

Andrew Murray

• An Impacted Life •

“I have been led to cast myself on Christ.”



(1828-1917)

Andrew Murray has become a household name to multitudes of seeking Christians for well over a century. His life and ministry continue to speak with spiritual power through his many writings. His classic work, With Christ in the School of Prayer, has been one of the chief influences behind many of the revivals of the last one hundred years.

The main factors that led to Andrew Murray's salvation at age seventeen include "the blessing of praying parents" and the deep spiritual impressions he received from godly men and women who impacted his life during the years of his formal education in Scotland and Holland.

After leaving South Africa, where he was born, Andrew and his brother first spent seven years in Aberdeen, Scotland, and then three years in Utrecht, Holland.

While he was in Scotland in his formative years, Andrew came under the influence of many men of God, including Thomas Chalmers, Robert S. Candlish, Robert Murray McCheyne, Andrew and Horatius Bonar, and William C. Burns. The most instrumental in his life in those years was Burns, who was also mightily used of God to bring revival throughout Scotland. Burns later went to China and had a profound impact upon Hudson Taylor as well.

One of the early seeds sown into Andrew's heart to lead him to Christ was a pointed letter written by Burns to Andrew's brother John, with a P.S. to Andrew. The content of the letter is as follows:

“Forsake not the works of thine own hands.” Psalms 138:8

DUNDEE, 13th January, 1841.

MY DEAR FRIEND, I was happy to receive your interesting letter, and I have been attempting in the all-prevailing name of Jesus to commend your soul in its present affecting case to the infinitely merciful and gracious Jehovah. Do not, I beseech you, give way to the secret thought that you are excusable in remaining in your present unrenewed state, or that there is the smallest possible hope of your being saved unless you are really born of the Holy Spirit, and reconciled to the Holy Jehovah by the atoning blood of His only-begotten Son. Search your heart, my dear fellow-sinner, and I am sure that you will find something which you are refusing to let go at the command of

God, and look upon this secret reserve in your surrender to Him as the reason on account of which He seems for a time to overlook your case. He is a God of infinite holiness, and cannot look upon iniquity. If we regard iniquity in our heart the Lord will not hear us. But if you are coming in sincerity of heart to Him through Jesus Christ, you will find Him to be a God of infinite mercy and loving-kindness, delighting in mercy and having no pleasure in the death of the sinner. Do not doubt, as your own wicked heart, under the power of Satan, would tempt you to do, that there is mercy for you if you will not willingly harden your heart against Jehovah's voice of authority and love. He will make Himself known to you in good time. Wait on Him. I can testify this to you from my own experience. Often do I think that God has forgotten me, but I find that afterwards He answers prayers which I have forgotten. Oh! dear friend, be not tempted to put off to a more convenient season your entire consecration to Emmanuel. You are enjoying in Jehovah's infinite and most undeserved mercy a convenient season at present; oh! improve it, lest the great God should be provoked and swear in His wrath, "You shall not enter into My rest." I will continue to pray for you, and I have hope in the Lord that I may be heard for His own glory. Jesus' service and His presence are indeed sweet.

I am, dear John,

Your affectionate friend in the Lord Jesus,
Wm. C. BURNS.

P.S. — Show this to Andrew, whom it may also suit. I got his letter and shall answer it afterwards if the Lord will. Write me again. ¹

The content of Burns' letter reveals that he discerned that both John and Andrew needed to be born of the Holy Spirit. There were many other encounters like this in Scotland — all preparing Andrew to find Christ. After seven years in that country, he and his brother went to Utrecht, Holland, to prepare for the ministry.

The spiritual condition in Holland was deplorable. Andrew found himself in the midst of rationalism, liberalism, and a dead and indifferent professing church that was steeped in outward religious forms without any heart or life. This caused Andrew to begin seeking the Lord in a new way. At this time in the city of Utrecht, a small group of students were forming a club called Sechor Dabar ("Remember the Word"). Andrew and John Murray became core members of this group. The intent and practice of this club was similar to the "Holy Club" that was formed a century before at Oxford under the Wesleys.

The students of Sechor Dabar were touched by the revival movement coming out of Geneva, Switzerland, under the leadership of Robert and James Haldane. This movement was called Réveil, the French word for revival, and included such names as Merle d'Aubigné and Frédéric Monod.

Sechor Dabar met once a week and took a firm stand against the worldliness of the other professing ministerial students and suffered ridicule because of this. They

drank only tea and coffee and ate chocolate, refusing wine and liquors. They were derisively nicknamed “The Chocolate Club” and “Prayer Club” by both students and professors.

During this period, Andrew was spending nights mapping out his week so that he would have definite and fixed duties for every moment of the day. Within Andrew the impact of all the previous years of spiritual impressions and godly influences and experiences came to a head in his heart. As he reflected on all these things, the stumbling block in his mind was removed concerning what was necessary for him to be saved. This event, along with being exposed to the degraded atmosphere of the professing Christian world, brought Andrew to a distinct surrender to Christ. He expresses this experience in a letter to his parents:

Utrecht, 14th November, 1845.

My Dear Parents,

IT WAS WITH VERY great pleasure that I today (after having been out of town three days) received your letter of 15th August, containing the announcement of the birth of another brother. And equal, I am sure, will be your delight when I tell you that I can communicate to you far gladder tidings, over which angels have rejoiced, that your son has been born again. It would be

difficult for me to express what I feel on writing to you on this subject. Always hitherto in my letters, and even yet in my conversation, there has been stiffness in speaking about such things, and even now I hardly know how I shall write.

