

*TRANSFORMED IN MIND.*

THE subject for our consideration this evening is “Being transformed by the renewing of our minds.” The connection in which this stands, the dear Christian friends know: “Be ye not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” As the redeemed of the Lord, it becomes us continually to keep before us, that our own salvation is not the ultimate end, but the glory of God. This we have never to lose sight of; and in order that we may do our part as witnesses for God in this world, it is necessary that we should not be conformed to the world, but transformed. Without this it is entirely impossible to be witnesses for God in a right way. We may think we do this and we do another thing to the glory of God, and yet just only in so far as we are not conformed to this world, but are transformed, are we truly witnesses for God.

Now as we have been bought by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ; as God in Christ has done so much; as that precious and adorable Lord Jesus Christ has done so much for us, it well becomes us that we, the sons of the Most High, should not wait for the glory, in order then to aim at being conformed to the image of God’s dear Son (though then it will be perfect conformity to that Blessed One), but as far as in us is to aim at it day by day already in this world. Now then, the first thing that we have to keep before us is just this; that it is the will of the Lord that we should be transformed.

Another point for our comfort is that this is possible—that it can be done through the renewing of our minds. The latter we have to keep as much before us as the former.

NOT DOING OUR OWN WILL.

First, then, it is the will of the Lord that we should be transformed. In our natural state we all go the way of the world—that is, we go our own way. We may be amiable people in the eyes of our fellow men, we may be honest and moral, and every one may speak well of us even before our conversion; but yet we go our own way, and in this state it is entirely impossible to please God, because we set Him not before us. We do not what we do—to the praise of His name. We use our bodily strength, our mental powers, our talents and gifts, just as we please, in order to gratify ourselves. We do not use them to the praise and honour and glory of God. We do not use our profession, our business, our money for the Lord, but we use them just as it pleases us, because we go naturally our own way; and that is just how we dishonour the Lord, how all natural men, through their living to themselves and not living for God, do dishonour God,

cannot but dishonour God, and until we are renewed by the Holy Ghost things will go on in this way. All the resolutions that we may make to be in a different state will not alter the case.

“Day by day we go astray,  
Day by day we go our own way,  
As sheep astray.”

That is just what dishonours God, because we set Him not before our eyes. We do not live for Him: our time is not given to Him. Why? Because the heart is not given to Him. Our talents are not given to Him, because the heart is not given to Him. We go our own way. We set Him not before us, and therefore we live to ourselves, we please ourselves; and thus it will go on, until we are convinced that we have been sinners needing a Saviour, and until, as poor, lost, ruined, guilty sinners, we have put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and have accepted salvation through His atoning sacrifice alone. In this way we are by the power of the Holy Ghost renewed. In this way we obtain spiritual life, and then begins the possibility of being transformed. Before that, it is impossible to be transformed, because we are dead in trespasses and sins. We are without spiritual life. Before the Holy Ghost has been given to us, and has renewed us through the belief of the gospel, we have no power to please God and to live for God, but we shall go on, to a greater or less degree, only to be conformed to the world, and to live to ourselves. So, then, should any be present who, up to this time, have been conformed to the world, and who have, nevertheless, a longing to be transformed, then let me say to such, dear friends, the only way to be transformed is, by the reception of the gospel, by believing the gospel, so that, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are born again: for until we receive the gospel, until we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, every one is dead in trespasses and sins; every one lives to himself; more or less, every one is conformer to the world, and must be, and cannot possibly be transformed from the world. And, therefore, since the only way to be transformed is to receive the gospel, this is the first deeply-important point; for by this the foundation is laid, and only in this way the foundation can be laid.

But whilst thus the beginning is made, it is only the beginning, and we should not be content with the beginning; but our hearty desire should be this, that not only for a few months after we have received the gospel we may be in some little degree transformed, but that thus it be month after month, year after year, ten years one after the other (if life is prolonged, and the Lord Jesus tarrieth); so that persons who knew us ten, twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years ago as

disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, and see us ten, twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years after, still find us in just the same way. Now, in order that it may be thus; in order that we may show our love and gratitude to our heavenly Father by being witnesses for Him in this evil world, and not waiting till the time of glory comes, and satisfying ourselves with saying that “I shall one day be conformed to the image of God’s dear Son,” there must be

PROGRESS IN THE DIVINE LIFE.

