

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

God's solid foundation stands firm. 2 Tim. 2-19

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Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel,
but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in
the house.

Matthew 5:15

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For a Conservative Anabaptist Perspective

From The Editor's Desk

Without Prejudice - many if not all people do have some prejudices which are quite often without foundation, we may be prejudiced by forming an opinion beforehand usually unfavourable based on insufficient knowledge, irrational feelings, inaccurate stereotypes, we may also form a prejudice against a person or group of persons because of their particular religion, ethnicity, social status or perhaps even sexual preferences or gender.

We can have these prejudices as individuals or hold them as part of our group identity for example the Jews had an intense dislike for Samaritans, Jesus even used an expression of the day to the Samaritan woman in Mark 7:27, He used some very strong descriptive language for the Pharisees as well, He called them hypocrites in Matthew 23 for example.

Now does that mean that Jesus was prejudiced?

Most definitely not, his ministry shows no signs of that, He may have had strong words of condemnation for certain people but He spoke them with a full knowledge of their character and called them to repentance and belief in him, He demonstrated and taught the way of love by his own example of the ultimate love of God, He suffered and died on a criminal's cross at Calvary so that his blood would be the final atoning sacrifice for the sins of mankind without prejudice, Revelation 5:9, by his blood he ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, He died and rose again so that all might be saved without prejudice.

In Luke 4:16-28 we see Jesus referring to God acting without prejudice even in the Old Testament, Israel, his chosen people, had turned away from him once again, God through Elijah caused a drought and famine and sent Elijah to minister to the widow at Zarephath, a non-Jew, later God directed Elisha to heal Naaman a Syrian, a non-Jew. Jesus reached out to the woman of Samaria at the well, a non-Jew, and the Syrophenician woman whose daughter was demon possessed, again a non-Jew. As we read the accounts of healing performed by Jesus we can be confident that many were non-Jews. Jews of the day were very prejudiced when it came to non-Jews, Jesus was a Jew but He was without prejudice.

If we profess to be followers of Jesus Christ should we not also discard our prejudices when it comes to people? He was not prejudiced against us when we came to him as sinners seeking forgiveness

As Jesus demonstrated let us be likewise - Without prejudice! *J.v.L*



From the Pulpit

The Need for Transformation 2 of 2

Linford Berry

Calvary Mennonite Fellowship VA

How Transformation Happens

I would invite you to turn with me to 2nd Corinthians the 3rd chapter I will be reading a number of verses from chapter 3 and chapter 4.

[2 Corinthians 3:12-18 \(ESV\)](#) Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, ¹³ not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. ¹⁴ But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. ¹⁶ But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

[2 Corinthians 4:1-6](#) Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. ² But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. ³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

There is a verse in [Zechariah 4:6b](#) that saysNot by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD.

And I think that verse could kind of be used as maybe a banner over everything that we are going to talk about tonight, if we could have this big banner maybe draped up over the back here to remind us, “Not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord!”

And that is how we will find that transformation happens.

Tonight I want to give some practical instruction, some things that we can do as a part of our transformation but in all of that we must constantly remember that is not our work and it is not done by our power it is not because we are so good, it is not because we are so able or so smart, it is because God is great and God is Spirit as it says in our text that we just read.

This issue of transformation and how it happens is a gospel issue, the gospel by its very nature is offensive to our natural desires, it is offensive to our natural way of thinking and doing, the gospel says that we are desperately wicked, that all of our parts are corrupted and that we are unable and unwilling to keep the law and to save ourselves.

The gospel also says that Jesus came to fulfil the law perfectly and to offer redemption, to accomplish redemption through his death on the cross in the power of his resurrection to certify that death indeed is what it takes and to offer us redemption if we would only surrender to him and trust him, and that trust by the way includes obedience for if you do not obey then you are not really trusting, but if we would trust him then He would redeem us, restore us, He would transform us and He would change us, transform us means to change us as we talked about this morning but this is very hard for us to do, very hard for us to accept actually Jesus says it’s impossible.

Remember what I read this morning, the disciples asked well how can any person be saved? And Jesus said, Yes how can anybody be saved? But with God all things are possible.

By ourselves impossible but with God all things are possible.

And so because this is very hard for us to do, impossible actually in our own selves, in our own strength in our own power, we devise all kinds of systems, we devise all kinds of ways and means and mechanisms by which we might attempt to become righteous, transformed, sanctified, whatever word you want to use, and sometimes the religious imposter looks on the

outside much like a genuine child of God might because we can do the things on the outside, that is something we can do something about, what we cannot do is the change that must happen on the inside.

