

# The Transfiguration of Christ

by Robert Murray M'Cheyne

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*The Transfiguration of Christ shows the height of his glory and is a glimpse of the coming glory, giving assurance that Christ will finish his work.*

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 31:18, Zechariah 12:10, Acts 5:31, Acts 20:21, Romans 2:4, 2 Timothy 2:24, Titus 1:1, James 1:17

**Topics:** "Christian Humility", "Spiritual Growth"

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## Description

Greek Word Studies preaches about the importance of handling opposition with gentleness and meekness, emphasizing the need to correct others humbly and patiently, especially those who are in error. The sermon highlights that opposition not only involves a psychological attitude but also corresponding behavior, and that those who oppose themselves are standing in their own way and hindering their own growth. It stresses the significance of being firm in convictions while communicating truth with love and grace, leading others to repentance through God's life-changing grace.

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## Transcript

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST SEEMS ordinarily to be but little understood. It is like Gethsemane, darkness hangs around it. Gethsemane showed the deepness of his sorrow; mount Tabor showed the height of his glory, which passeth knowledge.

Let us go over the different things mentioned in these words.

First, let us observe the favourite three: 'And it came to pass, about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John, and James, and went up into a mountain to pray' (verse 28). It is interesting to notice that these three disciples were often peculiarly favoured of the Lord. Christ seems to have exercised peculiar sovereignty to the three.

The first time that he distinguished them was when he raised the ruler's daughter. 'While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead; why troublest thou the Master any farther? ... And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James' (Mark 5:35-37). You will notice that these three were the same three. He took them into the ruler's house and showed them his power to raise the dead.

The second time that he distinguished them is in the passage before us. A little before he said: 'But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God'

(verse 27). And eight days after he took them up to the mount, and gave them a glimpse of the coming glory.

The next time was when in the garden of Gethsemane. When he wanted some to be witnesses of his agony, he took with him Peter, James and John. O brethren! it was a great honour to be permitted to see his glory; but oh! it was more glorious to see his agony.

There have always been men in the Church greatly honoured by God. Some are not only of the twelve, but of the three. There was a Noah, and there was a Daniel. You remember, God says, 'Daniel, a man greatly beloved' (Daniel 10: 11). And there was an Abraham, who was called 'the friend of God' (James 2:23). There have been many in the Church who have been eminent among the twelve, but it is far better to be among the three.

And this is quite different from worldly covetousness -- it is quite different from mere worldly ambition. It is not like the wish of Zebedee's wife for her children; she wanted them to have more worldly honour and glory than the rest. But oh! to covet Christ, to be like Christ -- this is to be happy. Mr. Edwards says, 'Suppose there never were to be but one in the world at a time, who is properly a complete Christian, in all respects of a right stamp, having Christianity shining in its true lustre, appearing amiable from whatever part, and under what character so ever viewed. Resolved to act just as I would do, as if I strove with all my might to be that one.'

Ah, brethren, resolve to be an eminent Christian. There are not many Christians nowadays that see far into Gethsemane's gloom -- they are not many who have glimpses of Tabor's glory. One star of the first magnitude gives more glory to God than a dozen lesser stars do. One eminent minister gives more honour to Christ than a dozen other ministers do. One eminent Christian gives more honour to God than a dozen others. Covet earnestly, brethren, to reflect all Christ's image.

The next point to consider is the prayer meeting on the hill. Matthew says, 'He went up into a mountain apart.' Luke says, it was 'to pray'. Christ loved to pray alone. We are told by Mark that he arose a great while before day and went out to pray. We are told by Matthew that after feeding the five thousand, he went up into a mountain apart to pray; and we are told by Luke at another time, when he was beset by his enemies, he went into the wilderness to pray; and we are told at another time by Luke, when he was to ordain apostles, he went out, and continued all night in prayer. This shows that Christ loved secret prayer.

Ah, you are no Christian, if you do not love secret prayer. O brethren! a prayerless man is an unconverted man. Disguise it as you may; defend it as you can; explain it as you like; but a prayerless man is a Christless man. Christ loved the prayer meeting. We are told in the 18th chapter of Luke, 1st verse, of Christ praying with his disciples. Another example is where we have been reading - the 17th of John. O how wonderful to have heard Christ pray!

It must have been wonderful to hear Abraham pray -- if you take the 11th of Genesis as an example; it must have been wonderful to hear Paul pray -- if you take his prayer for the Ephesians as an example -- the man who could pray that he might be filled with all the fullness of God. It was wonderful to hear Luther pray; one friend says, 'It was awful to hear him pray, there was such a reverence, and yet such a holy familiarity in his approaches to God.'

But that was nothing like hearing Christ pray. It must have been wonderful among the trees of Tabor, to hear him confessing all the sins that had been put upon him. 'Innumerable evils have compassed me

about, and mine iniquities have taken such hold upon me that I cannot look up' (Psalm 40:12). It must have been wonderful to hear Christ's strong cries and tears for deliverance - to hear him say, 'Save me from the lion's mouth. Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire where there is no standing; I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow me' (Psalms 22:21; 69:1, 2). Or to hear him pray for his believing disciples. 'I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me out of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. Father, I will that they also, which thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory' (John 17). Such, no doubt, was the prayer that was listened to on Tabor's mount that night.

