



June 2011 - *The Full Treatment*

Most of us will be aware that God's chief purpose for us is that we glorify him and enjoy him forever. However, we may not be aware of how God brings this to pass in our lives. Broadly speaking, he does it through two great operations of the Holy Spirit. In the first, the Spirit draws us to faith in his Son; in the second, the Spirit fashions us into the likeness of his Son. C.S. Lewis advised people to be utterly realistic about what this involves and count the cost:

I find a good many people have been bothered by...Our Lord's words, 'Be ye perfect'. Some people seem to think this means 'Unless you are perfect, I will not help you'; and as we cannot be perfect, then, if He meant that, our position is hopeless. But I do not think He did mean that. I think He meant 'The only help I will give is help to become perfect. You may want something less: but I will give you nothing less.'

Let me explain. When I was a child I often had toothache, and I knew that if I went to my mother she would give me something which would deaden the pain for that night and let me get to sleep. But I did not go to my mother—at least, not till the pain became very bad. And the reason I did not go was this. I did not doubt she would give me the aspirin; but I knew she would also do something else. I knew she would take me to the dentist next morning. I could not get what I wanted out of her without getting something more, which I did not want. I wanted immediate relief from pain: but I could not get it without having my teeth set permanently right. And I knew those dentists: I knew they started fiddling about with all sorts of other teeth which had not yet begun to ache. They would not let sleeping dogs lie, if you gave them an inch they took an ell.

Now, if I may put it that way, Our Lord is like the dentists. If you give Him an inch, He will take an ell. Dozens of people go to Him to be cured of some one particular sin which they are ashamed of (like masturbation or physical cowardice) or which is obviously spoiling daily life (like bad temper or drunkenness). Well, He will cure it all right: but He will not stop there. That may be all you asked; but if once you call Him in, He will give you the full treatment.¹

The "full treatment," as Lewis calls it, is the process of being conformed to the image and likeness of Jesus Christ, who was the firstborn or prototype of what we shall one day be. Throughout our days on earth God steadily works to "perfect" us; that is, to rid us of sins and selfishness, transforming us from one degree of glory to another and moving us toward the perfect maturity we see in Christ. This encompasses things great and small, things easy and things hard, as he works to shape and mold us into Christlikeness in preparation for life with him in the world to come. Have you embraced the full treatment? This is God's plan for each of his children, and it is a glorious plan indeed. He will settle for nothing less, and for that we should be glad!

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:18 (NIV)

¹ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Touchstone), pp 173-174.