Now as we have already said many times change on the inside does result in a change on the outside but just because there is a change on the outside does not certify that there is a change on the inside.

This is the matter of transformation, this is the matter of the gospel power within us.

And we want to look especially this evening at 2nd Corinthians 3 verse 18 which is the 4th place that we find in the New Testament that this word transformed is used, the first 2 cases are in the Gospels where it talks about Jesus being transfigured, and there the word is translated transfigured ([Matthew 17:2](#), [Mark 9:2 KJV](#)) this morning we looked at [Romans 12:2](#) which talks about being transformed by the renewal of our mind and here we come to an explanation of how this transformation happens and I want us to notice a few things that we find here in verse 18 and as we use the other verses around this verse as kind of commentary on it to help us understand it, to unpack it.

The first thing that we notice in verse 18 is that the transformation is for all of us, we all with unveiled face. But first we see in the verse prior that only through Christ we can have a unveiled face, it is only when Christ removes the veil that we can even see and savour the glory and goodness of God, only through Christ it says is it taken away, but when one turns to the Lord the veil is removed only then can we all with unveiled face behold the glory of God.

So it is for all of us, all of us who have unveiled faces that is all of us who can see with spiritual eyes we are the ones who are being transformed.

This isn't just for a few select Christians, this isn't just for the pastor or the preacher or the Sunday school teacher, this isn't just for the mature Christians those who have lived a long life with Christ, no, this transformation is something that all who have turned to the Lord must and can be involved in.

Nobody else can be transformed for you, nobody else can do this in place of you if you have turned to the Lord then you are one of the "all of us"

Secondly and we notice this at the end of verse 18, we are going from the beginning of the verse to the end of the verse the bookends of this verse, secondly we notice the transformation is something you can't do it, the last part of this verse says, for this, talking about this transformation from glory to glory, this comes from the Lord who is Spirit.

We see that this transforming work is from the Lord, He is the one who unveils so we can be transformed, He is the one who does the work of transformation in our hearts and the reason that it is only from him is because He is Spirit we are not but we do have a spiritual part to us, we do have a heart that must be transformed and the only way that can happen is through a spiritual action and so the Lord who is Spirit does the work of the spirit in transforming our hearts spiritually.

This is very important to our understanding for as long as we are struggling to do this work of transformation in our own power or even with the assistance of God's power, as long as it is our work and we're trying to accomplish it in whatever measure by our own strength we will be forever frustrated, we will be eventually deceived and we will ultimately fail.

I found an article written by J R Miller in 1888 that I found very helpful and I think I will quote a bit of it here, I don't think I can write it any better or say that any better he says: "But how may we grow into the Christ likeness of Christ? Not merely by our own strugglings and strivings. We know what we want to be but when we try to lift our own lives up to the beauty that we see and admire in Christ we find ourselves weighted down, we cannot make ourselves Christlike by any efforts of our own.

Nothing less than a divine power is sufficient to produce this transformation in our human nature."

He goes on to say, "Beholding we are changed. The verb is passive, we do not produce the change, the marble can never carve itself into the lovely figure that floats in the artist's mind, the transformation must be wrought with patience by the sculptor's own hands, we cannot change ourselves into the image of Christ's glory rather we are changed, the work is wrought in us by the divine Spirit we simply look upon the image of Christ and its blessed light streams in upon us and prints its own radiant glory upon our hearts."

So we see that one of the primary things that we must understand about spiritual transformation about the new birth about regeneration is that this isn't something we can do or make happen, it is not something we can control and ultimately the Scripture tells us we can't even choose for it to happen by ourselves, God must work by his Spirit, God must invite, He must call, He must draw. As I read this morning from [John 6:44](#), No man can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. God must act and He must act first.

Now it feels to us like we choose, it feels to us like we make a choice, a decision to follow Christ but that position, as real as it is, is predicated upon God's choosing first, upon God's drawing, upon God's invitation, upon the work of God's Holy Spirit in our hearts.

Even the repentance that I was talking about this morning happens only as a result of God granting it to us, 2nd Timothy 2 talks about this in the terms of the pastor, the teacher it says he needs to be the Lord's bondservant not quarrelsome but kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth that they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil having been held captive by him to do as he will, [2 Timothy 2: 24-26](#).

So we see the progression here, God grants repentance leading them to the knowledge of the truth and then they come to their senses, they say, Oh I was wrong! And they escape from the snare of the devil.

