

LEST YE FAINT

by

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

PURPOSE GLORIFIED

“Therefore came I forth” (Mark 1:38).

“RISING UP A GREAT WHILE before day, he went out and there prayed” (Mark 1:35).

This is an eloquent introduction to an ennobling example. Of course, faith must see in Christ more than an example, but one’s experience will suffer irreparably if one does not hear Him say, **“Go thou and do likewise.”**

Such word portraits as the one before us are designed for display in the art gallery of our souls, there to produce a cherished and challenging stimulant for life on a higher plane. They are glimpses of grandeur which exhilarate our spirits and exhort our hearts.

- They open the eyes of our understanding.
- They leave us with no excuse for our fearful failures in life.
- They allure our vision to heavenly heights and introduce us to the rapturous joy of being in the center of God’s will.

There and there only do His blessings flow into our otherwise parched souls in uncontainable volume, even as the sparkling, bubbling streams with invigorating refreshment descend to the needful fields below.

The immediate context, supporting the foregoing Scripture, furnishes us with several impressive points of practical appeal. They are the prominence of a place, the preciousness of prayer, and the pointedness of purpose. These are all the more impressive when we find the Saviour associated with each.

The Prominence of a Place

“He departed into a solitary place” (Mark 1:35).

The place localizes the incident. Experiences are invariably associated with places.

In the earthly ministry of our Lord we have reference to the desert place, the holy place, yonder place, the place called Gethsemane, the place called Golgotha and the place called Calvary. In the glory there is a place of preparation.

IT WAS A SOLITARY PLACE

Think of it, a sovereign in solitude! Or, more accurately, we should say THE Sovereign in solitude, for how unlike all other sovereigns is the Son of God.

- As a rule, a sovereign lives in luxury and comparative leisure, but the Master laboured in love.
- As a rule, a sovereign has servants to serve him, but the Saviour served others to save them.
- As a rule, a sovereign has attendants to prepare the bed, but the Son of Man had not where to lay His head.
- As a rule, a sovereign has a valet to care for his garments, but the coming King saw villains rob Him of His robe.
- As a rule, a sovereign has companions and counsellors, but Jesus was all alone—in solitude.

But he was none the less the Sovereign. Because He was alone, we need never be lonely.

HE WAS SOLITARY IN A WORLD OF SIN BECAUSE OF HIS PERFECTIONS

The Urim and the Thummim (lights and perfections) were wrought into the breastplate which was put “**upon Aaron’s heart**” (Exodus 18:30). But these were mere symbols of what is in actuality the very substance of our Great High Priest, even the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is the embodiment of perfection in demeanor, declaration and deed. Of none other can this be said. The perfection accredited to Noah and Asa was derived and not inherent. It was vouchsafed to them by the Lord God even as believers are perfect in Christ (Colossians 1:28).

The world had to wait until God tabernacled among men to witness the personification of perfectness (I Corinthians 13:10).

The Lord Jesus is perfect in His will, perfect in His Word, perfect in His way, and perfect in His work. He is unique in His person, universal in His provisions, and unrivalled in His perfections. He is the perfect One!

HE WAS SOLITARY IN A WORLD OF REBELLION BECAUSE OF HIS OBEDIENCE

God was forced to say of his creatures whom He had created for His glory, “**There is no judgment in their goings; they have made them crooked paths**” (Isaiah 59:8).

But from the moment the Son of God stepped in human flesh upon the footstool of His own making until the time the heavens received Him in glory, His course was one of absolute flawless conformity to the holy will of God the Father.

- He submitted to the wilderness testing but wavered not an iota.
- He listened to the offer of the kingdoms of the world as made by the arch-usurper but cast not a desiring glance.
- He trekked the trail of His earthly ministry amid seductive satanic snares but stumbled never.
- He sweat drops of blood as He pursued the via dolorosa but faltered not at all.
- He was bent beneath the weight of the cross but bowed not once to diabolical dissuasion.
- When He was reviled, He reviled not again.
- When He was flayed fiercely, He forgave freely.

At the climax of ignominy, in spite of stubborn demoniacal resistance, the victory note of hope was transmitted from His blessed lips—“**It is finished!**” It came from the crucible of crucifixion. Then, the finger of Inspiration penned His immortal epitaph: “**He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross**” (Philippians 2:8).

HE WAS SOLITARY IN A WORLD OF IMPOTENCE BECAUSE OF HIS POWER

All through His earthly ministry, our blessed Lord manifested His power.

- He unlocked the ears of the deaf and unloosed the tongues of the mute.
- He healed the infirm and helped the afflicted.
- He stilled the waves and calmed the troubled breasts.
- He blessed the living and raised the dead.
- He dispelled demons and transformed men.
- He amazed the multitudes immeasurably.

