

HIS IN A . . . LIFE OF PRAYER

by

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CHAPTER FOUR

HIS PEACE THROUGH A LIFE OF PRAYER

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee” (Isaiah 26:3).

It remains for us to consider the Life of Prayer in its practical effect upon Christian character; in doing so we propose to particularize, singling out one quality as the index of an all-victorious life. That quality is peace. For the absence of peace is prima facie evidence that Christ is not enthroned. It is a life that cannot please Him. He has not come into His own.

We move in a world of worry and vexation of spirit. So much so that we may characterize worry as the index of a worldly life. It abounds on all sides. Ofttimes it pervades the atmosphere we breathe to the point of saturation. Can the Christian hope to escape it?

Thank God, there is a life that is immune, in the possession of God’s own antidote. Of it we read:

“Neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10).

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Jesus gives us peace. The world gives us worry. Which shall prevail? Our prayer-life, or the lack of it, will decide.

It is the overcoming life that is to be crowned. In the new order of things that is to be, Jesus is heard saying, **“He that overcometh shall inherit all things”** (Revelation 21:7). Overcomes what? Surely the thing that goes to make up our God-given or God-permitted test.

And if “worry” is the answer we are prone to give to life’s tests, may we not venture, for our present purposes, to insert that word as the crystallization of our test: **“He that overcometh—worry— shall inherit all things.”**

Is there a life that supplants worry with peace? If so, who would not have it? Man's world, as we observe it, tells us such a life is desperately needful. God's Word, as we study it, tells us it is gloriously possible.

To deal with the problem comprehensively, from its roots to its fruits, at the same time bringing help and deliverance to those whom worry has victimized, we must raise, and undertake to answer, the following questions: Why do we worry? Why should we not worry? And then the practical question, How not to worry?

In treating the first two we will follow the threefold relationship, so often instanced in Scripture—our duty to ourselves, to our neighbor, to our God. These, like the three sides of a triangle, comprehend the whole of life. The third question will be answered by an appeal to Scripture, where alone such a life can be found.

I—Why We Worry

1. WORRY IS A PERSONAL HABIT.

It is a habit that, once formed, is difficult to overcome. For it is largely a mental habit, an attitude of mind toward what happens, may happen or may not happen. The habit of worrying wears grooves in our gray matter. Every time we indulge in it the grooves are made deeper, like ruts in a dirt road. With every recurrence we become the more apt to drop into them. We are victims of our own habit.

Moreover, the very earnestness of life superinduces the habit. Here, for instance, is a mother with three small children. She wants to be the best mother on God's earth. She bears those children hourly upon her mind and heart. Then she has three perfectly good reasons, insistent reasons, for worrying. One may break a limb before the day is over. Another may contract a contagious disease. Who knows what may happen to a child? Or here is a father: large family; small wages; no margin to fall back upon; uncertain health that may give way at any time. As he thinks of his family, why shouldn't he fall into the habit of worrying?

Once the habit is acquired, there is little relief. Every threatened fluctuation of circumstance is a signal for a fresh indulgence in it. Thus thousands are proving themselves incapable of an overcoming life, merely reflecting the fearsomeness or changefulness of their environment.

2. WE WORRY BECAUSE OTHERS ABOUT US WORRY.

It is contagious. It is in the atmosphere. It is passed from mouth to mouth. Our neighbors are worldly people. They know only the world's philosophy. When things go wrong, or threaten to, they freely express the world's spirit of fear and anxiety. We catch it from them. We fall into their ways of looking at things. We are bound to do so, unless—and that is where our prayer-life becomes a necessity. Only as a Life of Prayer makes Christ more real than our neighbors, makes His philosophy of life, His way of viewing things, more dominant than theirs—only so can we escape falling into their ways of worrying.

The world worries, and has ample reason for doing so. It faces tremendous problems, with no real solution for them. But the Christian is very differently situated. He is “**not of the world.**” Prayer maintains an other-worldly viewpoint, and he is spared the mental contagion.