If this was something that we could do or make happen or even ultimately choose in the first place then there would be reason for us to boast but according to Ephesians 2 and many other passages including John 3 and John 6 it becomes obvious to us that God works in us to bring about his will, God works in us to bring us to the place where we choose to serve him.

Now this is a hard pill for most of us to swallow it is not something that goes down easy because we want to believe in our flesh that we can somehow contribute to this matter of our salvation that there is something we have to add something of value and we are reminded in the words of the prophet Isaiah that our righteousness, our goodness compared to what God

has provided is nothing but filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). We don't have anything to add to our salvation, Jesus Christ is sufficient.

But that does not mean that we don't participate, it doesn't mean that we don't actually do something, the gospel is not about just sitting back and watching God work and just sitting on our hands and not doing anything. No, that is not how God works it is not how the gospel works.

I heard this week Brother Kenneth actually brought an analogy to my mind that I thought was very helpful and maybe it will help us tonight and I give him all the credit for it, it's the analogy of a sailboat.

Now I happen to know just a little bit about sailing, I happen to enjoy it actually and Kenneth brought this analogy to us the other evening at our small group leaders meeting when we were discussing the role of being spirit led and the role of order and structure and discipline in our lives and he said like this, sometimes we need to put the sail up, we cannot control the wind, we cannot make the wind blow so we put the sail up so that when the wind blows it moves us.

Now that analogy is helpful but only if we recognise one thing, remember the banner over the top, if we remember that God provides the sail and the sailboat and God provides the strength to even put the sail up but we still must put the sail up.

Yes Jesus tells us in John 3 when He's talking to Nicodemus He describes the work of the Spirit in regeneration the new birth He describes it like the wind, He says you can see the effects of the wind you can see when it's blowing but you cannot tell where it's coming from or where it's going.

And so is the work of the Spirit of God in our hearts, so is the work of transformation, it's like the wind it is difficult for us, impossible for us to control, that's God's business but we can put the sail up and as long as we recognise that putting the sail up is also a part of the work of God is also a part of the power of God then we will be okay.

From a human perspective it does feel like we're doing something when in ultimate reality it is God working through us and that is why we cannot boil these down we cannot formulate this into a 3 step plan where if you do 1, 2 and 3 then you will be transformed.

If we could do that then we would not need God, we wouldn't need the Spirit we could manage.

Another thing we need to notice is that God chooses to work in different ways with different people, there is no one size fits all approach to the work of transformation and sanctification.

So I cannot give you a formula for something that is the miraculous work of God, I can't do it and I'm not going to apologise for not giving you a formula but I can, hopefully, through the use and explanation exposition of Scripture give you some practical things that might be a means of setting the sail so that you can be more fully involved in the transformation that God wants in your life that God is working in your life.

You see here is the beauty of it, the beauty of God's work in transformation, is the things that we do are actually the results of transformation and they lead us into further transformation from glory to glory, from one degree of glory to another.

Let me see if I can explain this to you.

As we shall see throughout this evening the word of God plays a central role in the transformation of our hearts, of our lives, the word of God does play a key role so if we begin to study and meditate on the word of God, well wait a minute, if we begin to study and meditate on the word of God that is actually a result of God's work of God's power in us already so that we even have the desire or the inclination to read he has already worked in us.

And we might think we are setting our sail, and we are but notice this now the beauty of it is when we do such a thing when we open our Bible and begin to read God word He works even further and He uses his word to further shape us and further mould us and further transform us into his image. The power is all of him.

And so it is with every means of God's grace to us, in him we live and move and have our being, He is the prime mover, He is the sovereign Lord, the Lord of all the universe and we do participate in our transformation.

This isn't something again where we stand idly by and God acts without our involvement but even our involvement is transformative, even our involvement is a part of the process of transformation it is the result of the grace and power of God.

The 3rd thing that we notice here in this text is that transformation happens when we behold the glory of God and the later context describes this as in the face of Jesus Christ, beholding the glory of the Lord we are being transformed into the same image.

So here we get to the practical considerations for how we can participate in this transformation and again let me say that this is not something we can cause, this is not something we can make happen.

Well what are some ways that we can set our sails as it were to make the most of the power of God within us? What are some ways that we can behold the glory of God?

This verse in the broader context talks a lot about the glory of God, it talks a lot about the results of the glory of God about beholding the glory of God particularly in the face of Jesus Christ in the person of Jesus Christ but this is not an isolated reference in the Scripture the Scripture is full of references to beholding the glory of God. [Psalm 27:4](#) the psalmist writes, One thing, just one thing have I asked from the Lord.

