

4. Seeing the Goldsmith's Face (3Q 2022—In the Crucible With Christ)

Biblical material: Job 23:1-10, Dan. 12:1-10, Matt. 5:16, 25:1-12, 1 Cor. 4:9, Eph. 3:10, 4:11-16.

Quotes

- Love is an image of God, and not a lifeless image, but the living essence of the divine nature which beams full of all goodness. *Martin Luther*
- If God has created us in His image, we have more than returned the compliment. *Voltaire*
- Can it be fancied that Deity ever vindictively, Made in his image a mannikin merely to madden it? *Edgar Allan Poe*
- God is indeed dead. He died of self-horror when He saw the creature He had made in His own image. *Irving Layton*
- Love every man in spite of his falling into sin. Never mind the sins, but remember that the foundation of the man is the same—the image of God. *John of Kronstadt*
- Of all tyrannies, a tyranny exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive... those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end, for they do so with the approval of their own conscience. *C. S. Lewis*

Questions

How are we changed into God's image? How do we know what God's image is like anyway? Why do we "seek God's face?" What role does God play in "refining" us? How are we involved in our own "character-building"? How does our image to the world reflect that of God—what is our role? If we are made in God's image, what went wrong, and how is it fixed?

Bible summary

Job complains that he can't find God so he can present his case before him (Job 23:1-10). Dan. 12:1-10 described the time when Michael will arise. People see God through his followers (Matt. 5:16). Matt. 25:1-12 is the story of the five wise and five foolish girls. "The way I see it, God has put us apostles on display as the last in the line, condemned to die. We have been made a public show before the entire universe, to angels and to human beings." 1 Cor. 4:9 FBV. "God's plan was that through the church the various aspects of his wisdom would be revealed to the rulers and authorities in heaven." Eph. 3:10 FBV. The various members all build up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-16).

Comment

"As Christians, we must never forget that we are in the midst of a cosmic drama. The great controversy between Christ and Satan is unfolding all around us. The battle takes many shapes and is manifested in many ways. And though much is hidden, we can understand that, as followers of Christ, we have a part to play in this drama and we can bring honor to Christ through our lives." (Sunday's lesson). *Question is—what is this battle over, and how is it won?*

The Psalmist frequently makes reference to seeking God. Specifically seeking God's face: "My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek." "Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always. (Psalm 27:8, 105:4 NIV). We search for the face because the face tells us most about the person. We want to try to look beneath the surface and discover what the person is really like. We look for the smile, the twinkling eyes, the laughter lines—and hope we do not find a frown. In the case of this lesson study, we want to see who this is— especially if we see God as the one who is ratcheting up the heat!

Hebrews 12:6 does tell us that whoever the Lord loves he disciplines. Who is this "chastening" or "disciplining" God? Our answers will strongly influence our theology, our way of relating to God and to others. Just think of England's Queen Mary, who justified her burning of

religious “heretics” on the basis of her view of God: “As the souls of heretics are to be forever burning in hell, there can be nothing more proper than for me to imitate the Divine vengeance by burning them on earth.”

Our role is summed up very differently in Scripture. We are to represent the face of God to the world: “For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men.” (1 Cor. 4:9 NIV). God is made visible in those who claim to follow him—both positively and negatively. So what we say about this “goldsmith” and what he is doing is very relevant. Maybe he is the one stoking up the fire, as Queen Mary said!

Similarly in Ephesians 3:10 NIV: “His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms...” God wishes that through the church—you and me—the on-looking universe sees the universe-wide wisdom of God! Now that really is something worth thinking about!

This is God’s answer to the charges of the Devil, for as C.S. Lewis observed, “Of all tyrannies, a tyranny exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive... those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end, for they do so with the approval of their own conscience.” God rejects such reasoning—yet this is exactly the way the Devil thinks. How truly evil to think that you are doing good through inflicting torture. We ban such concepts in international human rights documents, yet some think it’s OK for God to do so!

On the contrary, we reveal God: “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3:18 NIV. How sad to be one of the five foolish virgins and be told, “I don’t know you.” We can only reveal the trustworthy God of grace and love if we truly know him...

Ellen White Comments

To those who receive Him, He gives power to become the sons of God, that at last God may receive them as His, to dwell with Him throughout eternity. If, during this life, they are loyal to God, they will at last “see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads.” Revelation 22:4. And what is the happiness of heaven but to see God? What greater joy could come to the sinner saved by the grace of Christ than to look upon the face of God and know Him as Father? {Mar 316}

As they [the Jewish rulers] gaze upon His glory, there flashes before their minds the memory of the Son of Man clad in the garb of humanity. They remember how they treated Him, how they refused Him, and pressed close to the side of the great apostate. The scenes of Christ’s life appear before them in all their clearness. All He did, all He said, the humiliation to which He descended to save them from the taint of sin, rises before them in condemnation...

Again they hear the voice of Pilate, saying, “I find in him no fault at all.” They see the shameful scene in the judgment hall, when Barabbas stood by the side of Christ, and they had the privilege of choosing the guiltless One. They hear again the words of Pilate, “Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?” They hear the response, “Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas.” To the question of Pilate, “What shall I do then with Jesus?” the answer comes, “Let him be crucified.”

Again they see their Sacrifice bearing the reproach of the cross. They hear the loud, triumphant tones tauntingly exclaim, “If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.” “He saved others; himself he cannot save.”

Now they behold Him not in the garden of Gethsemane, not in the judgment hall, not on the cross of Calvary. The signs of His humiliation have passed away, and they look upon the face of God—the face they spit upon, the face which priests and rulers struck with the palms of their hands. Now the truth in all its vividness is revealed to them. {Mar 293}