**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**2 THESSALONIANS-001**. **CHRIST GLORIFIED IN GLORIFIED MAN by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"He shall come to be glorified in His saints; and to be admired in all them that believe."*

*2 Thessalonians 1:10*

The two Epistles to the Thessalonians, which are the Apostle's earliest letters, both give very great prominence to the thought of the second coming of our Lord to judgment. In the immediate context we have that coming described, with circumstances of majesty and of terror. He shall be revealed ... with the angels of His power. Flaming fire shall herald His coming; vengeance shall be in His hands, punishment shall follow His sentence; everlasting destruction shall be the issue of evil confronted with the face of the Lord--for so the words in the previous verse rendered the presence of the Lord might more accurately be translated.

And all these facts and images are, as it were, piled up in one half of the Apostle's sky, as in thunderous lurid masses; and on the other side there is the pure blue and the peaceful sunshine. For all this terror and destruction, and flashing fire, and punitive vengeance come to pass in the day when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be wondered at in all them that believe.

There be the two halves--the aspect of that day to those to whom it is the revelation of a stranger, and the aspect of that day to those to whom it is the glorifying of Him who is their life.

**I. The remarkable words which I have taken for my text suggest to us, first of all, some thoughts about that striking expression that Christ is glorified in the men who are glorified in Christ.**

If you look on a couple of verses you will find that the Apostle returns to this thought, and expresses in the clearest fashion the reciprocal character of that glorifying of which he has been speaking. The name of our Lord Jesus Christ, says he, may be glorified in you, and ye in Him.

So, then, glorifying has a double meaning. There is a double process involved. It means either to make glorious or to manifest as being glorious. And men are glorified in the former sense in Christ, that Christ in them may, in the latter sense, be glorified. He makes them glorious by imparting to them of the lustrous light and flashing beauty of His own perfect character, in order that that light, received into their natures, and streaming out at last conspicuously manifest from their redeemed perfectness, may redound to the praise and the honour, before a whole universe, of Him who has thus endued their weakness with His own strength, and transmuted their corruptibility into His own immortality. We are glorified in Christ in some partial, and, alas! sinfully fragmentary, manner here; we shall be so perfectly in that day. And when we are thus glorified in Him, then--wondrous thought!--even we shall be able to manifest Him as glorious before some gazing eyes, which without us would have seen Him as less fair. Dim, and therefore great and blessed thoughts about what men may become are involved in such words. The highest end, the great purpose of the Gospel and of all God's dealings with us in Christ Jesus is to make us like our Lord. As we have borne the image of the earthly we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. We, beholding the glory, are changed into the glory.

And that glorifying of men in Christ, which is the goal and highest end of Christ's Cross and passion and of all God's dealings, is accomplished only because Christ dwells in the men whom He glorifies. We read words applying to His relation to His Father which need but to be transferred to our relation to Him, in order to teach us high and blessed things about this glorifying. The Father dwelt in Christ, therefore Christ was glorified by the indwelling divinity, in the sense that His humanity was made partaker of the divine glory, and thereby He glorified the divinity that dwelt in Him, in the sense that He conspicuously displayed it before the world as worthy of all admiration and love.

And, in like manner, as is the Son with the Father, participant of mutual and reciprocal glorification, so is the Christian with Christ, glorified in Him and therefore glorifying Him.

What may be involved therein of perfect moral purity, of enlarged faculties and powers, of a bodily frame capable of manifesting all the finest issues of a perfect spirit, it is not for us to say. These things are great, being hidden; and are hidden because they are great. But whatever may be the lofty heights of Christlikeness to which we shall attain, all shall come from the indwelling Lord who fills us with His own Spirit.

And, then, according to the great teaching here, this glorified humanity, perfected and separated from all imperfection, and helped into all symmetrical unfolding of dormant possibilities, shall be the highest glory of Christ even in that day when He comes in His glory and sits upon the throne of His glory with His holy angels with Him. One would have thought that, if the Apostle wanted to speak of the glorifying of Jesus Christ, he would have pointed to the great white throne, His majestic divinity, the solemnities of His judicial office; but he passes by all these, and says, Nay! the highest glory of the Christ lies here, in the men whom He has made to share His own nature.

The artist is known by his work. You stand in front of some great picture, or you listen to some great symphony, or you read some great book, and you say, This is the glory of Raphael, Beethoven, Shakespeare. Christ points to His saints, and He says, Behold My handiwork! Ye are my witnesses. This is what I can do.

But the relation between Christ and His saints is far deeper and more intimate than simply the relation between the artist and his work, for all the flashing light of moral beauty, of intellectual perfectness which Christian men can hope to receive in the future is but the light of the Christ that dwells in them, and of whose fulness all they have received. Like some poor vapour, in itself white and colourless, which lies in the eastern sky there, and as the sun rises is flushed up into a miracle of rosy beauty, because it has caught the light amongst its flaming threads and vaporous substance, so we, in ourselves pale, ghostly, colourless as the mountains when the Alpine snow passes off them, being recipient of an indwelling Christ, shall blush and flame in beauty. Then shall the righteous blaze forth like the sun in my Father's kingdom. Or, rather they are not suns shining by their own light, but moons reflecting the light of Christ, who is their light.

And perchance some eyes, incapable of beholding the sun, may be able to look undazzled upon the sunshine in the cloud, and some eyes that could not discern the glory of Christ as it shines in His face as the sun shineth in its strength, may not be too weak to behold and delight in the light as it is reflected from the face of His servants. At all events, He shall come to be glorified in the saints whom He has made glorious.