3. WE WORRY BECAUSE WE DO NOT REALIZE OUR HEAVENLY FATHER’S CARE.

This we conceive to be the chief and determining reason. The Fatherhood of our God has been left in the realm of theory. Faith has failed to clothe it with practical reality.

We must listen anew to our Saviour, pleading with us to be persuaded of our Father’s loving care and therein to rest:

“Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?” (Matthew 6:25, 26).

The “**thought**” Jesus disallows is not the provident thought that stocks the larder for the winter’s need, but the anxious, worrying thought that saps the spiritual life. He is inveighing against worry over the simple necessities of life—food, drink and clothing. He instances the birds. They have all these, with no lack. Why? Because their Heavenly Father provides for them? No indeed. They have no Heavenly Father; they are merely creatures. “**Your Heavenly Father**” feedeth them. That’s the kind of a Father you have. See what He does for His creatures. What will He not do for His children? “**Are ye not much better than they?**”

“And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?” (Matthew 6:28-30).

How the question of clothing vexes the human mind! Jesus bids us look to the lilies of the field, so beautifully clothed, for a demonstration of our Father’s delight to adorn even the humblest of His creations. Solomon, with all his suit-makers and costly extravagance, “**was not arrayed like one of these.**” If He does this for the grass of the field, so transitory, but for a day, surely we have every reason to trust Him. Jesus’ plea for a worry-excluding reliance upon our Father is very emphatic: “**Shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?**”

“Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or What shall we drink? or Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matthew 6:31-34).

Is there any fallacy, any weakness, in the argument upon which Jesus rests His double “**therefore**”? There is none. The case is so perfectly conclusive. So He commands us: “***Do not worry about these creature necessities; for after all these things do the Gentiles seek.***” Who are they? The unconverted people who have no Heavenly Father, who are just grown-ups looking after themselves, but how different it is with you, the children of God. “**Your Heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things.**”

What a comfort! What a carefree life! If Jesus wants us to live such a life, and shows us the reasonable basis for it, why should not every child of grace rejoice to live it? Note the thrice-repeated “**all these things.**” The unconverted continually seek them; our Heavenly Father is ever mindful that we need them; as we seek first our Father’s interest, He will delight to see that we, His children, have them.

Conclusion: The key to a care-free life is a day by day trust that leaves the unfolding future wholly and implicitly in our Father’s hands.

Such words of counsel from the lips of the Lord, who unfailingly and unflinchingly trusted His Father, should lead us into prayerful consideration of our second question.

II—Why We Should Not Worry

With our Lord’s plea for a carefree life resounding in the soul, we turn to the same three-angled consideration of the reasons why we should not worry.

1. IT IS MOST HARMFUL TO OURSELVES.

It is impossible to instance a single benefit accruing from worrying. By its indulgence one’s mental, spiritual and physical forces are depleted, leaving one the less capable of suitable action when action is needful.

We must recognize the existence of two well-defined sets of forces in the world. They are aligned with light, and its opposite, darkness; with life, and its opposite, death. The one is constructive; the other, destructive. Love, joy, peace, purity, contentment, kindness, etc.—these are constructive; they build up; they make better those who indulge them and those who experience them. Hatred, jealousy, anger, bitterness, anxiety, restlessness of spirit, etc.—these are destructive; they tear down; they leave one the worse for their indulgence.

That worry is definitely and unalterably destructive in its working can be conclusively demonstrated by appeal to the purely physical. How much more in the sphere of the moral, mental and spiritual. Yea, the demonstration we propose is based upon an unwholesome mental state, and that in turn is made possible by a below-privilege spiritual state.

We propose to trace the effect of worry, fear, and the like, upon the digestive process, and through digestion, or its lack, upon our entire well-being. It is a simple laboratory experiment.

Take, for example, a cat.

By the introduction into the alimentary tract of Sub-Nitrate of Bismuth, or allied substance, darkening the walls of the canal, the progress of the food may be observed from beginning to end of the process.

Let the subject be in a peaceful, contented state, and the peristaltic movement goes on with splendid regularity, extracting nourishment from the food for the upbuilding of the body. But let it be suddenly and severely affrighted; we observe the peristaltic process coming to a complete stop. Or if it be a milder disturbance of feeling there is a proportionate slowing down.

