

Christ All-Sufficient and Faith All-Inclusive

by William Edwin Boardman

Christ is all-sufficient and faith is all-inclusive, and we must surrender to God and obey His commandments to realize the saving power and presence of Jesus in our lives.

Scripture: Matthew 18:3, Mark 9:24, Romans 12:1, Philippians 4:19, Hebrews 10:14, James 4:8

Topics: "Faith And Consecration", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

William Edwin Boardman preaches about the analogies of first and second conversion, highlighting the difference between the pardon and purging of sins. He emphasizes the importance of complete consecration to God, illustrating through the stories of a Son of the Prophets at a School of the Prophets, a Lady of Distinction, and a Merchant. The sermon underscores the necessity of faith that gives all to Christ and faith that takes Christ as the Savior from sin, showing that both elements are crucial for spiritual growth and transformation.

Transcript

THE ANALOGIES OF FIRST AND SECOND CONVERSION -- DIFFERENCE -- CHRIST ALL -- A SON OF THE PROPHETS AT A SCHOOL OF THE PROPHETS -- FAITH TWO-FOLD, GIVES ALL -- A LADY OF DISTINCTION, TAKES ALL -- A MERCHANT.

The analogies between conversion and second conversion, are complete in all things -- save one.

There is a radical difference between the pardon of sins, and the purging of sins. Pardon is instantaneously entire, but cleansing from sin is a process of indefinite length. Even here, however, the analogy, though not complete, is not entirely wanting, for in the second as in the first, the apprehension of Christ as the way, is instantaneous, the difference being simply that in the first, the work of Christ is already done the instant the soul believes, while in the second, the work of Christ remains yet to be done in the future after the soul believes. In the one the atonement has been made, and the moment it is accepted, the pardon is complete; in the other, although the righteousness of Christ is perfect in which the soul is to be clothed yet the work of unfolding the heart to itself in its wants, and the unfolding of Christ to the heart from glory to glory, in his sympathizing love, and purifying presence and power, as the soul shall be prepared to go onward and upward from faith to faith, is a work of time and progress.

With this single exception, however, the analogies are complete. The period and process of conviction; the unwillingness at first to admit the light and obey the truth; the resolve afterward to seek and find the

salvation; the vain attempts and fruitless struggles; the deceptions and temptations of the adversary; the final perception of Christ as the way, and the giving of all up to him, and taking him for all; the light, and comfort, and peace that follow, and the wonder that there should ever have been a single doubt of the reality that there is such an experience; and the wonder still greater, that the way of faith in Christ, so plain and so simple as it is should not have been seen at once first of all: in all these things the analogy is perfect, no shade of difference.

The experience in no case will be exactly the same in the second, as in the first. The experiences of no two persons are precisely alike in every feature, or in any one feature. No two have faces alike. All have faces, however, if they are human. No two have any one feature precisely the same, yet all have the same features. He who should have two mouths, or three eyes, or two noses, would be a monster, not a man. And he who should have no mouth, or nose, or eyes, at all, would be a deformed man at best. So in religious experience, all have the same general features, though no two are exactly alike. And this analogy of unity in diversity holds good between first and second conversion in any person's experience, the same as between the experiences of different persons.

We have here also, a correspondence with all the processes of nature. A seed germinates in the ground and shoots up its stem and bud to the light, where it unfolds itself to the sun, and the dews, and the air, and drinks in the power of a second germination; and then puts forth another bud and stem just like the first in every essential thing, while yet no two buds are ever exactly the same, and so grows by repeating itself. The same analogy might be traced through all the mineral kingdom, in all crystalline formations, and through all geological history.

This analogy as it chiefly concerns us for the great practical purpose in view, gives us, if we have passed through the first step, two things to guide us through the second, in the strong light of our own past experience. First, CHRIST AS ALL-SUFFICIENT, and second, FAITH AS ALL-INCLUSIVE.

The first grand effort of the convicted, burdened heart, is to find relief -- not by taking Christ, at once as all-sufficient -- not, perhaps, by going to Christ at all, until driven to him by repeated failures, at the work of changing itself. And when at last driven to him, then the first thing is -- not to take Christ himself -- but to seek is salvation rather than himself.

