

FROM GLORY TO GLORY

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor 3:18)

The ultimate aim of God involves “unity” and is ambitious beyond the imagination of men and angels. It is an all encompassing strategy that not only involves uniting the fragmented relationships of earth, but also those in heaven. This is expressly stated in Eph. 1:10: **“That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:”**.

Please consider this brief overview of history:

- Before creation God was all in all.
- With creation came rebellion.
- Jesus was sent to reconcile the rebellious
- All who refuse to be reconciled will be destroyed.
- God will again be all in all (1 Cor. 15:28).

As incredible as it must have seemed to angels, the strategy of God to achieve His goal involves human participation. This decision was made before the world began and has been repeatedly woven into the fabric of human history. God planted the Garden but commissioned man to dress and keep it. God decided to save seed from the flood but commissioned Noah to build the ark and gather the animals. Like a Loving Father helps a little child work with building blocks, the Sovereign of the Universe shepherds us to success in His eternal plan. Even nature helps us to understand. The vine does not bear fruit, the branches do. So the Scriptures are explicit, God has ordained that men would be saved by the foolishness of preaching (1 Cor. 1:21). Jesus appeared to Saul, but Ananias told him what to do to be saved (Acts 22:12 - 16). An angel appeared to Cornelius, but Peter told him what to do to be saved (Acts 10:1 - 48). An angel did not preach to the Philippian jailer, God called Paul to come over into Macedonia and do that! (Acts 16:9, 10). The resurrected Jesus did not appear unto everyone, but to witnesses that were chosen before of God (Acts 10:41). These witnesses were not sent out like orphans to tell the Good News, Jesus went with them each step of the way. The power of His presence in their lives was called “glory”. Jesus said it like this: **“And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them.” (John 17:22)** This “glory” was not static, it was a growing relationship. The indwelling Spirit would help them to progress from one degree of glory to another degree of glory.

Note that His “glory” is associated with the unity of believers. He gave His glory that **“they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.” (John 17:22, 23)**

Division among believers does not reflect God’s glory. It is contrary to God’s nature. God is not the author of confusion but of peace. Division is a sign of carnality and immaturity. Paul, for example, wanted to write to the Corinthians as unto spiritual men, but he could not. They were divided. Their immaturity forced him to feed them milk for they were only “babes” in Christ (1 Cor. 3:1-4).

Conversion is instantaneous, but transformation is not. Our sins can be forgiven immediately, but our transformation takes place from one degree of glory to another. We are not “born again” as spiritual adults, we come into God’s family as babes. We are not to remain infants, however. We are to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pete. 3:18). God does not want us to be children tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, but desires that we all

come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full grown man, even unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13 - 15). This growth, as you know, is from glory to glory.

Love is the most important aspect of our new nature in Christ. It is the ultimate goal of God's commandments (1 Tim. 1:5). It is fruit produced by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22). It is greater than faith and hope (1 Cor. 13:13). It is proof to unbelievers that we are His disciples (John 13:34). John wrote by inspiration: "**Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.**" (1 Jn 4:7-8). This glorious love is further tied to the unity of believers when he continued: "**Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.**" (1 Jn 5:1).

THE GREAT STONE FACE

The life long process by which the glory of God is transferred from laws in stone, to a covenant of the mind and heart, is beautifully illustrated by Nathaniel Hawthorne's story of The Great Stone Face. Here is a brief condensation of that classic work.

High up in the White Hills of New Hampshire a Great Stone Face was formed by nature on the perpendicular side of a mountain. It seemed as if an enormous giant, or a Titan, had sculptured his own likeness on the precipice. There was the broad arch of the forehead, an hundred feet in height; the nose with its long bridge; and the vast lips which, if they could have spoken, would have rolled their thunder accents from one end of the quaint valley to the other. True it is, that if the spectator approached too near, he lost the outline of the gigantic visage and could only discern a heap of ponderous and gigantic rock piled in chaotic ruin one upon another. Retracing his steps, however, the wondrous features would again be seen; and the further he withdrew from them the more like a human face with all its original divinity intact, did they appear until, as it grew dim in the distance, with the clouds and glorified vapour of the mountain clustering about it, the Great Stone Face seemed positively to be alive.

