

# The Brown Street Beacon

*"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,*

*holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)*



Volume 2

October 5, 2014

Number. 35

## Drawing Near to God

Albert Dickson

**M**any have come up with their own ways of drawing near to God. For example, going to the ocean and listening to the waves on the beach. Others have thought by flying in an airplane or going into space are ways of drawing near to the Lord. In the fourth chapter of the book of James, we are given some instructions on how to draw closer to the God who created the heavens and earth.

First, as James told the brethren of the dispersion, *"cleanse your hands, you sinner..."* (James 4:8).

Hands carry the idea of deeds. Everyone must do this because we "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). We must cleanse ourselves from the ungodly things we have done. However, those of us who have initially taken care of this, Christians, as we examine our lives and see our shortcomings, we need to repent of our deeds of negligence, apathy and irreverent behavior. We cleanse ourselves by going to our Father, confessing our sins, with the commitment and determination to change and follow His ways, *"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:8-9).

For those who are not Christians, the gospel of Christ must be first obeyed. Why? It is not until one comes in contact with the blood of Christ that one can cleanse their hands, i.e. be forgiven of sin.

*"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace..."* (Ephesians 1:7)

We come in contact with His blood when we are immersed (baptized) in water by faith in Christ.

*"Peter {said} to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.... So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:38-39, 41; cf. 22:16).*

Second, *"purify your hearts, you double-minded"* (James 4:8). We must have singleness of mind towards God. He demands total commitment. He will not take anything less (Matthew 10:37-

39).

In the Law God gave to Israel through Moses, He made it known to them that He was to be first in their lives, they were to put no other gods before Him (Exodus 20:3). Under the New Covenant in Christ, it is no different.

*“He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything” (Colossians 1:18).*

Jesus taught that such a purified heart would see God (Matt 5:8).

Third, we are to *humble ourselves in the presence of God* (James 4:10). To humble ourselves means to submit to His directives, to obey His will. Without humility, we will not do what we need to do as God’s people nor as a sinner seeking salvation. Humility and submission are connected. Therefore, to submit to God is to humble ourselves to Him and His will taught in His word. As we obey, we are brought closer to Him. The apostle Peter wrote, *“...seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence”* (2 Peter 1:3). Also, we must understand that God is aware of us all. The Hebrew writer said, *“And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and lay bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”* (Hebrews 4:13). We cannot escape His awareness of us whether by thought or secret deeds. Thus, He waits for us to draw near to Him by our obedience to His instructions. For if we draw near to Him, He will draw near to us. We must humble ourselves in His presence.

Finally, take one day at a time. Jesus teaches us not worry about tomorrow (Matthew 6:34). Each new day presents opportunity for us to grow and be what God would have us to be. Thus, we must wake each day realizing who we are and our purpose. Take every chance to talk with the Lord for strength and wisdom to recognize the opportunities to serve when they come our way. *“...pray without ceasing... (1 Thessalonians 5:17). “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God”* (Philippians 4:6). Encouraging our brethren to continue in faith and encourage the sinner to change his life of sin to a life of godliness in Christ Jesus. The more we do this, the more we will become like Him, bringing us closer to Him.

## **Conforming To The Image of Christ**

**by Albert Dickson**

**T**he goal and desire of each Christian is to conform to the image of Christ. This means that the Lord and His word are at the center of our studies and our lives. Without this, we would be unable to please Him and give Him the praise He deserves. Paul said of himself and all those who have obeyed the gospel, “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.” (2 Corinthians 3:17-18) The ultimate praise that we can give the Lord is to conform to the image of His glory.

### **What is Image?**

The term image means, “to be like, to resemble.” It “always assumes a prototype,” in the case of the Christian, it is the Lord. He is the object of which we not only resemble but also draw our char-

acter. Therefore, when we learn and apply the ways of Christ in our lives, we become like Him. This was what the Hebrew writer said of Christ. "And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power..." (Hebrews 1:3). Peter said that He provided "everything that pertains to life and godliness" in order for us to partake of His divine nature (2 Peter 1:3-4).

### **What The Image of Christ Is Not!**

It is not an image about money, or prestige. Jesus was born in a stable in the city of David known as Bethlehem (Matthew 2:1; Luke 2:4; 7:42). It is not an image about fitting in with the politics of the day. In many instances, Jesus chastised the Jewish leaders for their hypocrisy and their self-righteousness (Matthew 23:13-33). Nor is it an image that conforms to the prejudices of society. Many of the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. It was Jesus who, when confronted by the Samaritan woman, taught her about the true worshippers that God seeks (John 4:7-27).

In another incident, Jesus was eating at the home of a Pharisee named Simon. A woman entered who was considered the lowest of women because of her many sins. However, it was Jesus who forgave her of her sins. What Jesus did changed this woman's life (Luke 7:36-50). What if Jesus had conformed to the prejudices, politics, and attitudes of His day? What if He had shunned the hurting, the sin sick, and Gentiles who sought His help? What kind of Savior would He have been?

### **The Image of Christ**

The image of Christ is an image of character and conduct that pleases God. Jesus said, "And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him." (John 8:29). That is the image each Christian is to have. An image that pleases God by being obedient to the instructions He gave. The apostle John addressing Christians during his day said, "We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error (1 John 4:6).

It is an image that is controlled by the love of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:14-17). This kind of an image does not conform to politics or prejudices of our day. It seeks to teach every man God's will because everyone has a soul that needs saving. It is not easy; there are many negative attitudes for Christians to struggle through. However, Christ's love drives us through those negative attitudes to help souls come to know Him as the Savior of us all.

Even though the image of Christ is not about money or prestige, some of us may be blessed with these temporal things. However, we are to use these blessings to glorification of the Lord, conformed to His image of humility. Paul told the Christians in Philippi, to have the same attitude that was of Christ. Although He is God, as a man He humbled Himself to even death on a cross (Philippians 2:6-8). As Paul told Timothy the hope of the faithful, we are to adhere to the same advice. Our hope is not to be in "the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy." (1 Timothy 6:17)

We can conclude that we are to conform to the image of Christ no matter in what walk of life we find ourselves. As we all work together to that end, then we will achieve the objective of praising God.

Friend, if we can help you in your obedience to Christ, please let us know. Come and let us sit down and reason together from the Word of God to see if we are conforming to the glorious image of our Lord.