

FULLY FURNISHED

or

THE CHRISTIAN WORKER'S EQUIPMENT

by

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE WORKER'S WHETSTONE

“Quicken Thou me according to Thy Word” (Psalm 119:25).

MANY are the similes which are used in the Scriptures about the Word of God, and various are their uses to elucidate its intrinsic value, its inherent virtue, and its inspiring vitality. We may call the Word of God, a whetstone to sharpen. As every mechanic knows the value of a whetstone to sharpen his tools, so every believer in Christ realizes the importance of sharpening the graces of the spiritual life with the Word of Truth. God's people, in all ages, have felt the liability there is on their part, to lose ground in the Christian life.

- The intensity of love to Christ, may be slackened by the love of other things.
- The glow of zeal, may be damped down by discouragement.
- The grip of faith may loosen its grasp, by self-occupation.
- The brightness of testimony may be tarnished by the breath of the world.
- The bloom of consecration may be rubbed off, by the hand of inconsistency.
- The voice of prayer may be hushed by the paralysis of doubt; and
- The cord of unity may be snapped by the rude force of discord, and neglect of the means of grace.

One half of our freedom from failure in the Divine life, is to know our danger. When we imagine we are safest, we are in the greatest peril. When we think we are strongest, we are most weak.

The Church at Laodicea is a case in point; they thought they were all right, when they were altogether wrong. Whereas, when there is a deep consciousness of our utter weakness, our complete sinfulness, and constant need of grace, we cast ourselves the more upon the Lord. John Newton puts it well, when he says, “Alas! My experience abounds with complaints. He is my Sun; but clouds, and sometimes walls intercept Him from my view. He is my Friend; but on my part, there is such coldness and ingratitude, as no other friend could hear. He is my Strength, yet I am prone to lean upon reeds. But still He is gracious, and shames me with His repeated multiplied goodness. Oh, for a warmer heart, a more simple dependence, a more active zeal, a more sensible deliverance from the effects of this body of sin and death.”

So prays every true child of God.

There is another danger, and that is, lest we should look to our inability, to the exclusion of God's ability; lest the sense of our insufficiency should not make room for God's sufficiency, and lest our weakness should so overpower us, that we do not let God's power possess us.

The one and only safeguard is to keep in touch with the Lord through His Word, and if we do this, the soul of our love will be true, the grip of our faith will be strong, and the cry of our prayer will ever be, "**Quicken me according to Thy Word.**"

In calling attention to the fact, that the Word of God is a whetstone, to sharpen us in the many-sidedness of our Christian life, I want to call attention to the frequency with which the Psalmist pleads the prayer, "**Quicken me,**" in the 119th Psalm.

The Hebrew word translated "**quicken,**" occurs no less than sixteen times. Nine times the term is rendered "**quicken**" and "**quickened,**" and five times "**live.**"

The same word is translated "**revive**" in I Chronicles 11:8 (margin); Nehemiah 4:2; Psalm 138:7; Habakkuk 3:2. The word occurs in three relations in Psalm 119:

1. There is the Psalmist's testimony as to what the Lord has done in the past (verses 50, 93).
2. The Psalmist's prayer for present revival (verses 17, 25, 37, 40, 77, 88, 107, 116, 149, 154, 156, 159, 175).
3. The Psalmist's confidence as to what the Lord will do (verse 144).

Does not the Psalmist's desire to be revived according to God's Word, give us the reason why so few are intense in their love to Christ, and whole-heartedly devoted to Him? Many would like a revival, but it must be according to their fancy, or their methods, or their senses, but true revival is always according to God's Word. When there is a revival according to God's Word, it will be a revival indeed.

Let us see how the Word of God is as a whetstone to sharpen us.

I - The Word of God is a whetstone to sharpen us in prayer.

Among the many promises that Christ has given us, is this: "**If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you**" (John 15:7).

Christ's words dwelling in us, not only give us the authority to pray, and direct us as to the petitions we should make, but they give us the incentive to prayer. When we come in the spirit of faith to the Word of God, it sharpens our desires, and makes us turn what we read into prayer.

Listening to the Lord, as He speaks to us in His Word, *makes us to pray for the blessings of which He speaks*, as when Christ spoke to the woman of Samaria about the Living Water, she exclaimed, "**Give me this water.**"

Pondering the promises of God's Word, *makes us bold to plead them in petition*, as when Elijah on Mount Carmel called upon the Lord as the "**God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel**," thus claiming the covenanted promises given to the fathers, that He would care for His people, and vindicate their cause against all the Lord's enemies.

Feeding upon the holy sayings of Christ, which refer to His death, *makes us to say with Thomas*, only in a different sense, and in the language of prayer, "**Let us . . . die with Him**" (John 11:16), die to sin, to self, to the flesh, to the world, and all that is associated with the old man and his deeds.

Musing upon the words of God's love, as we hear them falling from Him whose lips drop sweet smelling myrrh, *it makes us say to Christ, as the mighty men of David, in whole-hearted devotion*, said to him, "**Thine are we, and on Thy side.**"

Dwelling upon the commands of Christ, as He bids us follow Him, abide in Him, believe in Him, rest upon Him, suffer with Him, look to Him, and testify of Him; it stirs in our hearts, the longing to show our love for Him, by our obedience to Him, and we cry, with the Psalmist, "**Help me, O Lord my God**" (Psalm 109:26).

Thinking of the power of Christ, as the Spirit of God tells us that Christ is the Power of God, excites in us the longing to come in contact with Him, as the woman did who touched the hem of Christ's garment, and into whom flowed the power of Christ; and we pray with the apostles, that the Spirit of Power may rest upon us, that we may boldly proclaim the sufficiency of Christ, as the Saviour of the world.

