

CHANGED BY THE LORD, THE SPIRIT

Romans 8:28-30—And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose. For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren: and whom he foreordained, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

I John 3:1-2—Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is.

Mark 8:31-35—And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he spake the saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. But he turning about, and seeing his disciples, rebuked Peter, and saith. Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men. And he called unto him the multitude with his disciples, and said unto them, If any man would [follow] after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it.

Beloved Lord, we thank You that we are found here gathered in Your name, and we praise You, Lord, that You have made provision for us. You have not left us to our own natural energy or talents or gifts. Lord, You have provided for us an anointing, and into that anointing You so dearly won for us, we stand now by faith for both the speaking of Your word, the translating of Your word, and the hearing of it. Lord, touch our hearts. Speak to our hearts, Lord; not just to our heads but to our hearts. Meet us this day we pray, and we shall be careful to give You all the thanksgiving and praise of our hearts. For we ask this in the name of our Messiah, the Lord Jesus. Amen.

The purpose of God is very simple. It is that every child of God should be changed into the likeness of the Lord Jesus. There are no exceptions. God's predestinating purpose is to conform us to the image of His Son. We have to face the reality that few of us are like the Lord Jesus. We still bear all the marks of Adam. Even though we are born of God, even though we are saved by the grace of God, even though the Holy Spirit dwells within us, there is still in all our lives an area that is not at all like the Lord Jesus. Yet when we face this reality, we have also to face the simple fact that the purpose of God is to change us into the likeness of our Lord Jesus. We have to face the reality of what we are in ourselves; not with depression but with faith and obedience. God has made a glorious and all-powerful provision for every child of His. All the grace and all the power of God are available to every child of God. All that you need to overcome every problem, every insoluble circumstance in your life, He has foreseen and made provision for it. We are without excuse. The grace and the power are there.

THE TRANSFORMING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

It is the Holy Spirit who has been given to make the Lord Jesus a living reality in our lives

and to change us into His likeness. The Lord Jesus, in memorable words, said, "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." He spoke of the Holy Spirit, the One alongside, the Advocate, the Helper. I really do not like that term *Helper*. It devalues the Person of the Holy Spirit, as if He is some little helper that gets behind us and pushes us forward. I like the term *Advocate*. You have a lawyer because he is supposed to know everything. You can ask an advocate all kinds of questions, and he ought to give you the answers. And that is precisely the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He never speaks of Himself; He always reveals the Lord Jesus. He always takes the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden in the Lord Jesus and makes them real to us when we need them. It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And I find it amazing that when the apostle Paul speaks of our being changed into the likeness of the Lord Jesus, he prefaces this glorious statement with these words: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." And He ends it with this word: "... as from the Lord, the Spirit."

The Holy Spirit rarely draws attention to Himself, but when it comes to our being changed into the likeness of the Lord Jesus, He underlines this one simple fact: without the Holy Spirit there can be no transformation. You can study your Bible, you can become a Biblical encyclopedia, you can be correct in your doctrine, but you will remain just where you are with lots of knowledge and no transformation. But when the Lord, the Spirit is there, when He is in charge, when He is obeyed, when His ministry is understood, then He will make the Lord Jesus a living reality in the life of the child of God. He will change him from a sinner into a saint. He will change him into the very likeness of the Lord Jesus. What was once ugliness becomes beauty; what was once pride becomes humility; what was once impatience becomes endurance. It is the work of the Holy Spirit. If you quench the Holy Spirit, you are finished. If you grieve the Holy Spirit, His work in you is paralyzed. This matter is so important.

How are we to be like Him? It is only as we behold Him with unveiled face. By beholding Him with an unveiled face, we are changed (mark this), we are changed from glory to glory as from the Lord, the Spirit. We still remain earthen vessels. Some of us are more earthen than others; clay pots that may be cracked but still clay pots. But into those earthen vessels God has poured eternal treasure. It is the work of the Holy Spirit, no less, no more.

The Holy Spirit has always been the Supervisor; He is always being the Manager. When the world was empty and void, He was the One who hovered over the waters. It was the Holy Spirit who supervised the whole creation and brought light out of darkness. It was the Holy Spirit who came upon Mary, a young girl, and Jesus was conceived. By the Holy Spirit, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

It was the Holy Spirit who came on the day of Pentecost and created the body of the Lord Jesus. He took one hundred and twenty poor, ordinary, and, for us, unnamed people, and joined them to the Head in heaven. The Head and body became one living organism. It was the Holy Spirit who did it. He was the Supervisor; He was the Manager. That living, heavenly organism turned the known world upside down. It turned the Jewish world upside down. It turned the Greek world upside down. It turned the Roman world upside down. It turned the barbarian world upside down. Wherever it remained true to the principles of its birth, this living organism turned the world upside down, until man got his clammy hands on it and it became like any other earthly organization.