**II. And now, notice again, out of these full and pregnant words the other thought, that this transformation of men is the great miracle and marvel of Christ's power.**

He shall come to be admired--which word is employed in its old English signification, to be wondered at--in all them that believe. So fair and lovely is He that He needs but to be recognised for what He is in order to be glorified. So great and stupendous are His operations in redeeming love that they need but to be beheld to be the object of wonder. His name shall be called Wonderful, and wonderfully the energy of His redeeming and sanctifying grace shall then have wrought itself out to its legitimate end. There you get the crowning marvel of marvels, and the highest of miracles. He did wonderful works upon earth which we rightly call miraculous,--things to be wondered at--but the highest of all His wonders is the wonder that takes such material as you and me, and by such a process, and on such conditions, simply because we trust Him, evolves such marvellous forms of beauty and perfectness from us. He is to be wondered at in all them that believe.

Such results from such material! Chemists tell us that the black bit of coal in your grate and the diamond on your finger are varying forms of the one substance. What about a power that shall take all the black coals in the world and transmute them into flashing diamonds, prismatic with the reflected light that comes from His face, and made gems on His strong right hand? The universe will wonder at such results from such material.

And it will wonder, too, at the process by which they were accomplished, wondering at the depth of His pity revealed all the more pathetically now from the great white throne which casts such a light on the Cross of Calvary; wondering at the long, weary path which He who is now declared to be the Judge humbled Himself to travel in the quest of these poor sinful souls whom He has redeemed and glorified. The miracle of miracles is redeeming love; and the high-water mark of Christ's wonders is touched in this fact, that out of men He makes saints; and out of saints He makes perfect likenesses of Himself.

**III. And now a word about what is not expressed, but is necessarily implied in this verse, viz., the spectators of this glory.**

The Apostle does not tell us what eyes they are before which Christ is thus to be glorified. He does not summon the spectators to look upon this wonderful exhibition of divine judgment and divine glory; but we may dwell for a moment on the thought that to whomsoever in the whole universe Christ at that great day shall be manifested, to them, whoever they be, will His glory, in His glorified saints, be a revelation beyond what they have known before. Every eye shall see Him. And whatsoever eyes look upon Him, then on His throne, they shall behold the attendant courtiers and the assessors of His judgment, and see in them the manifestation of His own lustrous light.

We read that unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places shall be made known in future days, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God. We hear that, after the burst of praise which comes from redeemed men standing around the throne, every creature in the earth and in the heavens, and in the sea and all that are therein were heard saying, Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

We need not speculate, it is better not to enter into details, but this, at least, is clear, that that solemn winding up of the long, mysterious, sad, blood and tear-stained history of man upon the earth is to be an object of interest and a higher revelation of God to other creatures than those that dwell upon the earth; and we may well believe that for that moment, at all events, the centre of the universe, which draws the thoughts of all thinking, and the eyes of all seeing, creatures to it, shall be that valley of judgment wherein sits the Man Christ and judges men, and round Him the flashing reflectors of His glory in the person of His saints.

**IV. And lastly, look at men's path to this glorifying.**

He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be wondered at in all them that believed; as that word ought to be rendered. That is to say, they who on earth were His, consecrated and devoted to Him, and in some humble measure partaking even here of His reflected beauty and imparted righteousness--these are they in whom He shall be glorified. They who believed; poor, trembling, struggling, fainting souls, that here on earth, in the midst of many doubts and temptations, clasped His hand; and howsoever tremulously, yet truly put their trust in Him, these are they in whom He shall be wondered at.

The simple act of faith knits us to the Lord. If we trust Him He comes into our hearts here, and begins to purify us, and to make us like Himself; and, if that be so, and we keep hold of Him, we shall finally share in His glory.

What a hope, what an encouragement, what a stimulus and exhortation to humble and timorous souls there is in that great word, In all them that believed! Howsoever imperfect, still they shall be kept by the power of God unto that final salvation. And when He comes in His glory, not one shall be wanting that put their trust in Him.

It will take them all, each in his several way reflecting it, to set forth adequately the glory. As many diamonds round a central light, which from each facet give off a several ray and a definite colour; so all that circle round Christ and partaking of His glory, will each receive it, transmit it, and so manifest it in a different fashion. And it needs the innumerable company of the redeemed, each a several perfectness, to set forth all the fulness of the Christ that dwells in us.

So, dear brethren, beginning with simple faith in Him, partially receiving the beauty of His transforming spirit, seeking here on earth by assimilation to the Master in some humble measure to adorn the doctrine and to glorify the Christ, we may hope that each blackness will be changed into brightness, our limitations done away with, our weakness lifted into rejoicing strength; and that we shall be like Him, seeing Him as He is, and glorified in Him, shall glorify Him before the universe.

You and I will be there. Choose which of the two halves of that sky that I was speaking about in my introductory remarks will be your sky; whether He shall be revealed, and the light of His face be to you like a sword whose flashing edge means destruction, or whether the light of His face shall fall upon your heart because you love Him and trust Him, like the sunshine on the Alpine snow, lifting it to a more lustrous whiteness, and tingeing it with an ethereal hue of more than earthly beauty, which no other power but an indwelling Christ can give. He shall come with everlasting destruction from the face; and He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be wondered at in all them that believed. Do you choose which of the two shall be your portion in that day.