Now you know we read childhood stories about the genie in the bottle and you rub the bottle and the genie pops out and says I give you three wishes. The psalmist he only had one, one overwhelming overriding desire, one thing have I asked from the Lord and that I shall seek, that I might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

Why would he do that? To behold the glory, to behold the beauty or glory of the Lord and to meditate in his temple.

That was the psalmist's overwhelming overriding desire to behold the beauty and glory of God.

John 1 talks a lot about light and glory, verse 9 the true light which gives light to everyone was come into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know it. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, He gave the right to become children of God, children who were born, get this, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God. [John 1:9-13](#)

That's how it happened.

Verse 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. And verse 16 For from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace. (John 1:14, 16)

It's a marvellous thing the glory of God is a powerful thing.

Romans 8:29, For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

1 John 3:2.... We know that when he appears we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is.

Beholding the glory of our Saviour and we will be like him.

Isaiah 40:5 And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, this is going to happen, the glory of the LORD shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

And then there is this question that comes, A voice says, “Cry!” And I said, “What shall I cry?” All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it; surely the people are grass.⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. Isaiah 40:6-8.

You see we are not much we are like grass of the field and all God has to do is breathe on us, but the word of our God, the God who has spoken it, the God who has revealed his glory will stand forever.

And so the message to Judah, to Jerusalem, to Zion, Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, “Behold your God!” Isaiah 40:9.

Now what is so significant about beholding? How does this work?

Well the Bible talks a lot about imitation, we become like that which we admire, we become like what we look at and what we spend time with and what we feed on, the old adage “you are what you eat” is not too far off we become like the people we associate with.

We can think of examples of this both positively and negatively.

You know it is said that 2 people who love each other and who live together for a very long time start to look like each other, and they do, even more serious than that it is said some begin to look like their pets.

Now that's a natural illustration or a natural example but when we behold the glory of God, when we look at Jesus we become imitators of God and God begins to change us into his image, He begins to restore that which was broken by the fall.

Remember in Genesis 1 God said, let us create man in our image. What a glorious, glorious position.

But then there was the Fall, there was sin that brought brokenness that brought hurt and pain and so the whole world is now groaning and we bear but a scarred broken image of God but God is about the work of restoring us into his image, into the fullness of that and when we feed on him and admire it He does change us.

So how do we behold the glory of God? How do we behold the glory of the Lord?

Well God says we can't see him with our natural eyes, no man can see him and live, so this is going to be more of a spiritual exercise, we can behold his glory in his word, we've already talked about that, we can see who He is, we can see how great He is, how good He is, how just and righteous He is, in his Word we behold his glory.

We can behold his glory in nature, we can behold his glory as we pray and worship him together with our brothers and sisters or alone in our closet.

And so activities that you will want to do if you're going to be setting your sail in the wind of the Spirit is to spend a lot of time in the word, read [Psalm 119](#) if you want to see how important this is. The psalmist David delighted in the law of the Lord, David wrote the longest chapter in our Bible about the delights and goodness and riches of the word of God, that's Psalm 119 and Psalm 19 is the commentary on Psalm 119, maybe it's a prelude I'm not sure which, but either way it's important.

If you're going to set your sail to be transformed you will want to spend some time in nature to see the beauty and grandeur and vastness of God who is the Creator.

You will want to spend time in prayer and worship both by yourself and with the people of God who are as we shall see later to be faithful reflectors of the glory of God to us.

But the word of God in all of this is the primary interface, it is the primary interface where we come in contact with the glory of the Lord.

In the Isaiah passage that we just read and in others we are told that the mouth of the Lord has spoken. He has revealed himself and his purposes through speech, through the spoken word, our God is a God that articulates, He is a God who speaks, He is a God who writes, so we note in verse 8 of Isaiah 40 that this word of God will stand forever. Our God is a God who speaks, this word of God is central to our transformation.

Romans 10:17, So faith comes from hearing and hearing comes through the word of Christ.

John 17:17 Jesus says prays to his Father sanctify them in the truth, your word is truth.

Our God is a God who speaks and a God who writes and this is one of the reasons why Christians have always been interested in literacy, this is one of the reasons why Christians are so interested in making sure that the word of God is translated into the language of all the peoples of the world. It is why we see to educate our children so that they can read and comprehend.