When I now look back to see how I have been brought to where I now am, I must acknowledge that I see nothing. “He has brought the blind by a way that he knew not, and led him in a path that he has not known.” For the last two or three years there has been a process going on, a continual interchange of seasons of seriousness and then of forgetfulness, and then again of seriousness soon after. In this state I came here, and as you may well conceive there was little seriousness amid the bustle of coming away. After leaving [Scotland], however, there was an interval of seriousness during the three days we were at sea — our departure from Aberdeen, the sea, recollections of the past, all were calculated to lead one to reflect. But after I came to Holland I think I was led to pray in earnest: more I cannot tell, for I know it not. “Whereas I was blind, now I see.” I was long troubled with the idea that I must have some deep sight of my sins before I could be converted, and though I cannot yet say that I have had anything of that deep special sight into the guiltiness of sin which many people appear to have, yet I trust, and at present I feel as if I could say, I am confident that as a sinner I have been led to cast myself on Christ.

What can I say now, my dear Parents, but call on you to praise the Lord with me? “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. Who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases; who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercy.” At present I am in a peaceful state. I cannot say that I have had any seasons of special joy, but I think that I enjoy a *true* confidence in God. Short, however, as my experience has been, I cannot say that it is always thus. Already have I felt my sins separating between me and my God, and then the miserable consequences, a sort of fear, and the wretched feeling of being held back in prayer by sin.

24th November. — In taking up my pen again, I have again to lament my inability to write on the great subject. Though I can say that my heart at present is warm, yet whenever I begin to write or speak, I fail. I sometimes think how glorious it will be when it shall be impossible to do anything but ascribe praise to Him that has loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God. There certainly must be a great change in us before we shall be ready to do that.²

The following letter was written by Andrew to his parents six months later, just before his eighteenth birthday:

Tomorrow will close a year which is certainly the most eventful in my life, a year in which I have been made to experience most abundantly that God is good to the soul that seeks Him. And oh! what goodness it is when He Himself implants in us the desire of seeking while we are enemies. I rather think that when I last wrote I gave an account of what I believed was my conversion, and, God be thanked, I still believe that it was His work. Since the letter I cannot say that I have always had as much enjoyment as before it, but still there has been much joy in the Lord, though, alas! there has also been much sin....But through grace I have always been enabled to trust in Him who has begun the good work in me, and to believe that He will also perform what He has, out of His free love before I was born, begun. Oh! that I might receive grace to walk more holy before Him.³

Andrew again writes to his parents from Utrecht, expressing his desires to trust the Lord and his appreciation for his praying parents:

...I am prepared for whatever shall be good, trusting that that gracious Father will guide us now, as He has hitherto so kindly led us, and believing that He knows what is best for His Church in that part of the vineyard where I desire to labor. My desire is to place myself in His hands, and He can use me even although I have not the advantage of an additional year's stay in Europe —

perhaps even better than if I had such an additional stock of human wisdom, which so often proves nothing else than an obstruction in God's way.

I say it is my wish to do this, for, alas! the general state of my mind is not so much a resting in faith in God's leadings, but a certain indifference and contentedness as to the future, resulting from my natural character. What a blessed thing it would be if we could commit ourselves and all our cares to Him in faith, in that active, living faith that is really concerned in the future. I find that I so often mistake for faith a certain state of the mind which is content with the future from a sense, not of God's fatherly care, but of God's providence as something allied to fate — an idea that I can't help it, and that there is no use in troubling about it. Oh! how different is that faith which arises from a soul really concerned in its own interests and in God's glory, that sees and feels human aid insufficient and failing, and then flees to Him who is the strong refuge....

I am sure we have often been reaping the fruits of your believing prayers, while we were still unacquainted with true prayer, and I trust that we may still go on to experience what a blessing praying parents are. I must reproach myself, too, that I feel this so little, and that I so little seek in prayer those blessings for you, which we have so often received from you through this means. The Lord teach us to pray, and oh! although I do not pray for

it as I ought, may He grant you a rich answer to the many prayers you have offered for us in an abundant blessing for your own souls. I am sure there are no prayers which parents offer, of which the answer is more gratifying to their own souls, than those which they see answered in the conversion of their children. May a gracious God, who has so far richly blessed the family in the conversion of the four eldest, unite us all in those ties which are closer than those of earthly relationship, and make us one in Christ....Remember us to all the family.⁴

Like Andrew Murray, your life may have been impacted by many godly influences. Your parents have prayed much for you. You have been exposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ. You have known the tug of the Spirit on your heart to open to Christ, but up to now, you have not responded.

The Lord Jesus wants to get your attention. In Revelation 3:19-20 He says, ¹⁹“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. ²⁰Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.” The word “behold” is spoken because the Lord seeks to secure our attention concerning our salvation. He wants us to consider that all the things that have impacted our lives positively and

negatively are for one thing — to cause us to open the door of our heart and let Him in.

Andrew Murray reflected on his whole life, and by doing so, he stopped to *behold* that it was Christ standing at his door knocking. He then opened up to Him, and Christ came in and ushered him into a new life of enjoyment and spiritual feasting. This life is waiting for you now. The moment you open and say to the Lord, “Come in,” He will immediately enter into your life and change you forever.