Then it was the Holy Spirit who, again and again in the history of the church, took the initiative and once again brought people into a living relationship with the Head at the right hand of God. Whether it was the Priscillianists, the Waldenses, the Reformation, the Anabaptists, the Quakers, or the first great evangelical awakening, we see this living organism. And coming right

down to our own day, every move of the Holy Spirit has been to bring men and women, saved by the grace of God, back into a relationship with the Head at the right hand of God.

I am so glad that the Holy Spirit is the Supervisor and the Manager. He rarely speaks of Himself; He rarely draws attention to Himself. His whole ministry is centered in the Lord Jesus, but you cannot do without Him. You cannot ignore Him; you cannot grieve Him; you cannot quench Him. If you do, on every level, whether it is the work of the Lord, whether it is the church of the Lord, whether it is family life, whether it is your business life, or whether it is your personal life, it is paralyzed. The whole work of the Holy Spirit stops. The fire is gone; the power is gone; the life is gone. And we are left, a collection of religious people.

THE DEFACEMENT OF GOD'S IMAGE

This matter of being made like Him is central. Man was created in the image and likeness of God (see Genesis 1:26). When man fell, he became something other than what was intended. Do you remember the story of the two trees in the garden? Christians are always wondering what the tree was. Was it an apple tree? Was it an olive tree? Was it a mango? What does it matter? It was not the tree; it was the obedience or disobedience. That was the issue. God could have taken a rose bush and said, "You are not to pick those roses. In the day you pick those roses you will surely die." It does not matter what the tree was.

There is tremendous symbolism in the Bible, and trees speak of men, women, human beings. In the garden was the tree of life, and the Lord never said they could not eat of that tree. And there was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. You have two kinds of human constitutions. The first is centered in the life of God, eternal life. It is a human being as God intended—God-conscious, God-centered, and God-dependent. Let me put it another way—Christ-conscious, Christ-centered, Christ-dependent. The other tree represents another kind of human being—self-conscious, self-centered, self-dependent. Adam and Eve chose the second tree and ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In the moment that they took that fruit, their constitution changed (see Genesis 3).

Suddenly, they became aware they were naked. They became self-conscious for the first time, and they hid from God. Secondly, they became self-dependent. They took leaves and sewed them together and made some kind of girdle or breeches. They did not wait for God's answer. He slew a lamb, but they used the leaves. When the Lord said, "What have you done?" Adam immediately said, "It was not me; it was the woman You gave me." It was self-centeredness. "If anyone is going to get judged, judge her, Lord. She got me into this mess!" And immediately Eve said, "It was not me; it was the serpent You created. He beguiled me." They were all self-centered.

MAN TOOK THE PLACE OF GOD

In this amazing book of symbolism and typology, we have the whole story of mankind. Satan had said something so real, "You shall not surely die. In the day that you eat thereof, you shall be as God." In other words, "You shall be gods." That is the whole of human history from Cain to the present day. *I* is at the heart of everything—human genius, human energy, human power. "You shall be as gods; you will not need the Lord. You will be yourself a little god, self-contained."

All of human history stems from this being other than what God intended us to be. It is all there. It is Bab-el. In Hebrew *Bab-el* is the word for Babylon, meaning "confusion." What was so crystal clear to man, God called "confusion." They began to build a tower to make themselves

a name. It is corporate self-centeredness, corporate-consciousness, and corporate-dependence. “We will build a city. We will build a tower that will reach the heavens. We will bring in a golden era for mankind, a golden millennium of peace, of equality, of brotherhood.” And thus you have the history of this world.

Every time I see Moslem militants decapitating innocent men on television, every time I hear of a pedophile murdering some innocent baby, I think of what happened in the garden. And here we are six thousand years later, and we are still the same. We can be no other. It is this human constitution. And yet God made us in His image and after His likeness. Think of it. That image and likeness of the Lord has been horribly defaced. In its place have come avarice, greed, power, and unbridled ambition. It is in fact fallen mankind. “We will make ourselves a name.” It comes out of the personal: “I will make myself a name.”