In order that already in a goodly measure it may be the case in this life, I desire to throw out a few hints, by the attending to which and the blessing of God we may make progress in the Divine life, and become more and more conformed to the image of God’s dear Son. We have not to forget that the eyes of the world are upon us, that they want to see whether there is a difference between us and themselves—whether our lives witness for God, or whether they do not. Now, in order that it may be so, that more and more we aim after conformity to the image of God’s dear Son, and that already in this life, in some measure at least, we make progress in this conformity to the image of God’s dear Son, it appears to me, in the first place, a matter of deep moment, that day by day we seek to keep before us what we have been redeemed from, and what we have been redeemed unto, just in the measure in which it is kept before our minds that once we belonged to the power of darkness, that once we were the slaves of the wicked one, that once we were the children of the devil, and that we have been brought out of this state, that we have been transplanted into the kingdom of God’s dear Son, and that we are no longer dead in trespasses and in sins, as once was the case, and that we are no longer the slaves of the world and our own wicked, evil hearts—so shall we be constrained by love and gratitude to aim at this, that we shall seek increasingly to be conformed to the image of God’s dear Son.

WHAT WE ARE SAVED UNTO.

And, then, not only to keep before us what we have been redeemed from, but what we have been redeemed unto. All our sins forgiven—already, now; justified before God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; begotten again, children of God for time and eternity, and as such, the heirs of God and the joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ, ere long we shall reign with Jesus, ere long we shall sit with Him on the throne, and with Him judge the world—yea, Satan even, and the fallen angels. I say the more this is kept before us, that we shall spend a happy eternity in glory, together with the Lord Jesus Christ, that our own eyes

shall see that blessed One, that our own hands shall be allowed to touch that blessed One, and that, in seeing Him as He is, we shall be like Him, not only obtaining the glorified body, but be perfectly free for ever and ever from every sin—the more this is kept before us, the more shall we be constrained in this world already to seek the glory of God.

Further, we have to aim at this, that we keep it before us, that it is the will of the Lord that the human creature should not be happy while walking in separation from God. It seems to me a matter of deep moment that this should be a settled conviction in our minds, that what God has determined is, that the human creature shall be wretched and miserable going his own way, and that peace and joy in God and in the Holy Ghost can only be obtained by walking with God—by walking in the fear of the Lord. Now if this were really the deep conviction of our hearts, a settled thing in our hearts day by day, as assuredly as I go my own way, as assuredly as I live to myself, so assuredly must I be wretched and miserable, because I walk in separation from God. Were this deeply impressed upon our hearts, we should aim after walking in the fear of the Lord.

LIVING TO PLEASE GOD.

And, therefore, in the next place, it should be our deep, hearty longing to have but one single object for our life—to live for God, to please God, since it is impossible that, in going our own way, we should be happy, we could really have peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Therefore, to have this settled purpose of heart, that for the rest of the days of our life we will live for God, and for God only, and thus to dedicate the whole heart to God—not a part of it, but the whole of it—that is what is wanted. And this is a matter of the deepest moment, my beloved brethren and sisters in Christ; and should there be anyone amongst us with whom it is a question whether half the heart or three-fourths of the heart are given to the Lord, or whether the whole heart has been given to the Lord, then let me beseech such, my beloved brethren in Christ, not to be satisfied till they come to this, that the whole heart is given to the Lord, so that we can stand before the Lord and say, “My Father, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that Thy poor child is feeble and weak, but Thou knowest also that my heart is given to Thee: Thou hast my heart.” Thus it should be with us; and if it is not thus, oh! let us be determined not to leave this Conference Hall without coming to the purpose that the whole heart shall be given to the Lord.

But, then, my beloved brethren, we have not to lose sight of this, that though the whole heart is given to the Lord, and we desire with our whole heart to live

for the Lord, that in ourselves we are weak and feeble. We have no strength of our own, and we must adopt certain means whereby, with the blessing of God, we shall be kept in this frame of heart, and shall go on in this frame of heart—not merely to have it for an hour or two, or a day, or a week, or a month, but to have it for all the remaining days of our life.