Transfer the experiment to the human and the results are just the same. A peaceful, joyous, carefree state of mind and spirit is the best possible aid to digestion. But let a load of fear, fret or anxiety rest upon the mind, it immediately acts as a drag upon the digestive process. We become undernourished. Our nervous system is impoverished and deranged. We call a physician. He does his best to cope with the condition our folly has created. Finally he advises a change of scenery, involving banishment from home and dear ones. Or possibly an operation becomes necessary.

All of this costs in money as well as in health. And it is all traceable to persistence in the habit of worrying. What an expensive luxury! The writer, when speaking upon this matter, has had people come to him and say something like this: "My husband would have been spared the expense of a hospital and operation bill if I had heard and heeded this a few years ago."

Or, perchance, while struggling along under this slow form of self-inflicted suicide, you are approached with the suggestion: "I think Christian Science would help you." Why, of course!

For what happens? Immediately that you consult a practitioner of this mind-over-matter system you are asked the question, "Are you worrying about anything?" You have to confess that you are. "Well, you must stop worrying." And you do. You put on an artificial smile (for your heart has not been changed), and you walk out into life, resolved not to worry again.

Now look at yourself. What you would not allow the Son of God, your Lord and Saviour, to do for you, through your persistent refusal to obey His commands, not acknowledging worry to be sin against Him as well as against your body, you have arrived at through giving heed to a woman with a false system, denying the atoning Blood whereby you were bought. Oh, shame! Shame!! Shame!!!

But there is a further arraignment of worry, of still more serious moment.

2. IT IS MOST INJURIOUS TO OUR NEIGHBOR.

The particular injury we have in mind is on this wise: We have friends, people who know us, who are not Christians and possibly never will be apart from a vital, testimonial faith observable in our lives. Such a testimony to the superabounding sufficiency of our Saviour is the supreme debt we owe in the Gospel.

This is what happens. We are smiling and exuberant when our sky is flooded with sunshine and matters are moving along well with us. But our observers are not strongly impressed. They reason somewhat as Satan did concerning Job. It is a paying proposition when piety and prosperity are inseparably linked together. Anyone ought to smile and act the part under those circumstances.

But now, let adversity come. You meet severe financial reverses; or the grim reaper snatches a dear one from your bosom; or ill-health dogs your steps. Your observer is all attention, alert to see how your Christian faith will stand the test. What does he see? He sees the corners of your mouth droop, the light fade from your eyes, the elasticity leave your step, the joy depart from your heart. He says, "It's just as I thought. There's no reality in Christian faith. These people go to pieces the same as the man in the world. They have nothing that I have not."

Just when you had opportunity to bear glowing testimony to a Saviour who sustains and satisfies under all circumstances, you failed Him. And in losing your testimony, you robbed your neighbor. He should have seen the overcoming life in fullest demonstration in you.

Dear reader, it is our conviction that there are literally thousands outside the Church of Christ today who should be inside and would have been had God's people borne a consistent testimony to His sustaining grace, living in such intimate fellowship with Him as would enable Him to keep them in perfect peace, whate'er betide. May we not each for himself, ask the solemn question: "Of those thousands how many are unsaved because I failed under test?"

But the superlative reason for not worrying is still before us.

3. IT HURTS THE HEART OF OUR HEAVENLY FATHER.

Bearing in mind our Lord's teachings in Matthew 6, already considered, we can appreciate the hurt only as we place ourselves in His position of Fatherhood. For this purpose the writer may be pardoned for making personal reference to himself as a parent.

A few years ago our work as Bible-Evangelist took us away from home much of the time. The youngest in the home was a boy of eight or nine years. Let us suppose that, through the father's continued absence, he began to lose his childhood's rightful freedom from care concerning clothing, food, etc., things which lie wholly within the father's province to provide (This is just what takes place in the life of the child of God when, through neglect of prayer and fellowship, the Heavenly Father becomes an absentee). Upon returning, we find the telltale lines of care in his formerly joyous, chubby face. We ask what is troubling him. "Oh," says he, "my clothes are wearing out and I haven't the money to buy more. Then, too, I'm worried about my food. It may soon give out."

