular passage. That’s my first introduction really to the significance of this. Take time to behold him. How important that is, you Christian people. Take time to behold him. That’s what Martha did, at the feet of our Lord. That’s what those Emmaus disciples learned through experience as they had that Bible conference with the Lord Jesus, the speaker. And when he left, they looked at each other and said, “My, what a theological lesson. Now, I understand about supralapsarianism and infralapsarianism and also understand about representation and various other Christian doctrines.” Well, no, those are important things. We don’t denigrate them at all. But they said, “Did not our hearts burn within us.” What did he do? He just took the Scriptures and opened them up like throwing open the windows, throwing back the sashes and letting the light stream in. And he let the light stream in on the word of God, and they burned. Did not our hearts burn within us? And incidentally, the text says, “Not while we spoke with him.” That doesn’t come by prayer, the burning heart. It doesn’t come by witnessing, the burning heart. It doesn’t come by working around a church, the burning heart. It doesn’t come by coming to a meeting like this and hearing a preacher preach. Listen. They said, “Did not our hearts burn within us while *he* talked with *us*

along the way.” We don’t give him a chance today. We don’t read the word. We don’t really give him a chance to speak to us and give us that burning heart and provide, through the Spirit, the continuous transformation that will make us what many of us would like to be, a fruitful Christian.

“We behold as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord.” What is the glory of the Lord? Well, it, of course, is the glory of his person, the glory of his work, or to sum it up as John does in John chapter 1, full of grace and full of truth. May God help us to do that.

If you’re here today and you’ve never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, your first responsibility is to acknowledge him as the Son of God who died for sinners, to acknowledge your sin, to flee to him and receive the forgiveness of sins and enter into the experience of new covenant ministry, the promise of a living savior who dwells within us to free us from the dominion of sins, from the dominion of Satan, and even ultimately, from the bondage of corruption in the resurrection glory of our Lord. May God help us to glorify him in that way. Let’s stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, how marvelous are these words that the apostle has written which we have not at all plumbed. Lord, by Thy grace, give us new motivation to give ourselves to the contemplation as a mirror of the glory of the Lord. And enable us to experience by Thy grace, the transfiguration that will make us different, more pleasing to Thee, more fruitful in our lives.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.