Beneath the shadow of the mountain lived a small boy named Ernest. As a toddling child he listened to his mother relate the strange prophecy passed down from generation to generation by the inhabitants of the valley. They believed that some kind and benevolent person would someday appear who bore the exact likeness of the visage which nature had formed on the mountainside. Little Ernest would clap his hand in childish delight at the thought that someday he might live to see the man of the Great Stone Face.

The days and the years rolled by. Ernest never forgot the message of hope in those prophetic stories. Each day he would stand at sunset to meditate and pray as he gazed into the Great Stone Face.

Soon it was noised abroad that one of the inhabitants of that very valley had marched out into the world to seek his fortune. He was now the world's most wealthy individual. Ships and caravans and countless servants brought him wealth from every part of the then known world. Now it was told that this very man was returning to the valley of his birth. A majestic mansion was being prepared as his residence. Those who knew him as a boy insisted that he looked just like the kind and benevolent face that smiled down from the mountainside. The valley tingled with excitement as the prospects of seeing at last the realization of their dreams. When the man at last appeared the hope of the valley was only short lived. There was a resemblance sure enough, but it was only a shallow and superficial one. Ernest had been watching the Great Stone Face every day of his life, and immediately discerned that the Great Stone Face was not this man of wealth. Soon the people too came to realize that the object of their prophetic hope was yet to come.

When the man of wealth was dead another rumour spread though every home throughout

the countryside. This time the hope of the valley was the illustrious commander of a great army. He too had been born in the valley. He had gone out to seek his fortune, and was now returning the decorated and battle scarred veteran of many foreign wars. His school mates and friends all testified that he resembled the Great Stone Face to a hair. Thousands lined the road as his carriage drew near. Tables were arranged at a clearing in the woods so that the celebrated guest could be welcomed with speeches and toasts. Once again, Ernest was there standing on tiptoe . . . and once again he was disappointed. Again the people had been misled by only a shallow and superficial resemblance to the face on the mountainside. The Great Stone Face was neither the man of wealth, nor the man of war.

The years rolled swiftly by. Others came and went, exciting momentarily the hopes of the villagers. Politicians, poets and others passed their way, but still the prophecies were yet to be fulfilled.

Ernest was advancing in years. His hair was gray. His dedicated and humble life was highly revered by all who knew him., He was recognized as a paragon of wisdom and humility. The people down through the years came to congregate about him at the time of his evening prayer. Daily they would ask him questions and profit from the beauty of his example and advice. The withering hand of time gave certain frustrations to Ernest. The man of the Great Stone Face would have to appear soon or death would rob him of the all-consuming passion of his life.

One evening, as the hour of sunset approached, Ernest made his way through the woods as his custom was. The people followed him to a small nook among the hills with a gray precipice behind. The stern front of stone was relieved by the pleasant foliage of many creeping plants that formed a beautiful tapestry for the naked rock. At a small elevation above the ground, set in a rich framework of verdure, there appeared a niche spacious enough to admit a human figure with freedom for such gestures as spontaneously accompany earnest thought a genuine emotion.

Ernest ascended to this natural pulpit and began to speak. The countenance of this venerable man radiated love. All of his life had been devoted to others and to meditations about The Great Stone Face. The glory of his white hair was diffused about his face. At a distance, but distinctly to be seen, high up in the golden light of the setting sun, appeared the Great Stone Face with hoary mists around it like the white hairs around the brow of Ernest. Its look of grand beneficence seemed to embrace the world.

At that very moment, in sympathy with a thought which he was about to utter, the face of Ernest assumed a grandeur of expression so imbued with benevolence that one of the people, by an irresistible impulse, threw up his arms and shouted, "Behold! Ernest is himself the likeness of The Great Stone Face".

Now prayerfully consider again these inspired words of Scripture: **"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."** (2 Cor 3:18).

May the Spirit of God empower each of us to grow from glory to glory that all of heaven and earth may someday be one in Christ Jesus our Lord!