IT WAS ALSO A SACRED PLACE

Whatever the Lord Jesus touched is said to be sacred. The word itself is not a Bible word and sentiment sometimes forces it beyond the point of soundness. We are not disposed to believe that He transmitted virtue to the wood of the cross or to the linen of His grave clothes, nor yet to the sands on which He trod or to the sod on which He sat. But the place to which He repaired so early in the long ago was hallowed by his presence. The environs of the location otherwise may have been dull and dreary, but they were then engraed by the presence of the Bright and Morning Star, the Lord of glory. If Jesus could transform places, how much more can He transform persons.

The Preciousness of Prayer

Prayer is precious because He Who is our Preciousness elevated it to an imperishable eminence in that solitary but sacred spot long centuries ago. It must be observed that prayer had a place of prominence in our Lord’s earthly ministry.

IT WAS AN EARLY PRAYER

The text states that He arose early and went out for the express purpose of praying. Few people underwrite their evaluation of prayer with such pronounced action. Few will corroborate their claim to its importance by such inconvenience and effort.

“Ere you left your room this morning, did you think to pray?”

“A moment in the morning, ere the cares of day begin,
Ere the heart’s wide door is open for the world to enter in,
Ah! there alone with Jesus, in the quiet of the morn,
In heavenly sweet communion, let your duty day be born.
‘Mid a quietude of blessing with a prelude of repose,
Let your heart be soothed and softened as the dew revives the rose.
A moment in the morning—a moment, if no more
Is better than an hour when the busy day is o’er.”

An elderly Christian gentleman, who did not find the light of a new life until he was almost seventy years of age, fell so completely in love with the Lord that it was apparent to all who knew him. He related to us this daily habit which he so much enjoyed: “When I open my eyes each morning, I say aloud, ‘Lord Jesus, it’s good to know Thee. I want to walk and talk with Thee throughout this day.’ Then, when I pillow my head at night, I say, ‘Lord Jesus, we’ve had a good time together today.’”

What we need most of all, dear reader, in these critical days of increasing unrest, is a better acquaintanceship with our lovely Lord in a simple, satisfying manner. Too much do we find ourselves in the throes of technical determinism, with our faith and practice reduced to certain fixed formulae so foreign to the Word of Life. We need to enter early into the Unseen Presence and then carry with us through the day the consciousness of our Saviour’s nearness.

IT WAS AN EARNEST PRAYER

The prayer was earnest in reverence and devotion, earnest in meaning and outlook, earnest in content and expression. You may think of Daniel voicing his supplication in a den of danger, of Hezekiah in a plea for a protraction of years, of Zinzendorf and his pious grandmother bowed before a troop of marauding soldiers, of Mueller unlocking the storehouse of grace for orphans through constant communion, but that solitary spot, early one morning in the distant past, was the place of incomparable earnestness.

In a student pastorate of years gone by, I recall with present pleasure an elderly man who always assumed a kneeling posture and turned his face heavenward as he began to place his petitions at the Throne of Grace. Something within seemed to convince me that his was the most earnest praying of which I had knowledge.

Later, while visiting in a home in Pennsylvania one morning about nine o’clock, I heard from above a noise as of someone pounding on a table. The kindly Christian hostess, noticing my somewhat inquisitive countenance, said, “That’s Dad upstairs. He is eighty years old. He has had his breakfast and is now spending an hour with his Lord before going to the park with gospel tracts.”

That is real earnestness I told myself.

Then, there came to my mind with piercing vividness the old family homestead in the mountains of Maryland and the family altar. There, mother mentioned each member of the family by name. Sometimes, as she talked over matters of delicate import with the Lord concerning some of us, her voice would become affected; there were times of hesitancy, but her prayers were always pointed and precious.

“When mother prayed her soul was blessed;
When mother prayed she found sweet rest.
Her heart and mind on Him were stayed,
And God was there when mother prayed.”

This, I thought, must be the most earnest praying of my knowledge.

One day, while perusing the Sacred Page, I came to the 17th chapter of John. Somehow, in such a real way, I could see, through faith, the Great High Priest as He lifted his eyes toward heaven. Then, in His incomparable manner, He said so reverently, “**Father the hour is come . . . I have glorified thee . . . I have finished the work . . . I have manifested thy name . . .**” Finally, He began to pray for us—you and me, all of His purchased people—“**I pray for them . . . keep them from the evil . . . that they may behold my glory.**”

This is earnestness in its most sublime character.