What is his real trouble? He has left his place, the place of a child. What is a father for? Assuredly to take care of his children. The boy has stepped into his father's province, robbing him of his fatherhood prerogative. And, mind you, what is a small matter to the father's purse seems mountain high to the boy, bending him low beneath its burden.

We take him aside and reason with him: “Son, did we ever refuse to take you to the clothiers and buy you a suit when needed? Have we ever failed as a father to supply you with ample food? Do you doubt our willingness to do so still? Will you not leave these things to your father’s love and care?”

But now, suppose that, in spite of all our pleading, we are unable to dissuade him from his obsession that he must take the concern for these things upon himself, unwilling to trust his father’s loving care and power to provide. Suppose the worry continues to cloud his childish face and burden his boyish spirit. Do you see how it would hurt the father’s heart? Like thrusting him through with a dagger! To think that his boy would not trust him to function as a father!

That dagger, dear reader, you have heedlessly thrust through your Heavenly Father’s heart each time you indulged in worry, telling Him you were unwilling to take your place as His child or trust Him to fulfill His part as your Father.

Let us pause here long enough to ask His forgiveness; to confess that it will always be so as long as we neglect to live a vital, trust-begetting Life of Prayer; and in the strength of a new resolve, to solemnly promise Him: “By Thy grace, never again.”

III—How Not to Worry

If there is a life that does not worry, that feels itself free from all necessity of worrying, surely everyone should rejoice to find it and delight to live it. Why not? There is not a single argument for its usefulness or rightfulness.

Every consideration we have examined, in its effect upon ourselves, upon others, upon our God, argues for consigning worry and its vexatious family to the discard, definitely, once and forever.

But now comes the practical question. Is such a life possible? If it is, evidently it is not only our privilege; it is clearly our duty. Then how shall we find it?

We can never hope to come into a carefree life by looking to our circumstances. They are vacillating, unstable and uncertain. We know not what a day may bring forth. Consequently the centering of one’s life in circumstances, the sense of being subject to them, the inability to rise above them—this is the fruitful cause and occasion for a life of anxiety and worry.

Our sole escape is in God, in bringing Him consciously into the center of life’s living.

This means a Life of Prayer. Or, shall we say, a life of trust that through prayer feeds upon, and confidently appropriates, the promises of His Word.

To daily pursue this course is to experience day by day, moment by moment, a life of victory. Where God and His Word are enthroned, worry cannot crowd in. We have adopted the one means for effectively displacing it. We have supplanted it with His presence and peace.

All Scripture, studied in simple faith, assimilated into our spiritual being, and turned back to God in trusting prayer, is well calculated to produce peace in the soul. But the Holy Spirit, knowing sin's aftermath to be a native weakness for worrying, anticipated our proneness by adapting certain promises specifically to this need. The examination of a few of them will serve to stimulate the student to search the Scriptures for further warrant for a life free from worry, while a consistent prayer-life will transmute the revealed possibility into realized reality.

1. **"THE PEACE OF GOD"** (Philippians 4:6, 7).

"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Analyzed, these words present a threefold condition, in the nature of a command, the heeding of which is followed by the assured promise of the peace of God, as an actual yet supernatural experience, possessing mind and heart.

In nothing be anxious. Here let us pause to challenge the reader to find a single scripture that warrants worry on the part of a child of God. Just one! Do you not see that, if you could find it, the Bible would be chargeable with contradicting itself. Here is the command not to do so.

In nothing be anxious. Nothing is made up of nothing. It is impossible to put anything into nothing. Nothing is a circle with everything excluded. Your child's sickness; your boy's waywardness; your neighbor's meanness— all are excluded. They are but tests of your willingness to obey God rather than the promptings of human nature.

There is a reason. Worry is incompatible with a Life of Prayer. It prevents us from praying and God from working. Do not worry, "but—." Adopt the prayer method instead. **"In everything by prayer and supplication."**

Now we understand God's ways with us. Everything is excluded from care that it might be included in prayer. He, our Father, wants the opportunity of caring for the things that concern us.

