

He Refines Them

by Charles E. Cowman

The Lord refines His people by fulfilling their prayers, even if it means suffering, and making them like unto Himself.

Scripture: John 12:32, Galatians 6:14, Philippians 3:10, 1 Peter 2:21, Revelation 14:4

Topics: "Spiritual Transformation", "The Cross"

Description

Charles E. Cowman preaches about the transformative power of surrendering to God's will, using the imagery of being crucified with Christ and dying to the world's desires. He emphasizes how God answers prayers for contrition, purity, meekness, and likeness to Christ by allowing trials and refining experiences to shape believers. Despite initial fear and reluctance, those who draw near to the cross of Christ are changed into His likeness, living in intimate fellowship with Him and willing to sacrifice worldly comforts for the sake of following Him.

Transcript

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14).

They were living to themselves; self with its hopes, and promises and dreams, still had hold of them; but the Lord began to fulfill their prayers. They had asked for contrition, and had surrendered for it to be given them at any cost, and He sent them sorrow; they had asked for purity, and He sent them thrilling anguish; they had asked to be meek, and He had broken their hearts; they had asked to be dead to the world, and He slew all their living hopes; they had asked to be made like unto Him, and He placed them in the furnace, sitting by "as a refiner and purifier of silver," until they should reflect His image; they had asked to lay hold of His cross, and when He had reached it to them it lacerated their hands.

They had asked they knew not what, nor how, but He had taken them at their word, and granted them all their petitions. They were hardly willing to follow Him so far, or to draw so nigh to Him. They had upon them an awe and fear, as Jacob at Bethel, or Eliphaz in the night visions, or as the apostles when they thought that they had seen a spirit, and knew not that it was Jesus. They could almost pray Him to depart from them, or to hide His awfulness. They found it easier to obey than to suffer, to do than to give up, to bear the cross than to hang upon it. But they cannot go back, for they have come too near the unseen cross, and its virtues have pierced too deeply within them. He is fulfilling to them His promise, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32).

But now at last their turn has come. Before, they had only heard of the mystery, but now they feel it. He has fastened on them His look of love, as He did on Mary and Peter, and they can but choose to follow.

Little by little, from time to time, by flitting gleams, the mystery of His cross shines out upon them. They behold Him lifted up, they gaze on the glory which rays from the wounds of His holy passion; and as they gaze they advance, and are changed into His likeness, and His name shines out through them, for He dwells in them. They live alone with Him above, in unspeakable fellowship; willing to lack what others own (and what they might have had), and to be unlike all, so that they are only like Him.

Such, are they in all ages, "who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

Had they chosen for themselves, or their friends chosen for them, they would have chosen otherwise. They would have been brighter here, but less glorious in His Kingdom. They would have had Lot's portion, not Abraham's. If they had halted anywhere--if God had taken off His hand and let them stray back--what would they not have lost? What forfeits in the resurrection?

But He stayed them up, even against themselves. Many a time their foot had well nigh slipped; but He in mercy held them up. Now, even in this life, they know that all He did was done well. It was good to suffer here, that they might reign hereafter; to bear the cross below, for they shall wear the crown above; and that not their will but His was done on them and in them.

--Anonymous.

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