It is incredible that the European Power has built a building that was painted by the Dutch painter Pieter Bruegel (1525-1569 AD). In 1563 he painted a picture of the tower of Babel, and the European Parliament commissioned someone to build the parliament building like the tower of Babel. Babel is still with us. Now we have globalization that has come full circle. The whole world today is a global village. Now we have a great new power arising in Europe; it is the fourth kingdom of Daniel. It is the renewed, revived, recreated fourth kingdom.

In front of the European Commission, who answers to no parliament, is a very modern statue of a huge bull, and on the bull is a woman. It is the old legend of Europa, and it is based on a legend that Jupiter, Zeus, became a bull in order to deceive a woman. He lusted after her and offered her a ride. She took the ride, and then he transformed himself back to what he was and raped her. Can you believe that statue is in front of the European Commission? It is not just about Babel; it is the woman riding on the back of a beast in Revelation 13-14. Something terrible is happening, and most of God’s people are asleep. They have no idea of what is happening. It is not flesh and blood; it is not a human conspiracy. It is Satan; he is going to produce the antichrist.

A terrible and fearful change took place in Adam and Eve. They chose a constitution that was to be the curse of human history. The Lord said, “In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die.” What did He mean? They lived a long, long life. They did die, but they lived a long life, much longer than the senior citizens of today. What did the Lord mean? He meant that something in their human constitution was divorced from God. Man’s spirit which alone could contain the Lord had died. It was not exterminated, but it was lifeless, just like an electric light bulb out of the socket. It cannot give light because it is not in the socket. The power is cut off. Man became dead in trespasses and sin, and his soul became preeminent. The whole of world history on every level is contained in this *I*-life of Adam.

Thus the words of the Lord Jesus: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I say unto you, you must be born anew.” One of the old hymns says, “Out of my shameful failure and loss; Jesus, I come.” The only way out of Adam and the only escape we can have from this constitution is to be born again of the Spirit.

“Wherefore, if any man be in Christ, there is a new creation. Old things are passed away. Behold, all things have become new.” In Christ and only in Christ is there a new creation. The old is passed; the new has come.

SURRENDERING THE SELF-LIFE

Let us consider some practical, relevant points. It is not enough to be converted. It is not

enough to be born again. You and I need to surrender that defaced image before we can be conformed to the image of His Son. We have to surrender the defaced image we have been born with. There is an *I*-life in every one of us, and that is our problem. “*I* think; *I* know; *I* feel; *I* want, *I* shall have; *me* first; *me* last. Give *me*, give *me*. Let *me* have it. *I* only came to these meetings because *I* want some fulness in *my* life. *I* want to be something. *I* want to get to know my Bible so *I* can lecture others—*I*.”

This is not Christ. This is the old man. No wonder you have a civil war in your life. No wonder it rages backwards and forwards. It is obvious; it is explicable. Sometimes when I go into some of these assemblies, there is a civil war. Unbelievable! They are supposed to be the new men, but they are very much the old men “*I, I, I ... I* do not get my needs met here.” But the funny thing is they go off somewhere else to get their needs met, and in the end, they discover that their needs are not met there either. In the end, it is only in the Lord Jesus that your needs will ever be met.

Brothers and sisters, there is a price to pay. What is the price? This is not to do with your salvation; this is to do with your being changed into His likeness. Your salvation is a free gift. You can do nothing toward it; it has all been paid for. The Lord Jesus saved you, and you could add nothing to it. And if you think it was you coming to the Lord, let me tell you that there is a whole pre-history before you ever found the Lord. Someone loved you from the beginning. Nevertheless, there is a price.

What is the price? It is your self-life. “Whosoever would seek to save his life...” In the Greek the word *psyche* means “soul” or “self-life.” “Whoever would preserve his self-life...” You want to be saved. You want to get to heaven. You want the Lord to clear up your messes. You want the Lord to meet your needs. You want everything the Lord has, but not at the price of your self-life. I want the Lord to be a kind of cosmetician, fixing me up, making me more pleasant. I still want to be *I*; *I* want to be in charge. *I* do not want anyone else in charge. There is a price.

“Whoever seeks to preserve his self-life shall lose it, and whoever loses his self-life for My sake and the gospel shall save it.” Listen to the words of the Lord Jesus: “If any man will follow Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me.”

