

LEST YE FAINT

by

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE SIAMESE TWINS OF SPIRITUAL PROWESS

“**Two things have I required of thee**” (Proverbs 39:7).

EVERY GROWING CHRISTIAN encounters difficulty in transmuting into actual practical experience what he so readily accepts mentally as being the truth of God for his life. Sooner or later, he must stand with Paul in Romans 7:18 and cry, out of the distress of his heart, “**To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not!**”

A notable example of this is graphically depicted in the first four stanzas of the 119th Psalm, where the chief emphasis is life on a higher plane. The possibility is pictured; the procedure is prescribed; the prospect is promising; the personal pleas are presented; then the prevailing problem is posed.

The Psalmist sees the examples, hears the exhortation and longs for the experience; but when he attempts to move, he cannot. “**My soul cleaveth unto the dust**” (Psalm 119:25), he laments. He had the theory and the desire, even the determination, but not the ability. Nor has anybody else.

The most abject failures are those who *try* to live the victorious life.

But let it be said that when one gets as far as the Psalmist—the point of acknowledged helplessness—one is in a very favorable position indeed. Such a situation places one where progress begins.

When determination joins desire at the end of *self*, faith needs to find the necessary and sufficient assistance. “**Quicken thou me according to thy word,**” is the prayer which begins the victory march. The enlivening power of the Word is equally an elevating force, even as it is an enlightening agent. It lifts. But this is only the beginning.

The Psalmist knew that, if he relied upon himself at any time, he would long for the old things on the lower course as the delivered Israelites longed for the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic on Pharaoh’s table. Thus, he appealed, “**Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me IN the way**” (Psalm 119:37).

Nor was this enough. He prayed longingly, “**Quicken me in thy righteousness**” (Psalm 119:40).

What is the righteousness of God but the nature of God? And what is the victorious life but the nature of God being manifest in the believer in a daily triumph over the flesh?

Much is said about the victorious life, but little seems to be experienced. We have been urged on in quest of this coveted status. We have meetings for dedication, consecration, reconsecration, surrendered life and volunteering for “fulltime” service. It is not our purpose to disparage earnest attempts, nor yet to speak lightly of the methods employed, but is there not a simple formula whereby we can translate the whole matter into understandable language—some way to make practical what to many has been made so perplexing?

Satan, the subtle and sinister enemy of God and man, is a pastmaster in the art of confusing the mind. Before the unbeliever, he draws a terrifying picture of the complexity of salvation. Then the poor, helpless and doomed sinner, believing the lie, is frustrated by the disturbing metaphorical giants which the Devil marches out on the horizon of his mind, then turns away in his darkness. All the demons of hell are committed to the proposition that no lost sinner shall see the simplicity of salvation. When the conquering Saviour delivers one from this diabolical delusion, then Satan shifts his attack to make the abundant life appear as utterly impossible. And, sadly enough, believers have succumbed to his deceptive scheme.

After years of prayerful consideration of the “deeper life,” it is our candid impression that generally Christians lack honesty and courage. We are simply not honest with God. We say we believe His Word, but do we?

If we believe what He tells us, we would do what He instructs; and, in doing what He instructs, we would realize the blessed status He has described.

- If I say I am working in an office when, in reality, I am labouring in the shop, I am dishonest.
- If I say I am living for the Lord when, in reality, I am catering to self, I am equally dishonest.

When I say, “**All things are possible through Christ Who strengtheneth me,**” and then claim that I am unable to live a consistent Christian life, I am dishonest. To say the least, it is glaring inconsistency.

Then, there is the lack of courage. And what is courage but trust in action, faith carrying out its assignments regardless of the cost. Courage in Christian endeavor is that quality which withstands caustic criticism and base ridicule, then proceeds undeterred in spite of the threats which Satan hurls. Courage is the backbone of loyalty.

Honesty dictates the course and courage pursues it. Few of us would be cited for gallantry in Christian conquests. When we lack courage, our convictions lack challenge, and the cause of Christ suffers irreparably. There can be no bonafide victorious life unless we are consistently honest with God and constantly courageous for Him.

Honesty With God

Paul presented plain facts about honesty; but then, all facts about honesty are necessarily plain. It is dishonesty which seeks concealment.

- Honesty can stand the closest scrutiny, while dishonesty breaks down under the test.
- Dishonesty struggles for defense, but honesty is stalwart in its strength.
- Dishonesty lives in fear of discovery, but honesty is open-faced and unsuspecting.

Honesty is more than a virtue;

- It is the strong sinew of integrity.
- It is the steel crossbeam upon which responsibility firmly rests.
- It is the dynamic which produces prestige, promotes reputation and portrays principle.
- It is the solid, reinforced footing upon which the concrete foundation of dependability is built.
- It is the bond of confidence in every worthwhile relationship.
- It dissipates doubt in dealings.
- It adds assurance to promises.
- It procures the richest of privileges.

When honesty weakens, character disintegrates.

Honesty is the escort of trustworthiness.

- It cannot forsake at play and be found dependable at work.
- It cannot default at home and be faithful in public.
- It cannot fail in private life and truly function in spiritual endeavors.
- It knows no dual standard.