The Pointedness of Purpose

With the Lord Jesus purpose was primary in progress. This is why there was a place. This is the reason for the prayer. With Him purpose pointed not so much to plans and programs, but to the fulfillment of His Father’s will. What a noble example for the child of God to emulate. The purpose of Christ proved that He had the right perspective.

HIS PURPOSE WAS POSITIVE

Denounced, denied and finally delivered to the Roman court, Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate to hear him nervously and incoherently propound many interrogations. Then, ere the court turned Him over to the crowd for crucifixion, the Lord Jesus went on record to show that the custom of the people would lead to the fulfillment of the determinate counsel of the Godhead. “**To THIS end was I born,**” He solemnly emphasized, “**and for THIS cause came I into the world**” (John 18:37).

Jesus did not deal in generalizations. He was specific. There was no suppositional if in His statements. There was no uncertainty. He knew the why and the manner of His coming to earth. He knew also the type and the time of His departure. Had not He informed His disciples that “**the Son of Man MUST suffer many things, and be rejected . . . and be killed?**” (Mark 8:31)

And, as to the time, did He not in His solemn, high priestly prayer, say, “**Father, the hour is come?**” (John 17:1).

Yes, THIS was the end; THIS was the cause.

We thrill to the revelation of His definiteness, and well we may, but could it have been otherwise? He was the divine Son of God. He was the embodiment of perfection. He doeth all things well.

We must get beyond the thought that we are dealing with a narrative, the plot of which has been conceived in some finite mind and the characters carefully chosen to play well their parts. Many see no more reality than this. But it is real! It is REAL in a glorious sense!

The earth's Creator became our Saviour. He came so to be; nor did He for an infinitesimal part of one second lose sight of His purpose. He repeatedly explained why He had come. "**The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost,**" He had said, but the world which He loved and for which He bled and died has been dull of hearing and slow of response.

HIS PURPOSE WAS PRESSING

"I must work the works of Him that sent me!" (John 9:4).

The workmen who laboured to rescue little Kathy Fiscus from the deep, dry well in California, pressed their efforts with strenuous persistence through thirty-five continuous hours with little rest and food, while as many as fifteen thousand stood by. When asked if or by whom they would be paid, and why they would drive themselves to the point of exhaustion, the reply was quickly given: "There's a little girl down there."

"That He should leave His home on high,
And come for sinful men to die—
You count it strange? Well, so did I
Before I knew my Saviour."

There were men—a world of men—down in the shafts of sin.

Legions of angels stood by. Looking over the battlements of heaven the Father saw the spirits of men whose faith had been counted unto them for righteousness. There was Abraham, the father of the faithful, Moses, the liberator of Israel, Joshua, the General of the battle of Jericho, Gideon, who triumphed over the Midianites, Elijah, the performer of miracles—but God so loved that He gave His ONLY BEGOTTEN SON that sinners wedged in the wells of wickedness might not perish but have everlasting deliverance.

The Lord of glory put aside His royal wardrobe and dressed in human flesh, descended to the scene of the unspeakable disaster into which sin had plunged the whole of mankind. He came, not to be ministered unto but to minister, and His labour was a matter of pressing importance. He descended, not only to the earth, but into the horrible pit from whence we have been digged. From those very depths, a cry of His bleeding heart surged forth to be inscribed in the fadeless Record, "**The pains of hell gat hold upon me**" (Psalm 116:3). But He pressed on— on through the incomprehensible grapplings with sin and Satan beneath the burden of the unspeakable judgment of wrath which rightly was our due.

Then came the victorious word, “**IT IS FINISHED!**” The expiatory work was accomplished for us. “He saw us plunged in deep distress and flew to our relief. For us He bore the shameful cross and carried all our grief.” What a wonderful Saviour! His was a pressing purpose.

Into the chapel of a co-educational college in the east walked the dignified Christian president one morning with solemn mien. Following the opening hymn, he arose to address the student body. He told them about a telephone message which he had received just before leaving his office for the chapel service. A promising young man who had been graduated from that institution only three years previously had died suddenly during the night. The announcement was charged with solemnity. Then, pointing his finger slowly in a coverage of his congregation, the college president asked, “If all you desire to do, if all you hope to do, had to be crowded into three short years, would you do differently today?” The challenge struck home.

No one of us may have even three years to do all we desire before we meet the Saviour face to face, there may not be two years in which to accomplish it— perhaps not one.

Should we do differently today? This glimpse of the Lord Jesus should inspire us. We should see Him. And, remember, no one can see this lovely One and ever be the same. Either you will be better or worse for the vision. There He is—in a solitary but sacred place, engaged in an early and earnest prayer, with a positive and pressing purpose. He glorified purpose!

Keep looking unto Jesus—lest ye faint.

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