

Be Ye Transformed

By: Jim Hohnberger

The central theme of the Bible, the theme about which every other in the whole book clusters is the redemption plan, the transformation of the character of fallen man into the character of a risen Christ. Is this really possible? And if so what is my part in this Divine-human relationship?

Recently, while conducting a series of meetings, I was brought in contact with a man that was quite distraught with his Christian experience. He had been raised in a Christian home, he believed that the Bible was the word of God and had accepted that his salvation was found in Christ alone. But yet, that transformation of his character into the character of Christ was far from reality. He found himself in almost every trying situation giving way to the flesh rather than the spirit of God. Why wasn't his experience like that of the apostles Peter, James and John after Calvary? Why hadn't God worked on his behalf to not only save him from the penalty of sin, but also from its power? Was there something God had failed to do for him, that he had done for others

such as the apostle Paul? Or perhaps, was there something missing on his part? Perhaps his faith was not a genuine faith, a faith that works by love and purifies the soul. Could it be that he didn't understand what his part was in this divine-human relationship?

After some discussion it was quite evident that he didn't understand how it was that this transformation takes place on a practical level. That once the individual has through faith in Christ accepted the free gift of salvation, **genuine faith** always and continually brings a response of love. A response of love, this is our part of the equation in the science of salvation. God has been wooing this man drawing him to Christ, he was not inclining his will to the will of God.

Are we resisting the grace of Christ? When God awakens us early in the morning and bids us to "come unto **me** all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28. Does our faith awaken, from a response of love and then rise to meet with our Saviour and

there find our strength and help for the days duties and trials? Or is our faith a slumbering faith, one that is asleep in the flesh rather than awake in the spirit? Christ found His strength in meeting with His Father at the very beginning of each and every day. "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place and there prayed." Mark 1:35. This is the example of genuine faith, a faith which recognizes its need of a power outside of itself to sustain and keep oneself throughout the day. This was the example of Christ. We are told that, "As a man He supplicated the throne of God till His humanity was **charged** with a heavenly current that should **connect** humanity with divinity. His experience is to be ours." DA 363. Is it your experience? If not, is it no wonder that you have a floundering experience. We are all to follow the example of Christ and by a response of love meet in fellowship with Him every morning of our life and there so connect with our source of life and strength that we can and will go out into the day with an abiding trust in the **one** mighty to save.

Dear friends, once we have connected with Christ on our knees, we need to remain connected with Him on our feet. Throughout the day Christ will continually call for the surrender of our thoughts, words and actions. Here is where we need to watch and pray constantly, that we will not choose to let go of Him and give way to the flesh. This is where so many Christians flounder again and again. The apostle Paul in his epistle to the Galatians cautions us, "Are ye so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Galatians 3:3.

In other words, if God has called for the surrender of our lives and we have cooperated by a response of love through the Spirit, will He not also continue to call to us throughout our entire day by His Spirit? See Isaiah 30:21. Will not the Spirit impress upon our conscience, which has been enlightened by His word, which thoughts are safe to think (See Philippians 4:8) and which

thoughts we must choose to resist? See James 1:14, 15. Will not the Spirit of the Lord impress us to be "Swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." James 1:19. Yes, God is faithful to remind us for he says, "Lo I am with you always." Matthew 28:20.

God promises to guide us through every day of our life and every hour of that day. But we have a part to play. We must be willing to be made willing. We must be willing to choose between the voice of the flesh and the voice of His spirit. Our choice, motivated by a response of love through genuine faith, will determine whether we fight against God or against the flesh. The apostle Paul was not all unlike us. When God called for a surrender of his life on the road to Damascus, he had a choice to make. He could resist God and reap the flesh or he could resist the flesh and receive the spirit. His response is one which we all need to enter into continually throughout our entire life and day. It is found in Acts 9:6, "Lord what wilt Thou have me to do?" Isn't that a beautiful response, simple to understand yet transforming in application? As Paul responded to the Spirit, his character was transformed into the character of Christ. He was no longer seen as Saul, the man in the flesh, but as Paul, the man in the Spirit.

So it is to be with us. As God calls for the surrender of our life to Him and continues to ask us to die to self, daily, see I Corinthians 15:31, we find ourselves in the process of transformation from living in the flesh to living in the Spirit. For the Spirit always encourages us to, "Turn not aside from following the Lord but serve the Lord with all your heart." I Samuel 12:20. As we respond to this call of grace upon our hearts, God restores us into His image. This is what is meant in Philippians 2:12,13 by; "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

God does not bid us fear that He will fail to fulfill His promises, that His patience will wea-

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ry, or His compassion be found wanting. We are to fear lest our will shall not be held in subjection to Christ's will, lest our hereditary and cultivated traits of character shall control our life. We are to fear lest self shall interpose between our soul and the great Master Worker. Fear lest self-will shall mar the high purpose that through us God desires to accomplish. Fear to trust to our own strength, fear to withdraw our hand from the hand of Christ and attempt to walk life's pathway without His abiding presence.

Friends this is a healthy fear, a fear that puts our dependency in Christ and not in self. Here besetting sins are overcome; evil thoughts are not allowed in the mind; evil habits are purged from the soul temple. The tendencies which have been biased in a wrong direction are turned in a right direction. Wrong dispositions and feelings are changed, new principles of actions are supplied and there is born a new creature in Christ Jesus our Lord. An entire transformation of our character takes place, day by day, as we consent to say **yes** to God and **no** to self.

It's just that simple. "Subjection to God is restoration to ones self." That's the science of salvation from the power of sin as well as its penalty. This is not works friends, this is genuine faith, faith that works by love and purifies the soul. It is the faith of the martyrs, the faith of the apostles and the faith of the reformers. They all consented to let God have them fully, completely and utterly. It is the faith that is willing at all times and in all places to say, "Not my will, but Thine, be done." Luke 22:42. And when we consent to let God so have us, that we will even allow all our thoughts, words and actions to be filtered through Christ before they find expression, then truly we shall be transformed.

Oh friends, lets make our "calling and election sure". II Peter 1:10. We are elected to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling by continually saying yes to God and no to self. We are elected to put on the armor, to fight the good fight of faith. We are elected to use the means God has placed within our reach to war against every unholy lust, while Satan is playing the game of life for our souls. We are elected to

watch unto prayer, to search the scriptures and to avoid entering into temptation. We are elected to have faith continually. We are elected to be obedient to every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, that we may be, not a **hearer only** but a **doer** of the word. This is Bible election! This is genuine faith that cooperates at all times and in all places with Divine grace.

This life of absolute dependence, absolute trust, absolute surrender which brings entire transformation is available to us all today. Now! Friends, we have heretofore lived a life to our own liking. Will you not begin today, by the grace of heaven, to live a life fully and completely given to the Lordship of Jesus Christ? Will you not now choose a life in which Christ shall be All and in All? Colossians 3:11. For this is what it means to **"Be Ye Transformed"**. Rom 12:2

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