It is a very simple lesson to learn -- as it seems when once it is learned -- but one of the hardest we ever learn in our lives; that having Christ we have salvation also, while without receiving Christ himself we cannot have the salvation. Having the fountain we have its issuing -- streams. Cut off from the fountain, the streams will not flow to us. Christ offers himself to be the bridegroom of the soul. He offers to endow his bride with all the riches of his own inheritance in the heirship of his Father. Taking him as our bridegroom, and giving ourselves to him as the bride espouses her husband, with him we have all he has, as well as all he is, while without him we can have neither.

The mistake is that of seeking the salvation instead of seeking the Saviour. Just the same mistake that the affianced would make, if she should seek to have the possessions of him to whom she was engaged, made over to her from him, without their union in wedlock, instead of accepting his offer of himself, and having the hymenial. bond completed, by which he and all he has would become hers.

Our salvation is IN Christ and with him, but not APART from him. When a bank note or a gold coin is put into my hands, my money is in that, not apart from it. When a deed is signed, sealed, recorded, and delivered to me, my title is in my deed and not apart from it. My bank note or gold coin will pay my debt

and pay my journeying expenses. My deed will ensure me my farm. Even so in Christ I have my debt cancelled, my journeying support, and my heavenly inheritance all secure.

Perhaps this matter cannot be better illustrated than by a sketch of the struggles and victory of

ONE OF THE SONS OF THE PROPHETS AT ONE OF THE SCHOOLS OF THE PROPHETS.

J. was doubly one of the sons of the prophets. His father was a distinguished minister, and a professor in one of our so-called universities, while he himself was a student in one of our Theological Seminaries in this favored land. He was about to leave the halls of sacred science and go out to try his armor and his arms on the great western missionary battlefield. His conversion was clear and decided, years before while in college. His consecration to the ministry of Jesus was unwavering. His course as a young Christian and student had commended him to universal respect. The distinguished men who were training the sons of the prophets for their great work, esteemed J., even above most of the noble young men around them. To all others his prospects were bright and fair, but J. had his own misgivings. When he thought of the great work of the ambassador for Christ, his heart chilled with fear lest he should come short. Then he turned himself to see what could be done. Resolutions -- the first grand resort always -- were formed, and alas, broken too, almost before they were cold. A covenant was written out, and signed, and sealed, and blotted with tears. But alas, again it proved worth not so much as the foolscap on which it was drawn up. Then it was nailed up in plain view of himself and his visitors in his own study, right over the desk where he dug out his Hebrew, and wrote out, his sermons. But the case was no better at last. Finally he vowed -- a rash vow -- to give his most splendid books, the treasure of his study, to the flames, if he should fail to keep covenant again with the Lord and his own soul. But he failed again. Now what? Now he did not know what. He was at his wit's end. He was a strong man of iron will. Unbending as the oak in his uprightness, and rooted deeply in all Biblical science -- but his heart! Ah, his wayward heart was too much for him! He was associated with a fellow student in a Mission Sabbath School, and various other works of love for the cause of the Master. His fellow student, like Rieu with D'Aubigne, though far behind J. in many things, was far ahead of him in the knowledge of Jesus. In one of their conversations, his associate mentioned the fact of a second conversion, in the case of one mutually esteemed by them, and seeing a look of surprise in the face of J., said, "You know there is such an experience, do you not?" "No" answered J., "I do not. I never heard of such a thing." "Well then, be assured there is." Explanation followed, and they separated. Next time they met, the matter was called up again, and as they parted again, J. said, in tones of deepest emotion, "Come to my room as soon as you can. I shall die if I do not find relief from my agony of soul."

Next day, seated in J.'s room, a scene occurred between the two, never to be forgotten by either. J.'s anxiety seemed to have reached the highest point of endurance. The heartstrings were evidently ready to break. He wanted, he must have the fulness of the blessings of the gospel. He could live no longer without, so he said, and so he felt.

His friend pointed him to Jesus, saying, "Look to Jesus! Accept of Jesus! He offers himself to you to be yours. Take him at his word. Trust in him, and he will be all in all to you."