This is to be mingled **"with thanksgiving."** Remembrance of past mercies is the key to unlock further benefits.

When these three are faithfully followed as the prescribed ingredients of a life of trust, the promised result is bound to be our experience.

His peace, which Jesus proved and passed down to us as our rightful inheritance, saying, **"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you"** His peace shall garrison our minds and hearts, and that in a manner beyond comprehension in view of our circumstances. God is taking a hand. We have refused worry. Now His peace is there peremptorily to challenge its every approach. It cannot set foot on ground that He is occupying, the sacred citadel of a surrendered, trustful heart.

We believe there is practical “medicinal value” in this prescription. Here is one instance. Not long since a young business woman requested us to call upon her as a spiritual physician. She had gone to pieces physically. She was in mental distress and spiritual darkness. She appealed for help. We were not free to go but we prescribed by mail. Among other scriptures we stressed Philippians 4:6, 7 as a threefold prescription, urging her to take it as often as symptoms indicated. What of the result? She speedily recovered. Not only was she able to retain her position; today she is well in body, mind and spirit.

Reader, will you as definitely make proof of God? He is saying, “**Prove Me now herewith,**” and is waiting to pour His peace into your erstwhile troubled heart.

2. “CAST ALL YOUR CARE UPON HIM” (I Peter 5:7).

“Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.”

The emphasis is upon the “**all.**” Some, however large the part, will never do, it is the principle He is concerned with. Worry or trust, care or prayer—which? There is no middle ground. So, to test us, He sends a wee little care. If we worry about it we will feel ourselves free to worry about any and all others. We have not come into the place of pleasing Him. So He says, “***My child, until you can trust Me will all your care, you may keep it all.***” We have robbed ourselves and Him.

Dear reader, can He not persuade you that “***He is caring for you,***” and that His so marvelous, supernatural care is all-sufficient under all circumstances?

“O Lord! how happy should we be,
If we could cast our care on Thee,
If we from self could rest;
And feel, at heart, that One above,
In perfect wisdom, perfect love,
Is working for the best!”

Surely we see that a constant and consistent Life of Prayer is the only portal through which we shall enter into the privileged freedom from care here enjoined.

3. “LOOKING UNTO JESUS” (Hebrews 12:2).

“**Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.**”

These words become exceedingly significant and peace-imparting when we catch the complete thought conveyed by the language. The participle “**looking**” has as its fullest meaning, “*looking away*”. What it says is this: “***Looking away unto Jesus.***”

The meaning is evident. To run the race successfully, to be counted an overcomer and obtain the victor's crown, our eyes must not be suffered to rest upon objects nearby, which serve to disturb and distract.

What a secret for Christian living.

Is there anything that tempts to anxiety; that threatens to rob us of our spiritual poise and peace? The instructions are: Refuse to keep looking at it, brooding over it, pondering it, mulling it over in your mind until you have cudged your brains with it. Look away from it. Look away to Jesus, who is never disturbed, in whom is no suggestion of worry, who Himself faced every test, even the severest, that of the Cross, and was crowned as our Overcomer.

There is Christian psychology at the basis of this. If we allow ourselves continually to dwell upon troubles, either threatened or actual, it is utterly impossible to maintain a peaceful state of mind and heart. We live under psychological laws that preclude it. So doing, our troubles bore a hole into our gray matter; they burn themselves into our consciousness.

Anyone can convince himself of this in a very simple, everyday manner. Take the following personal experience.

On a certain afternoon, while in the State of Washington, we drove to the woods to gather wild blackberries. Several hours passed pleasantly in the task. Upon returning home we found it necessary to spend the evening sorting and preserving them. When we retired and closed our eyes we still saw blackberries. We had looked at them so continuously, they had registered upon the retina of the mind. They refused to withdraw, and were real to us even though absent. So will it inevitably be, dear reader, with your much brooded-over troublesome circumstances.

But when we play the part of a Christian; the same law works for us. When we fill our eye with Jesus, in whom is peace and strength, when through a Life of Prayer He has the preeminence and takes precedence over things outward and pressing, we have fixed Him upon the retina of the soul. Then how amazing to discover that "things" are shorn of their power to disturb.

"Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face;
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace."

4. **"KEEP HIM IN PERFECT PEACE"** (Isaiah 26:3).

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth in Thee."

Here again the Hebrew is rich in its meaning. "**Perfect peace**" is the translation of a Hebraism, literally, "*peace, peace.*"

It means: Thou wilt keep him in a continuous, uninterrupted experience of peace. Peace today, peace tomorrow, peace the next day. Peace, peace, peace, (add as many as you wish). It is the unbroken flow of the river's current:

“O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments! then had thy peace been as a river” (Isaiah 48:18).

To whom is this experience promised? To him whose circumstances are just right? Never fluctuating? Never troublesome? Never disappointing? Oh, no! Quite the contrary. To **“him whose mind is stayed on Thee,”** the more because his circumstances threaten to break through upon his peace.

It is the same lesson as we were seeing in Hebrews. The secret of life is inward, not outward. If only we will turn our mind trustingly to Him, He can thereby control our inner estate, and the outer will be shorn of power to trouble us. It is psychology, plus Christ.

Hence the appealing exhortation, that should beget in every child of God, for his own satisfaction and that of his Heavenly Father, an earnest, ceaseless life of trustful, mind-stayed-upon-Him prayer:

“Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength” (Isaiah 26:4).

5. THE **“FRET NOT”** SERMONETTE (Psalm 37:1-8).

“Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.”

This Psalm encourages the righteous to live a peaceful life, in calm and quiet confidence, though surrounded by the wicked and harassed by their evil deeds. The outcome is certain and assured (vv. 9-40). In view of this we are bidden to live victoriously, whatever the present, permitted testings, in restful, rejoicing reliance in the Lord our God (vv. 1-8).

These verses, quoted above, constitute a brief, beautiful, yet effective sermonette on the subject of worrying. The text is the two words, **“Fret not.”**

It points out the steps leading to a life that does not worry. These successive steps are found in the emphasized verbs of command and exhortation.

“FRET NOT” (vs. 1).

This is one of the clear commands of Scripture, wholly in harmony with the spirit and purpose of God’s Word throughout. Presuming that all our readers accept the Bible as their “rule of faith and practice,” with whom to see its teaching is forthwith to gladly submit thereto, let us propose a Christian’s questionnaire:

“Do you steal?”

“Do you lie?”

“Do you swear?”

“Do you get drunk?”

Instantly and indignantly you reply, “Why, of course I do not. I am a Christian, ordering my life by God’s Word. I would not do any of these things.”

Then, encouraged by your ready reply, we add the further question,

“Do you worry?”

Why do you hesitate, and perhaps falteringly answer, “Well, I’ll have to think about that”? Why make a distinction, where God’s Word makes none?

Unequivocally you condemn a man for falling into the former sins. Why do you not condemn yourself for the latter? Is it at all conceivable that drunkenness on the part of a fleshly, unregenerate man is as great a sin in the sight of God as is worrying on the part of His Spirit-born, Spirit-indwelt child? Assuredly not.

“TRUST in the Lord and do good” (vs. 3).

You have no time to worry with a Christian’s call to service sounding in your ears. Moreover, the two are mutually exclusive. You cannot “worry” and “trust” at the same time. Such spiritual acrobatics are as impossible as for a man to stand on his feet and sit restfully in a chair at one and the same time. The two acts are mutually exclusive. So are fretting ourselves and trusting the Lord. When we are fretting, we are not trusting. When we are trusting, we are not fretting. And worrying, being an indulgence of the flesh, wars against and suppresses the spiritual attitude of trusting.

“DELIGHT thyself also in the Lord” (vs. 4).

Do not remain on the dead level of duty, merely endeavoring to avoid worry because it is wrong. Here is an antidote for it—a delightful one at that. Set your mind and heart upon the Lord, to delight in Him and His dealings with you. Two things will follow: Not only will you feel no provocation to worry, but you will enable the Lord to **“give thee the desires of thine heart.”** This is a glorious step in advance. We are well on the road to Heart-Ease. We have taken higher ground.