We observe and behold the glory of God as we hear his voice through his word and as we observe the living person of Jesus Christ, the Living Word, in the pages of the written word.

Jerry Bridges wrote a paragraph that I thought was very helpful again I cannot improve on it so I will quote it for you: “Beholding the Lord’s glory in his word is more than observing his humanity in the Gospels, it is observing his character, his attributes, his will in every page of Scripture and as we observe him as we maintain this relationship with him through his word we are transformed more and more into his likeness. We are enabled by the Holy Spirit to progressively manifest the graces of godly character. So it is this relationship with Christ expressed by beholding him in his word and depending upon him in prayer that enables us to draw from him the power essential for a godly life. The Christian is not like an automobile

with a self-contained power source rather he is like an electric motor that must constantly be connected to an outside current for its power. Our source of power is in the risen Christ and we stay connected to him by beholding him in his word and depending on him in prayer.”

The word of God is the primary interface through which we behold the glory of God, God who speaks, God who writes.

We also behold the glory of God in nature.

Who among us has not be awed by the beauty of God that we find in his creation as displayed in the world around us.

I have not done it for a couple of years now but one of the things that I really enjoy doing is going to the hills of West Virginia when it's really dark and laying down on a moonless night and looking at the stars and the sky fairly glows with stars and who among us when we lie on our back on the ground looking up at a dark night sky full of stars, who among us somehow thinks more highly of ourselves?

No, we realise we are but a speck, we are but a speck of dust in this grand universe.

How about when we see a beautiful sunset like the one we saw last night, some of us, don't we marvel at that, don't we marvel at how a God that is big, a God that is powerful and so beautifully painted this for us to see.

When we stand at the edge of the Grand Canyon can we help but marvel at the incredible power and the intensity, power and intensity beyond human ability that it must've taken to carve that chasm.

In nature we are confronted with parts of the attributes of God.

In Romans chapter 1 it tells us that this is enough, this is enough to convict us, this is enough evidence to prove to us that there is a God and it is also part of the glory of God that we behold and so if you are going to be setting your sail for transformation, if you are interested in sanctification perhaps you would do well to take a hike perhaps you would do well to even jump in the lake from time to time to behold the glory of God.

A 3rd way we behold the glory of God I've alluded to this a couple of times is in community, the community of the bride of Christ.

Let me read again [2 Corinthians 4:5-6](#) For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Then he goes on to say that we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. [2 Corinthians 4:7](#).

As we behold God we become reflectors as well.

As a matter of fact there is an alternate translation of [2 Corinthians 3:18](#) that some versions use that I think captures a bit of this, it talks about beholding as in a mirror or reflecting as a mirror and so we reflect the glory of God to each other.

[Colossians 3:16](#) says let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

The word of Christ, there it is again, the importance of the word, the word dwells in us richly, that only happens when you behold the glory of the Lord but the word of Christ dwells in us richly and because of that then we admonish one another, we sing to each other, we speak to each other out of that word.

[Hebrews 10:24-25](#) And let us consider then how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

God has chosen us, to use us, as ministers of his glory. It is an amazing thing to minister his glory to others and so a very real part of beholding the glory of God is the life on life interaction that we have with the rest of the body of Christ.

But notice again the Colossians passage tells us what the content of our sharing is supposed to be, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly and out of that you are to speak and admonish and sing to each other.

So once again the word of God is in view as a part of what it means to behold the glory of God even as we do so with our brothers and sisters.

The 4th thing we notice from this passage is that transformation involves obedience.

There is one little word in this verse that speaks volumes about obedience and that word is the word Lord, for this comes from the Lord, kyrios, the Greek word meaning slave master, this comes from the Lord because He is our Lord this signifies that our relationship to him is one of a slave, slaves are obedient, if they are not obedient they are not slaves very long and we see this in the rest of Scripture as well this matter of obedience is a part of our participation in the transformation.

So if God tells us to put the sail up and we're disobedient and we don't put the sail up whether that would be the sail of reading the word of God, of beholding his glory in nature, of meeting together with our fellows believers, whatever that is, if God tells us to put the sail up and we're disobedient what's going to happen?

Well the wind is going to come along and I know how this works, the wind comes along and pushes against the side of the boat but the side of the boat is only about this tall so you don't move very far very fast, with the sail up you can go places, you can experience freedom, but if we're not obedient not much is going to happen, we will not sail in freedom and glory.