"Ah, yes, but that does not help me at all. I am not changed at all by that. I want to be changed, made all new. I am so vile! so fickle! so foolish! O, for transforming power!"

"No, but if you take Jesus to yourself as yours, and give yourself to him to be his, that is all you need. He will take you as you are, and keep you by his own mighty power through faith unto salvation."

"Ah! But, my heart! my heart! O, that is the same as ever! Tell me how my heart can be made anew!"

"Trust in Jesus. His covenant is, 'I will write my law in your heart. I will put my truth in your mind, and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.' Trust in Jesus."

"Ah, yes, but that does not change me!"

"But is not Jesus able to do for you all he promises -- all you ask or think? Think of his works of mercy, and wonders of love in the days of his flesh. He is with you now, as he was with his disciples then, only now in spirit, then in body; but yet, to do all you need, or can desire in the way of salvation. If you have him, you have all he can do for you, and will ever have. He will be with you, and be yours -- your own -- your Almighty Saviour -- always everywhere. O, think what a treasure you have in Jesus!"

The Lord opened his eyes to see that Jesus was his, and that Jesus was all in all to him, more than he had ever dared to hope for. And hiding his face in his handkerchief, to prevent the convulsions of his features being seen, he sobbed out, "Oh! is that it? Is that it? Glorious! Glorious!"

Then after a moment, dropping on his knees, "Let us pray," he said. And slowly, yet as fast as he could control his utterance, he thanked God over, and over, and over, and over again for the unspeakable gift of such a Saviour to be the sinner's own, and all his own, and always his own, and all he ever could want in life and in death, to atone for his sins, and take away his sins, to justify him, and sanctify him, and glorify him. He could do nothing but praise, only just to exclaim, "O, that all might see him, and know him, and glorify him too!" This to him was a new and glorious era. He went forth to the battle, but not alone; and he lives to fight, but not alone. The invisible but Almighty Saviour is ever with him, and he knows it. Jesus is now all-sufficient, he wants no more, for in him, and with him "all things are his, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come," all are his, and he is Christ's, and Christ is God's.

FAITH ALL-INCLUSIVE.

This is the second matter of chief importance to be illustrated. True and saving faith is two-fold. It gives all and takes all. If it fails to give all up to Christ, no matter how bold and clamorous it may be in claiming the promises, it is dead and powerless. Its boldness, like Peter's before the crucifixion, will be put to shame when put to the test, and its owner will have occasion of bitter weeping in this world, and it may be of terrible gnashing of teeth in the world of despair. On the other hand if it of taking Christ for all, all its givings will be in vain, ending only in sore and terrible disappointment at last.

The word of God presents to us two grand assets. One of command and the other of promise. Faith trusts implicitly in both. Faith obeys the one accepts the other. In the Commandments, God himself as a requiring God -- in the promises as a giving God. Faith relies upon Him, in his commandments and his promises -- yielding explicit obedience to the one, and putting forth hand of assured confidence to take the other.

Now, that faith is not properly faith at all, which accepts the one and rejects or neglects the other.

God demands of us heart and life wholly given and consecrated to him, and true faith responds "Yes, Lord, Thou shalt have all. All I have and am are thine."

God gives us his Son to be our Saviour, and true faith takes him at once and for all in all, and is satisfied saying

"Thou O Christ art all I want,

More than all in Thee I find."

He who gives all and takes all has all. He who but does not take, or takes but does not give, has nothing but disappointment and sorrow.

Daniel obeyed the Lord and trusted in him. When the collision came between the command of the King and the command of God, Daniel's faith did not waver. He obeyed God rather than man. And when the test of the den and the lions came his faith was still unshaken; he trusted in Him whom he served.