“**COMMIT thy way unto the Lord,**” etc. (vss. 5, 6). As the former command cares for our inner estate, so this command fully covers our outer estate. Whatever the circumstance, as we commit it to Him, and trust Him, He accepts our case and sets to work. “**He shall bring it to pass.**”

How wonderful! How reassuring! The particular promise is for days when we are misjudged and our good name is at stake. Such days drive us to our knees, to a trustful Life of Prayer. When scandal and abuse are abroad, and our reputation is assailed, this is preeminently the place in God’s Word to which we should turn. Put the finger of faith upon Psalm 37:5, 6 and live in it. The inner calm of quiet committal will be followed by a gracious outer stilling of the storm.

“**REST in the Lord, and WAIT patiently for Him**” (vs. 7a). Let us see how reasonable, and wholly possible, this exhortation is at this point. For our inner need we have learned to delight ourselves in the Lord—now we can rest in Him. For our outer need, we have definitely committed our way to Him and He is working—we can patiently wait for Him and His time of full deliverance.

“**FRET NOT—FRET NOT**” (vss. 7b, 8b). We have reached the end of our sermonette. It concludes with a double reiteration of the text—“**Fret not.**” Step by step it has led us into the life that does not worry, the life that feels itself free from the proneness to worry. It is the life of peace and rest; from it we have no desire to descend to our former low, miasmatic level.

Having highly resolved, trusting in Him for strength, henceforth, as a matter of Christian principle and privilege, to so abide in Him as to leave no room in our lives for sinful, Christ-dishonoring worry, He meets us in this resolve and pours His own heaven-sent peace into mind and heart. In this abiding answer to our trust, we are “**kept.**”

Three practical considerations and the story is told:

First. *A Life of Prayer*, the consistent and constant laying hold of God through His Word, rather than a spasmodic, haphazard effort to meet the exigencies of our case as some special need arises, is the only way whereby we can let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts, even that experience of peace to which we are called (Colossians 3:15).

Second. *To stop short of attaining this peace is to threaten our whole prayer-life with failure.* Worry sends off deadly gases destructive to faith. Prayer cannot mount on wings of faith when the clouds of fretful doubt obscure the Father’s face. To be victorious in our prayer-life we must leave behind the Plains of Worry and press on to the Citadel of Peace.

Third. *This done, peace is by no means the only resultant in the life.* Peace never comes to us alone; she has sister-graces. The gains are many. In excluding worry, we have pleased the Lord and opened our hearts to His unhindered operation. A Spirit-filled life is unfolding to us.

What will He not work in us?

Not alone peace, for “**the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance** [self-control]” (Galatians 5:22,23).

A Life of Prayer is the loosing of the power of God in the soul that is exercised thereby.

Its possibilities are limitless:

“**For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure**” (Philippians 2:13).

It means a life more and more approaching, even here, the likeness to which we are destined over there.

May our God create in us such cravings for peace, for power to overcome, for holy, victorious living, as shall clothe prayer with a new constraint of daily necessity.

The Holy Life

There is a faith unmixed with doubt,
A love all free from fear;
A walk with Jesus, where is felt
His presence always near.
There is a rest that God bestows,
Transcending pardon's peace,
A lowly, sweet simplicity,
Where inward conflicts cease.

There is a service God-inspired,
A zeal that tireless grows,
Where self is crucified with Christ,
And joy unceasing flows.
There is a being “right with God,”
That yields to His command
Unswerving, true fidelity,
A loyalty that stands.

There is a meekness free from pride,
That feels no anger rise
At slights, or hate, or ridicule,
But counts the cross a prize.
There is a patience that endures
Without a fret or care,
But joyful sings, “His will be done,
My Lord's sweet grace I share.”

There is a purity of heart,
A cleanness of desire,
Wrought by the Holy Comforter
With sanctifying fire.
There is a glory that awaits
Each blood-washed soul on high,
When Christ returns to take His bride
With Him beyond the sky.

- Anon.

~ end of chapter 4 ~

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