This obedience to the Lord is in the form of actions, actions that we take in faith, faith that God knows what He's talking about, God knows the best way even when it might not feel right to us that's the real acid test will we trust Him enough, do we have faith that He is right, will we obey even when it doesn't feel right to us even when we think we have a better way?

The Bible talks about sacrificing it talks about denying the flesh, it talks about putting off and putting on certain behaviours, it talks about enduring suffering without retaliation, that's what suffering looks like, that's what obedience looks like in real life, it is the day to day decisions that indicate obedience, it is in the day-to-day decisions and actions that we surrender.

That is why in [Romans 12:1](#) it is called a living sacrifice, we don't just get up on the altar and He kills us and we are done and we go to glory and it is peace and joy forevermore. No, we get up on the altar every day and every day we die to self and every day we live to Christ and every day we choose to obey and every day we are being more and more transformed from glory to glory.

This living sacrifice requires actual obedience, actions.

Now of course this will look different in different people's lives.

What we have tended to do often, not just Mennonites but other people too, what we have tended to do is to try and put this into a tidy formula to put this obedience into a tidy box that looks the same for everybody and we said okay as long as you are doing this then you must be okay, as long as you are doing this then you have what it takes.

But we all tend to sin in different areas, we are all tempted in different ways, we all have different predispositions and so what might be necessary for one of us actually becomes a hindrance for someone else and that is why this does not work because not everyone struggles with the same issues, the same sin.

Once again these obedient actions they don't save us, they don't gain us any favour with God and they must be done in the power of God but these obedient actions are a part of the means of God's grace to us in our transformation, it is a part of the process, it is a part of the means of grace whereby we become more and more sanctified, more and more transformed and we go from one degree of glory to another.

And once again we find that the word of God is of central importance here in describing for us, in informing us what kind of behaviours, what kind of responses, what kind of attitudes are godly and alternatively what kind of actions, behaviours, attitudes are ungodly so once again we must behold the glory of God in His word in order to be obedient.

And finally we see that transformation is a process not a crisis.

Transformation is a process it is not a crisis, it says from one degree of glory to another.

Again I will quote J R Miller he says, "We have nothing to do but to keep our eyes fixed on the beauty as the flowers hold up their faces toward the sun and the transformation is divinely wrought in us. It is not wrought instantaneously, at first there are but dimmest glimmerings of the likeness of Christ, we cannot in a single day learn all the long hard lessons of patience, meekness, unselfishness, humility, joy and peace, little by little the change is wrought and the beauty comes out as we continue to gaze upon Christ, little by little the glory flows into our lives from the radiant face of the Master and flows out again through our dull lives transforming them.

Even though but little seems to come from our yearnings and strugglings after Christ likeness God honours the yearning and the striving and while we sit in the shadows of weariness, disheartened with our failures He carries on the work within us and with his own hands produces the divine beauty in our souls.”

Yes we struggle, yes we strive, yes we fail but this is a race that is not run in a day, this race takes a lifetime.

Furthermore I can assure you that if this transformation is something that you desire it is something you want, the very reason you want it and desire it is because God has put that into you, God has put that desire into your heart, God has worked it in and He says in his word that He will continue the good work that He has started. [Philippians 1:6](#) And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Just don't expect whole roadmap before you start, it's not how He works God usually only gives us turn by turn directions and as we trust him in faith and in obedience then He shows us the next step.

But we want the whole map and so we sometimes get impatient and we sometimes question him, are you sure God, is this really the right way? But there is the test of faith again and obedience, who are we going to trust who are we going to rely on?

So in conclusion whether it be by beholding the glory of God in nature or by seeing the glory of God reflected in our brothers and sisters or beholding the glory of God in the word of God and the result, the outcome, of all of this is the renewal of our minds as it says in [Romans 12:2](#) or the putting on the mind of Christ as it talks about in Colossians, or setting our minds on things above or some other similar language. And this involves a couple of aspects all requiring supernatural work of God to empower us, to think differently, this involves repentance, repentance literally means to change your mind as we've noted already that is something that God grants to us, the changing of our mind from the focus on self and what we want to the focus on God and what He wants this requires an actively thinking approach.

Christianity is not for people who don't think, Christianity requires a new mind, it requires a mind that is fashioned after Christ.

This requires understanding or seeing at least in part our sin, our selfishness, our rebellion, it requires repenting, confessing, that is agreeing with God about our state about our sin and so we examine ourselves we examine our motives, we even get our brothers and sisters involved in helping us to see ourselves as we really are and to see God as he is.