Now for the sake of the illustration, suppose the faith of this noble servant of God had been reversed -- suppose when the commands of the king and of God came into collision -- he had done as, alas, too many do, obeyed man rather than God, and yet trusted to the clemency of God that he would not be angry with him, even though he did disobey -- made the goodness of God a plea of presumption that all would be well at last, though the word of God was set at naught. Would God, think you, have left such a testimony on record as the exclamation of the angel: "O Daniel! Man greatly beloved of the Lord?" Or on the other hand, suppose when Daniel was cast into the lion's den, instead of trusting in his God, that he would deliver him -- suppose then that in his impotence, bound hand and foot, he had made fight with the lions, and sought deliverance by his own struggles with those terrible beasts of prey, how long before he would have been torn limb from limb and devoured by the hungry monsters of the den? But no. When the commandment came up, Daniel made God his trust and obeyed, even at the risk of what seemed inevitable and terrible death. And when the danger came then again he made God his trust, and was delivered.

The two aspects and their results of Faith separated, may be illustrated by two separate sketches -- First, a sketch of the struggles and failures, and final success of

A LADY OF DISTINCTION,

Will show the futility of trusting to the promises while neglecting the commandments, that is, the necessity for consecration to God in order to realize the saving power and presence of Jesus.

The lady in question is well known both in Europe and America, both by the brilliance of her genius, and the liberality of her gifts, but as she still living, her name is withheld.

For many years after her conversion, which was bright and clear and happy, she served the Lord in the too frequent sort of a life of ups and downs -- knowing of nothing better for the Christian here below, at least for the Christian of her "temper and temperament," as she was wont to say. The superior consistency and fervor seen in some others, she thought was due mainly to superior natural qualities and educational training, rather than to any deeper and fuller experimental oneness with Christ.

A brother beloved however, at last convinced her that, for all the children of God, herself amongst the number of course, there is such an experimental union with Jesus as has for convenience been named second conversion.

Months wore away after this, however, before any earnest step was taken to make it her own. Notwithstanding her deep persuasion of its reality, for herself it seemed an impossible height to scale. Often and often it was called up in the heart's own ball of legislation, and as often with a sigh of despondency it was laid on the table again.

At last, meeting with one zealous in this matter, in whose mind the one aspect of faith -- that of taking the promises, seemed in the main like Aaron's rod, to have swallowed up everything else, especially the other aspect -- that of consecration, she was persuaded to cast herself upon Christ. And right heartily and wholly she did seem to take him to herself, and her hopes were sanguine that he would be to her and do for her all he had promised, and all that others received.

A little while, and her hopes all died. The Saviour seemed no nearer, no dearer, no more her helper than before.

Then came another similar trial, with similar results. And another, and another, and so on. More than a year passed in these fruitless struggles, and many a sad, sad disappointment marked and blotted the pages of that year's history. The hand of the Lord, always near at the right moment, at last placed upon her pillow -- for she was ill at the time -- Upham's "Interior Life." She read as she had strength to read, a few pages at a time. Coming to the chapter on "Consecration," she read it to the end, and said to herself, "This I have not done. I have tried to trust in Jesus, but I have never yet in all these attempts, made an entire surrender of myself to him, to do his will, but only to receive his salvation."

Turning back she re-read every line and every word with renewed care, and closer scrutiny. And as she read, the length and breadth of the requirements of God upon her, came out in appalling proportions. "Right! Right! Yes, all right," she said. "I ought to make this full consecration of myself to God. But O, how hopeless! My whole pathway in the past, in memory, is strewn with the fragments of broken resolutions. And resolve I resolve again?"

The book recommended a written covenant, if convenient. After days and days of weary reflection, she concluded finally to make the covenant of consecration as advised. The first time she took to the easy chair as a rest from her long, long, prostration -- even for an hour -- she called for pen and ink, and wrote out a covenant, full even to the minutest details, signed it, and knelt and repeated it word from the heart, then rose exhausted and sought again her pillow.

Days passed by. Days of heavenly peace. Trials came, but her "peculiar temper and temperament" did not overcome her. She was calm as Silver Lake at sunrise and as bright and clear. She was slow to believe, after so many failures, that success had crowned this last act. By and by, however, the conviction that Jesus was with her, and was keeping her in perfect peace, and would do it, was forced upon her. And her joy in Jesus as a present Saviour -- All-sufficient -- was unbounded.