If it is allowed to assert itself in the real business of life, it will be found the same tomorrow as it is today.

- It will dictate one's decisions;
- It will rebuke unsound suggestions;
- It will recoil from unfair practices.
- It is a towering indispensable in both moral and spiritual realms. Honesty is a basic essential in all forms of uprightness.

It is evident from observation that people take unusual liberties in their dealings with the Infinite. This is nothing short of a denial of His sovereignty. And this is precisely the way in which the Lord looks upon it. He longs for the luscious clusters of the first-ripe summer fruit but receives only the grape-gleanings of the vintage (Micah 7:1).

He desires and deserves the first place in the program of our lives but receives little prominence in our daily schedules (Hosea 5:4).

He requests an unreserved heart devotion accompanied by the richest offering of which we are capable, but the treatment we accord the omnipotent, thrice-holy God would be counted an insult by an earthly dignitary. (Malachi 1:8).

We are not honest with God.

In the whole purview of Scripture (King James Version) the word “**honesty**” occurs but once, the word “**honest**” seven times, and the adverb “**honestly**” three times, making eleven times in all.

These few occurrences however, by no means minimize the importance of the truth involved. It underlies all the moral and spiritual precepts in the Word of God.

In these several occurrences are four points of pertinent interest:

HONESTY NOT ONLY ORIGINATES IN THE HEART, BUT APPROPRIATES FROM THE HEART THE TENETS OF TRUTH

“But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15).

Thus, it requires honesty to give proper attention, permanent retention and patient intention to the prescribed precepts of Scripture.

HONESTY DISPLAYS ITSELF IN A FAVOURABLE AND COMMENDABLE REPUTATION

“Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business” (Acts 6:3).

While the presence and power of the Holy Spirit combine to produce both wisdom and integrity in the experience of an individual, the person for this particular assignment had to have, of necessity, a reputation for honesty.

If one’s influence for Christ is to reach out perceptibly in any field of endeavor, this same characteristic is a definite “must” in that life.

HONESTY SHOULD CLOTHE OUR THOUGHTS, FOR THOUGHTS MOTIVATE OUR ACTIONS

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest . . . think on these things” (Philippians 4:8 10).

Thoughts prime the initiative, plan the procedure, presage the action and ponder the development.

If honesty characterizes our meditation, it will control our ministry.

HONESTY SHOULD CHARACTERIZE OUR CONVERSATION AND OUR CONDUCT

“Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation” (I Peter 2:12).

The point is, honorable conduct, motivated by honesty, will have an inevitable reward even though one is presently being defamed as a criminal.

The kind of honesty which can stand the test is that which elicits the approbation of the Lord as well as the approval of man. **“Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men”** (II Corinthians 8:21).

Paul prayed sincerely that honesty might be the controlling factor in the life of every believer. **“Now I pray to God that . . . ye should do that which is honest”** (II Corinthians 13:7).

In all his careful and complete instructions for the highest type of Christian behavior, the Apostle thought it wise to include an admonitory note regarding deceptive acquisitions. **“Provide things honest in the sight of all men”** (Romans 12:17).

If we desire plain facts on the subject, here they are.

The safest and surest way to protect and to promote an exemplary Christian life is to **“prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance [every form] of evil”** (I Thessalonians 5:21, 22).

This hearty, wholesome advice involves three practical propositions to which we shall briefly direct our attention.

IT CALLS FOR EXAMINATION.

“Prove all things.”

The word **“prove”** in the following references means, literally, *to test*. By implication, it means to approve. **“I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them.”** (Luke 14:19).

This test is by actual use. **“That ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”** (Romans 12:1). This test is by obedience.

- **“To prove the sincerity of your love”** (II Corinthians 8:8). This is the test of liberality.
- **“Prove your own selves”** (II Corinthians 13:5). This is the test of devotion.
- **“Let every man prove his own work.”** This is the test of fulfilling the law of Christ.

Then, for a summation of Scriptural tests, Paul urges that we **“prove all things”** (I Thessalonians 5:21). This is the test of thoroughness.

IT CALLS FOR DETERMINATION

“**Hold fast that which is good.**” The good is only discernible by examination. When it becomes apparent to our spiritual judgment, it commends itself to our determination. We are to grip it tenaciously, never to let it slip, to invest it for the glory of God, the encouragement of others, and for our own edification. It implies that what God calls good has both rigidity and stability, and faith may anchor to it with pleasant confidence.

IT CALLS FOR ELIMINATION

“**Abstain from every form of evil**” This is the negative side, attention to which magnifies the positive.

A man who had never visited a large city went on a trip to New York. After walking up Fifth Avenue, gazing into the store windows as he journeyed, he confessed, “I never knew before that I could get along without so many things.”

Likewise, the one who becomes a new creation in Christ Jesus is amazed how well he can get along without the many sinful and questionable things which are displayed in the windows of so many unchristian lives.

In countless ways, the Holy Spirit teaches us how we may make our practical lives more honoring to the Lord. “**Let not mercy and truth forsake thee; bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart**” (Proverbs 3:3).

What a wholesome yoke! It is the easy yoke of the Lord (Matthew 11:30).