Now in order that it may be thus, it is a matter of the greatest moment that we remain conscious of our own weakness, and nothingness, and ignorance, all the days of our lives; and, therefore, in simplicity, in the consciousness of our weakness, and feebleness, and nothingness, cling and cleave to our heavenly Father in prayer. We must be men and women given to prayer; day by day to our heavenly Father for help, strength, support, wisdom, for everything that we need, thus speaking to our heavenly Father. But, then, coupled with this must be, letting Him speak to us. When we pray, we speak to Him; and when we read the Word of God, our heavenly Father speaks to us.

#### LOVING THE WORD OF GOD.

Here I again ask my beloved Christian friends: Are we really men and women who love the Word of God? How does it stand with us in this matter? Now since our happy Conference meetings last June how has it been with us? How much have we been reading of the Word of God? Have we once been reading through the whole of the Bible? Oh! beloved in Christ, it is a matter of deep moment that we are men and women given to the reading of the Word of God—regularly reading it, consecutively reading it; but, then, we should couple with this—meditation. Meditate, if it only be for a short time, upon only a small portion of the Word, and do this always with reference to our own hearts. Always meditation with reference to our own hearts, and read the Word of God practically, as the Word of God, so that our fallen reason bows before it. It is God who says it, and that should be enough for us, whether we can understand it with our fallen reason or not. “What thou knowest not now thou shalt know hereafter” is applicable in this respect also, and we should patiently, and prayerfully, and believingly wait till that time comes when we shall see why it is so, and why it is expressed in this way and not in another. But always have it before us practically, that the Holy Scriptures contain the Word of God, and therefore it becomes the fallen human being to bow before the Word of God.

But we should mix with the Word faith, and we should read and ponder it with the especial object of carrying it out in our life. If this is neglected, prayer will profit us very little; and the reading of the Word will profit us very little, if we do not mean to act according to it. It is given to us for the very purpose that

we should act according to it; and in doing so comes blessing to the soul. In doing so our peace and joy in the Holy Ghost will be increased more and more. The blessedness of this I have known in my own happy experience for the last forty-seven years and nine months, and I can recommend this very particularly to my beloved younger brethren and sisters in Christ. Let us be honest. Let us never cease to act according to the Scriptures, and then with whatever weakness (at the first this may be the case) we shall surely make progress, we shall get further and further in knowledge and in grace.

CONFESSION OF FAILURE.

Now if any one after all this fail in any way, what then?

Simply honest confession at once, without hypocrisy or without seeking to excuse our failure. There should be unmistakable confession before our heavenly Father, and then to seek to experience the power of the blood of the Lord. Jesus Christ afresh with regard to our own hearts, and to lay hold on the promise; “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;” and to lay hold of that Word afresh, that the blood of Jesus Christ makes clean from all sin. And this being the case, afresh to consecrate the heart to God, afresh to yield ourselves to Him, and seek His grace with regard to the future.

Now if any one were to go on in this way, what would be the result? The fulfilment of the promise of our adorable Lord, “Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.” As assuredly as any one walks in this way, he will be less and less conformed to the world, and more and more transformed. He will be more and more like Jesus. Though it be but little in comparison with what it may be, and what it ought to be, still there will be more and more conformity to the image of our precious, adorable Lord, even in this life. And He is worthy, that blessed One who laid down His life for us, who shed the last drop of His blood—He is worthy that we should seek to live for Him.

Oh, my beloved Christian friends, let us aim at this! You see we are come here in order to be strengthened with might by the Spirit in our inner man. We come here, not to be amused, not to have some things brought before our minds, and, after all, just to remain in the state in which we were before; but we are here, beloved Christian friends, in order that each one of us may obtain spiritual strength through these happy meetings. The Lord delights in giving us blessing; it is the very joy of His heart to give us blessing; and if we are only willing to receive blessing, He is sure to be ready to give, and to give far more

abundantly than we ever expect to receive. It is a blessed thing, even for this life, to walk in the ways of the Lord; but what He looks to you for is the whole heart.

WHOLLY THE LORD'S.

In this one thing we must be honest, that there does not remain to ourselves a part of the heart; He will have the whole heart. He says, "My son, give Me thine heart," not "part of thine heart." Nor does He say, "My son, give me a little of thy money;" but He says, "Give me thine heart," and He will accept nothing in the room of the heart. When the heart is really given to the Lord, then the purse is given to Him also; then the profession and business are given to Him also; then our houses and lands belong to Him also; and all we have and are belongs to the Lord. At this we should aim, and with nothing short of it should we be satisfied.