Brethren, such are the prayers that are offered up yet on Zion! Brethren, if you had been behind some of the trees on Tabor's mount, and heard him mention your name in prayer, saying, 'I do not pray for Peter only, or for James, or John, but for this soul. Father, sanctify this soul through thy truth. Father, I will that this soul be with me where I am, that it may behold my glory.' Say, doubting sinner, if you had heard Christ mentioning thy name, would it not have given you peace? Does distance make any difference? Suppose you heard a friend praying for you in the next room, or suppose you were told that a friend residing in a foreign land prayed for you, would it make any difference? Now, supposing you are told Christ prays for you -- for he prays for all his believing people -- will you not take the comfort of it?

Thirdly, let us look at the answer to prayer. The first answer to prayer was the transfiguration, verse 29: 'And, as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening.' You will observe this was an answer to prayer, for it is said, 'As he prayed the fashion of his countenance was altered.' Matthew says, 'It did shine as the sun.' Luke says, 'his raiment was white and glistening.' Matthew says, 'it was white as the light'. I believe that the answer to prayer came for two reasons: (a) for his own sake; (b) for his disciples' sake.

For his own sake. He prayed, 'Glorify thou me', and here was the answer. Brethren, this was sweet proof to Christ that he would go through with his work. I believe that this was often his prayer -- that he might finish his work; so here is a glimpse of the coming glory, as a proof that he would finish it.

For the disciples' sakes that they might believe in the coming glory. Peter, when an old man, often looked back to this scene.

He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount (2 Peter 1: 17, 18).

You will notice, brethren, that Peter was now an old man, yet he looked back to the scene he witnessed on Tabor's mount that night. It was a sweet assurance to the disciples that Christ would yet finish the work and be glorified, and they glorified in him. Ah! brethren, it is sweet assurance to you and me that Christ is now glorified. His raiment is now white as the light, and that raiment is what he offers to you and me. 'I counsel thee to buy of me ... white raiment that thou mayest be clothed' (Revelation 3:18). And that answer to prayer was given for our sakes.

There was another answer to prayer: 'And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem' (verses 30, 31). Compare this with Luke 22:43: 'And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.' In Gethsemane, you will notice it was an angel that came down from heaven to

strengthen him. On Tabor's top, it was two redeemed sinners. I believe that this answer to prayer was also for his own and the disciples' sake. I believe it was an answer to that prayer, 'Father, I will that they also which thou hast given me be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory' (John 17:24). What an assurance was this that he would finish the work! The Father had received them into heaven on the ground of the work which Christ should finish. And it was a sweet assurance to the disciples; they learned that Christ can save sinners; and they learned also that saints in glory love to talk about the deace which he accomplished at Jerusalem.

Brethren, let us take one of these lessons. Learn that the redeemed love to talk about the deace which he accomplished at Jerusalem. They love to sing about it: 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain' (Revelation 5:12). Ah! there are some that would take this world as their portion; they love not to talk about the deace which he accomplished at Jerusalem. Ah, brethren, this shows you are not saved. Brethren, think whether you would like to sing the song the redeemed sing in the New Jerusalem, or be back on earth again. Ah! filthy dreamers, how could you walk on the golden streets of the New Jerusalem who love earth better? -- it cannot be: 'And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie' (Revelation 21:27).

I come now to the fourth thing, and that is to notice the three disciples: 'But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep ...' (verses 32-33). Observe their sin -- they were weary, and had fallen asleep. What! asleep, when there was such a glory around Christ. Asleep, when redeemed men had come down from heaven and were talking with him. O Lord, what is man? Man is but dust. Ali! brethren, does not this show that ordinances in themselves will not do? If anything could have kept them from sleep it was surely this; but just as they slept at Gethsemane, so they slept at Tabor; they slept both in his sufferings and in his glory. Often you say, If I had but these privileges - If I but sat under a faithful ministry, I would be holy. It is not all the ordinances in the world that will do; grace, and grace alone will do.

Observe Peter's joy, 'Master, it is good for us to be here There are many that could not have endured to be there. Many of you cannot bear the conversation of the redeemed on earth, how could you relish their conversation when they came down from heaven? This shows the old man, and this also shows the new man. The old man is, 'Let us make three tabernacles'; The new man is, 'Lord it is good for us to be here.' So that you can say, it is good to be here.

Last of all, notice the Father's answer: 'While he thus spake, there came a cloud and overshadowed them; and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him' (verses 34-35). This was the third answer to prayer, 'This is my beloved Son.' He received from the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' When the disciples came down from the mount, they would hear Christ in another manner, they would hear him as one whom they had seen in heaven. And so, brethren, in like manner, if you can get a sight of the glory to which the Father has exalted him, you will hear in a different manner: 'My sheep hear my voice ... and they follow me' (John 10:27). Once we heard Christ's voice, and now we follow him, and soon we shall hear his voice again, and be where he is, and to all eternity we shall follow him. Amen.

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