From the very first, she had been willing and more than willing that the Saviour should work in her to will and to do of his own good pleasure. And she was really convinced, fully persuaded that if ever the law of God should be written upon her heart in letters of light and love, it would be by the hand of God himself in answer to faith in Jesus. In this she was clear. She had no confidence in the flesh -- none in her own will -- none in any round of duties or course of action. She knew that God alone could fill her heart and soul with God. Why then, and how, did she fail? Simply because she did not yield herself a living sacrifice unto God. She gave herself up as a dead, a passive sacrifice merely. She consecrated herself to receive merely, and not to do. God requires of his intelligent voluntary creatures an intelligent active consecration to himself, heart and soul yielded to do his will, as well as receive his gifts of grace and mercy.

And in this, with all her genius and intelligence, and all her earnestness besides, she failed entirely until, through failure after failure, together with the timely suggestions of Professor Upham's Interior Life, she was led to review the past, and superadd a covenant of consecration to her covenant of trust for grace.

Then, but not before, she came to the place to receive what the Lord had in store to bestow upon her.

Here then, in the case of this lady, we have a clear illustration of the necessity of that aspect and phase of faith, which obeys the command of God -- which gives up heart and soul to do the will of God.

"Take my yoke," says our Saviour, "and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly and you shall find rest to your souls. "But without taking the yoke, where is the learning and the rest of the soul? " "Whosoever will do the will of my Father shall know of the doctrine," he says again. But is not the converse of this saying equally true that, Whosoever will not do His will, shall not know the salvation?

The need of taking all, as well as giving all will be seen as clearly in another example, that of

A MERCHANT.

Early in life, at the very outset of a somewhat extended and varied business career, B. enlisted in the grand enterprise of laying up his treasures in heaven. At first, and for a while, he was quite content to make the Lord Jesus his chief banker, and counsellor, and was very joyous in his course as well as abundantly useful. From early childhood, however, the love of money, not for its own sake but for the glory of it, had been instilled into B.'s heart, and the habit of mercantile ambition had grown with his growth into the strength of an almost unconquerable desire. Kept under for a time after his conversion, this besetting sin by and by, like the shoots from Carvosso's stump in his garden, began to show itself. But unlike Carvosso, B: was not alarmed by it, and did not attempt even to pull up the noxious sprout. Satan reasoned him into its cultivation. "Get rich," said the tempter, "and O how much good you can do with your money. Get rich and you will be a great man. Every body will respect you. Your influence will be mighty for good." "Yes," said B., "I will. I will never rest until I am the master of a fortune, and at the top of the topmost business circle."

A little circumstance helped this decision mightily. One of B.'s old school-mates who had been a sad laggard at school, and no better in business, when he heard of B.'s conversion, said, "Well, that will spoil him, he might have made a business man if he had let religion alone, but that will kill him. He'll never be much now."

This repeated to B., made him feel in his heart, "He shall see! My religion shall not spoil me! He will yet see, and all the world will see. I will be at the top yet."

His ambition was fired, and as the fire of ambition kindled into a flame in his heart, the fire of love sunk into ashy embers. He made money rapidly, and with money came pride and vanity. The valley of humility had little attraction for him. The gushing fountain of the waters of life flowing forth from the foot of the Rock of Ages lost its sparkle and freshness in his eyes. Like a balloon cut loose from its moorings he soon mounted to a dizzy height, and grew dizzy as he mounted. Nothing but the strong hand of a faithful Saviour kept him from tottering and tumbling into perdition. God gave him the desire of his heart, but sent leanness into his soul.

At last, like the prodigal that he was, he came to himself, and all the glories of the world seemed turned into husks, as they are; and even these no man gave to him. They all eluded his grasp, poor as they were. His grandest schemes failed. His gourds were cut down. His balloon was rent, and its buoyant support, poor, empty, evanescent vanity, all escaped, letting him suddenly down into the cesspool of his own folly and madness.

He appealed to Jesus, and was lifted out of the pool. Gave himself up anew and was accepted. He was delivered from his embarrassments, and made a new start in business as well as religion. Months passed -- the happiest of his life, though the soberest up to that time. The Bible was a wellspring of joy to him. Prayer, especially the prayer of the closet, like the astronomer's observatory with its telescope pointed heavenward, gave him happy and hallowed communion with the bright world above; and the house of God, to him, was as the gate of heaven.