It is designed to keep us in step with Him. Also, truth and mercy are to be inscribed upon our hearts. This is to govern our affection. If we love Him, we will love mercy. If we love Him, we will obey His truth. Both the yoke and the inscription speak of definiteness and honesty in the profession of a believer. Thus, “**the integrity of the upright shall guide them**” (Proverbs 11:3).

How shall it guide them, and where? It shall guide them through a conscience that has not been seared by habitual malpractice. It shall guide them through a heart that is responsive to the Holy Spirit. It shall guide them through the light of revealed truth. It shall guide them into the will of God and into the favour of men.

“**The lip of truth shall be established for ever**” (Proverbs 12:19).

Words of honesty, truth and justice give unquestionable evidence of righteousness and have a wise and health-giving effect upon the hearers. The lip of truth in life is an immortal monument for it utters facts, and facts cannot be budged.

The use of words of honesty and truth qualify men to be counsellors with a recompense of peace and joy (Proverbs 12:20).

Courage For God

Perhaps we have forgotten that the good soldier of Jesus Christ is called upon to disentangle himself from the things of the world and to face without flinching the hardships to be encountered. There must be a reckless disregard for our own convenience and comfort. We must not count our lives dear unto ourselves. But courage for God is more than daring, more than a display of boldness. It may embody these, but it goes beyond the risk of personal interests and concerns itself with getting a job done for the Lord.

It is deeper than patriotism—and more significant. It does not say, “I will lay down my life.” No, this is secondary. It says, rather, with a ring of genuineness and resolution in the voice, “I will use my life—not part of it, but all for Him Who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

It is said that John Wesley travelled 250,000 miles on horseback, averaging 20 miles a day for forty years. He preached 40,000 sermons, produced hundreds of books; knew ten languages. At 83, he was concerned that he could not write more than 15 hours a day without hurting his eyes, and at 83 was ashamed he could not preach more than twice a day, and noted in his journal that there was an increasing tendency to lie in bed until 5:30 in the morning. *

* From *Herald of His Coming*

We may not have as much to give as John Wesley or other of the stalwarts who have preceded us in the way, but were we so deep in devotion and thorough in dedication as they, we, too, would give our all—honestly and courageously.

“Must we be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize
And sailed through bloody seas?”

Let us be well advised as children of the Light. It requires the strongest of courage to withstand the wiles of the devil, but let us not misunderstand the true meaning of such courage.

- It is more than fleshly determination;
- It is more than induced avowal;
- It is more than promised abstinence;
- It is more than devised resolution;
- It is more than outward pretense.

It is that strength of practical oneness with the Lord which refuses to be daunted or deterred;

- A devotion which does not deviate,
- A virility which does not vacillate,
- A determination which does not deteriorate,
- A faithfulness which does not fluctuate.

Courage, to be bonafide, must be bolstered. It must have a basis sufficiently firm to withstand the stunning blows which the evil one will be sure to register. This is why Joshua differentiated between strength and courage. This is why he advised strength before he suggested courage. “**Be strong and of a good courage . . . be strong and very courageous**” (Joshua 1:6, 7), he counseled.

- This called for convictions which pierce the sands of shallow profession and anchor to the bedrock of truth and righteousness.
- This called for a foundation which is firm and durable.
- It called for a careful and prayerful alignment with the purpose of the Almighty.

To be strong in the Lord demands that one plant one's feet where the power of God is provided. Then he who stands for truth stands ruggedly. He does not quail before the threats of a Goliath or quake before the preponderant number of his cohorts. He simply takes refuge in the God of Elijah and counts not his life dear unto himself in his unflinching defence of the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Sacred history is replete with impressive illustrations of courage in action. It had to be so, else we would neither have an inspiring heritage nor a preserved testimony. Our ancient foe has ever supplied tests for faith and courage in his unceasing animosity toward God and His Christ. His warfare is against our Lord, and his strategy is to strike hard against His body (the Church). He who is touched by our injuries cries out, “**Why persecutest thou Me?**” (Acts 9:4) This was the question which stopped Paul of Tarsus cold in his tracks. At the time of his planned persecution of the saints, he did not realize that he was a tool in the hand of Satan to inflict injury upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

For a renewal of courage, a reaffirmation of our faith, and a redoubling of our zeal, the blessed Holy Spirit marches before our vision those stalwarts of Hebrews eleven, who being dead, yet speak. Each one might have pursued a devious path. Each one might have drifted with the current of pleasure, popularity or prestige, hut faith asserted itself in a fearlessness of death, then favored them with a devotion which knew no desertion. They were followed by the martyrs who faced the fires without faltering, had a sweet tranquility of soul before the tumultuous throngs, and died unhesitatingly amid the fagots and the flames.

We need, as never before, to be aroused from our lethargy to rediscover what it was that put such strong sinews in the spiritual framework of the stalwart Christians of former days. We need to develop readiness of mind and a willingness of heart to accept such a discovery as applicable to us, and workable in us. We must admit our surprise that we have not seen these simple but profound truths ere this, or, having seen them, humbly confess our utter unwillingness heretofore to apply them.

~ end of chapter 11 ~

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