It is pretty stark, isn't it? When the Lord Jesus said this, it was the first time He talked about His death, burial, and resurrection, the supreme work of His life. And Peter tried to stop Him. His motive was good, but maybe Peter had his eye on some kind of position in the kingdom: “We cannot have You dying, Lord; we will stop that. We have a vested interest in what You are going to do.” And Jesus turned to him and said, “Get behind Me Satan.”

If I were to say to you, looking right into your eyes, “Get behind me Satan,” you would be horrified. You would go to the brothers and say, “Do not have that man back again. I have never been so insulted in all my life. He looked straight into my eyes and said, ‘Get behind me, Satan.’ I am not Satan!”

If he had only said, “Satan is troubling you,” that would have been acceptable. If he had said, “You are thinking negative thoughts,” that would have been even more acceptable. But to look into Peter's eyes and say, “Get behind Me Satan,” may have had this response from Peter: “I am not Satan. I am the first of the apostles. The Lord told me that I have the keys of the kingdom. I cannot be Satan.” What did the Lord Jesus mean?

Then Jesus called the great multitude together with His disciples, as if this was the heart of the gospel, meaning you can be saved and still have a self-life, but you cannot follow Christ and have a self-life. There is no way you can follow the Lord Jesus. You can only grow in knowledge, academic knowledge, but to follow the Lord Jesus He said, “If any man follow Me, let him deny

himself.” I think it is best understood like this: “If any man follow Me, let him give up all right to himself.” That is the heart of the matter—my rights, my self-rights. We live in an age of rights—baby’s rights, the unborn’s rights, women’s rights, trees’ rights, animal rights, everything has rights. But Jesus said, “If you would be a follower of Me—no rights.” A hired servant has rights, but a bondsman has no rights. Here is the cost of being a disciple. You can be a convert, but are you a disciple?

SANCTIFY CHRIST AS LORD

In Ephesians 4:22-24 it says, “That ye put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, that waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit; and that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.” I think this putting off of the old man and putting on of the new man is to be explained very simply. It is a question of Lordship. If Jesus is Lord, you are putting off the old man, and you are putting on the new man, and you are being renewed in the spirit of your mind. Something is happening; you may not always feel something is happening.

Sometimes people come to me and say, almost weeping, “I feel I am nowhere.” But we who know them can see a great change taking place. The nearer you get to the Lord, the more hopeless you feel you are. It is almost as if the Lord uses this to give us the energy to go on and on and on with Him.

Who then is boss in your life? Are you? If you pursue that, you will discover a poison within yourself. It will destroy you. It will paralyze the work of the Holy Spirit changing you into His likeness. When you receive your self-life back under new management, your soul, your will, your reasoning powers, and your emotions will be received back under a new boss, the Lordship of Jesus. It is a tremendous thing!

The apostle Peter makes a declaration, a statement in his first letter: “Sanctify Christ as Lord in your heart.” Set Him apart as Lord in your life. Who is boss in your life? Set the Messiah aside as Lord in your life. If you do, you will discover the truth that is contained in another amazing Scripture in Hebrews 4:12: “For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of the soul and spirit.” This spiritual laser surgery that divides spirit and soul can be painful, but it is absolutely necessary. Otherwise, you always think that your will is the will of the Lord, that your voice is the voice of the Lord. Actually, it is not His voice but the voice of your soul. The cross removes; the Holy Spirit produces life and power.

Note that little phrase: “Even as from the Lord, the Spirit.” The Holy Spirit is the Supervisor and Manager of your being transformed into the image of His Son. He wants the keys of your life. Keys represent authority. He wants the keys of your life. “Even as from the Lord, the Spirit.” How can He be Lord if you retain the keys? How can He be Lord if you are the boss? No way! A new creation leads to all things new. We shall be like Him. The process is now, and we do not have so much time. Things are now moving so fast that unless we have real dealings with the Lord, we shall be overtaken by the events.

Who is your boss? Who has the keys of your life?

Dear Lord, help us to surrender that defaced image and put off the old man with all his doings. Help us to give You the keys to our life. Help us, Lord. Have mercy upon us, our worldliness, our lukewarmness, the many issues in our lives that we have not allowed You to deal with. Lord, take this word and make it so real in us that we cannot escape it. Dear Spirit of God,

You never draw attention to Yourself, but do Your essential work in every one of our lives. Make us Christ-like; change us into His likeness. Help us to repent of any grieving that we have done of Him or any quenching. Be free to do Your own work. We ask it in the name of our Messiah, the Lord Jesus. Amen.