Nevertheless, there was still a want rising more and more in his soul. The want -- the sense of want from a sense of his lack of -- holiness. He had not yet learned to find in Jesus, by faith, the supply of this want.

Memoirs became a delight to him, and as it proved, a wondrous blessing. The memoir of another merchant of eminence, inspired him with the hope of gaining a higher level, both in the joys and the utilities of the Christian life, gave him to see as within reach even of the care-pressed, and toil-worn business man, amongst boxes and bales, customers and notes to meet, and paper to be discounted, sharpers to unmask and risks to encounter, a life both of joy and peace in Jesus, and of Christian integrity, unswerving even in the whirlpool and whirlwind of commercial bustle and distraction.

He determined to make it his own. The way as it appeared to him -- and the only one in his view -- was that of uncompromising, and universal consecration to do the will of God. To give himself and his business, and his influence, personal, social, domestic, and commercial, all up to God, and hold all as the Lord's. This he did without reserve. He did not, like Naaman the Syrian, reserve the smallest thing, but gave all up. And then expected as the result of this to receive the light and joy, and comfort, promised in the word of God, and realized by the eminent merchant whose example had moved him to take this step.

To his deep disappointment, as well as great astonishment, after days and days had passed, he found his cherished hopes unfulfilled. His peace was no greater, his self-control no greater, his communion with God no greater -- the same dead level of feeling -- the same impurity of motive -- the same power of wrong impulse remained. And now what should he do? "Try again in the same way," he thought. It did not once occur to him to ask, "Is this process of consecration all? Is there not something besides this?"

Perhaps -- if it had occurred to him, and he had asked and asked at the lips of the Holy One of Israel, it might have been shown to him -- that another thing was needed as much as consecration to do the will of God, viz: faith in Jesus, for the power of Him who worketh in us, to work in Him, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure. He did not ask, however.

So again he gave himself up anew to Christ, to do all his will, after surveying the past and the present and the future more carefully and solemnly than before. But the result was failure again, and again, and again, until wearied with repeated efforts, and discouraged by constant failures, he was driven to the conviction that something else must be required than consecration alone. Happily the Lord who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working, sent him a messenger with the message --- "Believe in the Lord Jesus! It is faith in Christ you lack." He was convinced.

Then soon came another messenger and message -- unseen and unheard, save in the heart of the bewildered and struggling one. But it was effectual there. It was Jesus saying, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." "I am he who purifieth his people unto himself. This work that you have so long struggled to have done on account of your consecration, is mine to do, and I will do it. Believe, only believe in me and it shall be done."

That was the hour and that the moment of joyful deliverance to the struggling merchant.

Many a struggle in the race of business, had been his, but never a harder one than this in the Christian race. And many a success had crowned his struggles with joy, but never one in business, or even in religion, so fruitful of happiness or usefulness as this. It was a wider and deeper opening of the channel of commerce between his soul and the mart of pearls above price, and it was the era of a revival, or rather of an enlargement of a life-long commerce, to be consummated at last by his removal to the fountainhead of that commerce itself.

Now the one point of especial interest, of this illustration in the present case, is the necessity shown by it of the faith that takes Christ as he is offered to the soul, as the Saviour from sin, just as the case of the distinguished lady given before shows the necessity of the faith that gives the soul to Jesus a living sacrifice to do all he requires.

Let either element of faith be lacking, and the soul will be like a boat with one side oar, which goes round and round but makes no progress, only drifts with the stream whirling as its drifts. Or like a bird with a broken wing, whirling over and over and falling as it whirls.

"Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children," says our Saviour, "ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven."

The child is both obedient and docile. His father commands and he knows it is right to obey, and trusts entirely in his father's judgment and integrity, doing at once what his father bids, even when he knows nothing at all of the reasons for the command.

So again, his father promises, and he counts upon the fulfillment of the promise with the most implicit Confidence.

His father states some fact or lays down some principle, he believes it at once, and acts as if it was true.

And this is our Divine Master's illustration of the faith which opens the gates of heaven to the soul -- it must be both obedient and trustful.

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