We do this by studying the word which the book of Hebrews says is sharper than any two edged sword and powerful enough to discern or to divide between soul and spirit, the word of God both written and in the flesh that is Jesus Christ this is the primary interface through which our minds are renewed as we surrender to the revelation of God and obey what He says.

Now even someone that is very limited in mental capacity can do this.

You see it's not about achieving a certain level of competence, it isn't about a certain level of mastery, because again that would be all about us would it not, I finally got where I need to be I'm finally good enough, no, no, this is something that is about being faithful in response to God, about trusting in him and I would have to tell you that some people who are mentally limited can do this far more easily then some of the rest of us.

I have to tell you a story about Edward.

Edward was the man I met in Los Angeles, you've probably heard about him before, Edward is a man who at one time was very smart who lived a full life a rich life but then he was involved in a tragic accident and he suffered head injuries and his brain no longer works the way it did, his wife left him, he lost his job, he lives just a couple of blocks from Skidrow, Edward is a simple man but Edward is a man that loves God, Edward is a man that trusts, he knows that God is right.

The first thing Edward wanted to do when he got into the car with me was to tell me what he had discovered in the word of God that he was reading that day, Look he said, Look what I found! And there was joy on his face.

And I discovered that he has beautiful handwriting and he writes vast portions of Scripture in his notebook and he memorised it. Edward can't tell you about soteriology and he can't tell you about ecclesiology and eschatology but he can tell you about God and he can tell you that God is faithful and God is good.

We need that kind of faith, that kind of trust, that kind of confidence! And through all of this we must remember that it is the work of God in us, it is the work of God through us and therefore it says in chapter 4 verse one therefore having this ministry by the mercy of God we do not lose heart, (2 Corinthians 4:1).

There is coming a day, there is coming a day when the struggle of transformation will be complete, when the world will no longer threaten to conform us to its way of thinking, there is coming a day when we will finally see perfectly the Saviour, the glorious face of Jesus Christ. There is coming a day when we will see.

For now we see in a mirror dimly but then face-to-face. Now I know in part; then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. 1 Corinthians 13:12.

Oh what a day that will be when my Jesus I shall see!

Let's pray.

Oh Father we come before you as your humble servants recognising that we are not worthy, there is nothing we have done that should cause you to look with favour on us but you, you have chosen us before the foundation of the world, you have adopted us as sons and daughters of the King.

Lord we're not worthy but we want to respond to you in love and praise and adoration, in full surrender and obedience, in trusting confident faith that you will continue the good work that you have begun.

And Father I pray that if there is someone here tonight, this evening, who does not yet have an unveiled face that you would take of the veil that they would turn to you and that they would be transformed by the power, the marvellous miraculous power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Lord this is your work it is not ours we give you all the praise, all the honour and the glory that is due your name.

We pray in the blessed and glorious name of Jesus Christ, the one whom we long to see face-to-face. Amen.

N.B. This message has been edited original available by request. The Editor.



Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

O Heart of Faith

O heart of faith, sing on and on forever,
Although the way be sometimes dark and drear,
For God is with thee and forsaketh never,
And to the eye of faith doth He appear.

O heart of faith, trust on and on forever!
The Christ who called thee never, never fails;
Fear not to follow as He leads thee ever,
Thro' all life's strange and weary, winding trails.

O heart of faith, hope on and on forever!
A better day is sure for thee to dawn
— A day, beyond life's dark and turbid river,
Where earth's bleak shadows cannot ever come.

O heart of faith, press on and on forever!
Forget the things that now lie far behind,
The prize awaits, and Christ himself the Giver
—A great reward thy soul shall surely find.

O heart of faith, fight on and on forever,
While in the fiery conflict here below!
Nor sheathe thy sword for any fear or favor,
As ebbs the tide of battle to and fro.

O heart of faith, look up! nor be discouraged;
Thy God enthroned on high is looking down;
He giveth grace for all life's stormy voyage
And holds for thee the victor's golden crown!
—The Christian Faith

HAST THOU CONSIDERED MY SERVANT?

Could there be any greater honour than for God to place our name at the end of the title above? Most of us likely recognize the source of the heading as coming from the book of Job, and we would clearly hesitate to write our name in place of his. And yet, we would all desire for God to see us as he saw Job: "There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil" (Job 1:8). We would have to re-examine our view of "fiery trials" before we could willingly place our name in place of his. How do we look at the hardships of life?