As we hear the Saviour speaking of the coming glory in His gracious promise, "**I will come again and receive you to Myself**," and the pointed declaration, "**Behold I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every man according as his work shall be**," it begets in our heart the glad response, as we are walking with Him, "**Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.**" Thus the Word of God is a whetstone to sharpen the soul in prayer.

**II - The Word of God is a whetstone to sharpen us,
in separating from us things contrary to the mind of God.**

There is one incident, recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, which illustrates in a remarkable manner the separating influence of the Word of God - when it is believed - upon the life .. The Apostle Paul met with great success, in his preaching at Ephesus, and one result of his mission was, that many who had used cunning arts, burnt all their books; and the cause of this is put down to the working of God's Word, for in speaking of the burning of the books, it says, "**So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed**" (Acts 19:20).

Cheyne Brady tells a remarkable story of the separating influence of God's Word. He says:

"A well-known evangelical minister of Christ, made a tour in Canada some time since. Arriving at an out-of-the-way village, he found a lively assembly of French Christians, who were walking in the love of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost.

“Surprised to find a flourishing Church in such a place, the visitor inquired by what instrumentality such a work had been brought about. The aged pastor, who was ninety years of age, went to his closet, and produced a small French Testament, literally worn out. ‘This,’ said he, ‘was the commencement of the work. More than half-a-century ago, a lady passing through this place, presented me with this Testament. I was a Roman Catholic, but the perusal of this book, so freely given to me, was the means, through the Holy Spirit’s enlightenment, of my regeneration. I was the first convert. I lent it to others, then followed another conversion, and another, until our number has reached three hundred. For years the priest persecuted me, and at length offered me a large sum of money, if I would give up the Bible, but when he found all his efforts unavailing, he desisted; and now we are a happy united community.’ “

The effectual instrument, which was used of God in separating the man from superstition and sin, was the Word of God.

As the laver in the tabernacle was given, that the priests might wash their hands and feet therein, and the defilement they had contracted might be removed; so the Word of God will separate from us the dirt of worldliness, the slime of unbelief, the mud of superstition, the filth of lust, the dust of conceit, the spots of jealousy, and the ashes of pride.

III - The Word of God is the whetstone to sharpen us in our spiritual life.

When the Apostle Paul was leaving the Church in Ephesus; among other things he said, “**I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up**” (Acts 20:32).

During the last few years, we have heard a great deal about the down-grade, and not without reason, but we have not heard so much about the up-grade of the spiritual life. The Holy Spirit says a great deal in relation to the Christian life, in connection with the little word “**Up.**”

The following are a few of the directions the Lord has given in the word of His grace, as to the up-grade of faith.

The attitude in our spiritual life, is to be looking up. As the Psalmist says, “**In the morning I will direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up**” (Psalm 5:3), for, as the mirror reflects the image of the person who is looking into it, so the believer reflects Christ, as he looks at Him.

The strength of our spiritual life is to gird up the loins of our mind with the truth of God, as we read in I Peter 1:13: “**Gird up the loins of your mind,**” for as the girdle strengthens the loins in walking, so the truth of God ministers to us its power, and we are girded with it.

The exercise of our spiritual life is to stir up the fire of grace, which the Lord has kindled in our hearts, as Paul says in writing to his son Timothy, “**Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee**” (II Timothy 1:6), for, as the fire in the grate will burn the brighter when it is stirred, so the Divine life will glow when stirred by the truth of God.

The place of our spiritual life, is the presence of the Lord. “Go up to Bethel, and dwell there” (Genesis 35:1), was the command of God to Jacob. We, too, have our Bethel (Bethel means *the House of God*), namely, abiding in Christ; for as certain plants will only grow in a warm atmosphere, so our spiritual life will only flourish in the warm environment of His presence.

The responsibility of our spiritual life is to take up our Cross daily, even as Christ took up the Cross for us. His word is calm and clear as He bids us follow Him, namely, “**Take up thy Cross**” (Matthew 16:24). Cross-bearing always precedes crown-wearing. There was no ascension glory before Calvary’s Cross.

The secret of our spiritual life, is to grow up into Christ in all things (Ephesians 4:15). The secret of all growth is Christ. Winning Christ, knowing Christ, and apprehending Christ are the causes that make us advance in grace, even as the child grows in stature as it is fed with good food.

The solidity of our spiritual life is to be built up, with the strengthening of God’s truth. The stamina of faith, the steadfastness of love, the sturdiness of zeal, the solidity of service, the stalwartness of witnessing, and the stablishing in the truth, are all born of the cementing power of the Word of Grace.

The story is told of a great bell, which was made to vibrate by the note of a slender flute. The flute had no influence upon the bell, except when a certain note was sounded, then the great mass of metal breathed a responsive sigh. Thus, when our hearts and lives are in unison with the flute of God’s Word, there sounds forth from the bell of our conduct a corresponding action, as in the case of the Thessalonians, who having received the Word of God, it sounded forth from them, in that “**they turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from Heaven.**”

Let us, morning by morning, like the Master (Isaiah 14), sharpen our spiritual faculties by the whetstone of the Truth, for it will:

- Give edge to our testimony (Acts 2:37),
- Keeness to our vision (Acts 17:11, 12),
- Courage to our ministry (II Timothy 2:15),
- Intensity to our love (Acts 16:14, 15),
- Alertness to our faith (Acts 16:33, 34),
- Tone to our spiritual life (Psalm 1:2, 3), and
- Equipment for service (II Timothy 3:16, 17).

~ end of chapter 16 ~

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