It is our human nature to think that God's blessings are only in the form of health, comfort, and prosperity. When trials and afflictions come upon us, we (like Job) have our moments of confusion and frustration. Why is this happening? What am I doing wrong? Is God punishing me? How long will this go on? These are all questions that want to dominate our thinking when we face hardships on almost any scale. Satan's desire is for these questions to persist. We know that life on earth must sometimes involve pain and suffering, and we try to console ourselves with the thought that there are others worse off than ourselves, and we naturally pray for God to let the cup pass from us.

Is our aim to simply endure hardships until they are removed? The book of Job would be a much different book if Job had prayed and received an immediate deliverance. Yes, we would still likely hear him say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord." I am quite certain, though, that a speedy deliverance would have cost us that priceless gem that we find in the thirteenth chapter: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

Perhaps one day we will ask Job if he would have chosen to avoid the entire experience and not have been able to say, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee."

So what does this mean for us today? There are numerous dear brethren who go in and out among us who seem to have their names written in place of Job's. Is it wrong for them to pray for deliverance? I think not. But, like Jesus, we must all look for God's will to be done in our lives. And, as in

Job's case, we must realize that our earthly actions add to or detract from God's honour.

An example of courageous Christian living that is worthy of our consideration is found in John Bunyan's second volume of *Pilgrim's Progress*. Here the reader is presented with a fascinating character called Great Heart. He is the seemingly fearless guide and protector to Christiana and the little band of heaven-bound believers. We find it easy to relate to Christian (the main character of Bunyan's first volume). Christian's mixture of fear and courage, doubts and faith, despair and persistence seem to meet most of us right where we are at. Great Heart, on the other hand, is always courageous, always faithful, and always pressing forward. Speaking of the Valley of Humiliation (where trials and afflictions often lead us), Great Heart says, "It is the best and most useful brave piece of ground in all those parts ... Behold how green this Valley is, also how beautified with lilies ... for indeed it is a very fruitful soil, and doth bring forth by handfuls." Is this how we feel about the Valley of Humiliation? Probably not. But there are many brethren throughout Christian history that viewed their fiery trials as fruitful ground. Do we realize that we could have the same vision?

We can learn more about the spirit of Great Heart as we consider his replies to Christiana's questions following his fierce battle with Giant Maul: "Christiana asked the guide if he had caught no hurt in the battle. Then said Mr. Great Heart, No, save a little on my flesh; yet that also shall be so far from being to my detriment, that it is at present a proof of my love to my Master and you, and shall be a means, by grace, to increase my reward at last.

"But were you not afraid, good Sir, when you see him come out with his club?" It is my duty, said he, to distrust my own ability, that I may have reliance on Him that is stronger than all.

"But what did you think when he fetched you down to the ground at the first blow?"

"Why, I thought, quote he, that so my Master himself was served, and yet he it was that conquered at the last."

Oh, that we could fight our giants with that selfsame spirit! Can our wounds and suffering of the flesh be proof of our love to our Master? Can

we let our fears melt into reliance on Him that is stronger than all? Can we accept being served as our Master was served, knowing He can conquer all?

A few months ago I fought a giant in the form of a physical infirmity. As I learned of my condition and began to see what the road ahead might involve, I had many fears, questions, and conflicting thoughts. I felt like the Sabeans had already taken the oxen, the fire had already consumed the sheep, and I just didn't understand why the Chaldeans needed my camels! And then my thoughts fell to Great Heart. In an act of childlike faith, I asked God to give me the spirit of Great Heart to slay this giant. There was a persevering grace given to me that I will never forget. In the weeks and months that followed, God gave me abundant courage. It wasn't just courage to endure but courage to joyfully slay the giant! The Lord gave deliverance, and it has become an experience I would not trade. My part in the battle was in that small act of faith to ask God for the spirit of Great Heart.

There are many Great Hearts among us. Brothers and sisters are facing cancer, chronic pain, lifelong depression, and the aftermath of strokes, diseases, accidents, and injuries. For reasons far above us, they face the heat of the "furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated" (Daniel 3:19). And for reasons far above us, they daily slay the giant of despair and find joy in pressing forward. Not even the smell of fire passes on them. I cannot promise that I will not pray for deliverance the next time I see the Sabeans coming over the hill (and they will come), but I do hope that I will ask myself if God is asking Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Darren?" I hope I will think of the joy Great Heart would have in slaying another giant. Pray for an escape route? Maybe. Maybe not!

Brother Darren – Courtesy Messenger of Truth Gospel Publishers Kansas



Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

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