

FULLY FURNISHED

or

THE CHRISTIAN WORKER'S EQUIPMENT

by

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CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE WORKER'S ISOLATION

THE command of the Lord to the prophet Ezekiel was, **“Go shut thyself within thine house”** (Ezekiel 3:24). He was prohibited from speaking any further to the rebellious house of Israel. He was to withdraw himself into seclusion. This command may be taken as applying to the Christian life. As indicative of the Lord's desire that His children shall be much alone with Himself. He is continually saying to us, **“Let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely”** (Song of Solomon 2:14).

We have not only the desire of the Lord in His expressed command that we should dwell in the secret place of His presence, but there are unnumbered blessings which come to us in so doing; We shall focus the line of our thought upon some of the SHUT DOORS OF SCRIPTURE as illustrating and bringing out some of these blessings.

I - The shut door is the place of safety.

When Lot was in danger of being ill-used by the Sodomites, the angels pulled him into the house, and shut to the door (Genesis 19:10). Being in the house he was safe from the unholy hands of the men of Sodom. The Christian Worker is also in danger amid the dust and din of life, lest the world should pull him down into the dirt of worldliness, and thus soil the garments of his spiritual life. Lot would never have been in the position of danger if he had kept in the place of separation, but he had allowed himself to drift with the tide of worldliness, and the consequence was, he got into the place of defilement, from which he had to be rescued by the angels.

Something similar happens in the lives of God's children at times. Through willfulness, or compromise with some truth, or hesitation at some specific command, they find themselves in places of peril, from which they have to be rescued by the Lord's gracious intervention. The special point to which we draw attention is, it was not till Lot was behind the shut door that he was safe. The men of Sodom would have handled him roughly, if he had been outside. The lesson for us is, when we find ourselves in danger of contamination from worldly association, through unwatchfulness, the only place of safety and restoration, is to shut ourselves in with the Lord, confess the wrong, and abide with the Lord in secret prayer in the future, for unless we keep in communion with Him we shall find the world will entrap us.

I well remember a Christian worker telling me, in his endeavor to rescue one from a life of shame, he was placed in a very awkward and trying position, and that his safety in not yielding to temptation, was found in dropping on his knees and praying aloud. His action in so doing proclaimed the fact, that he was in touch with the Lord. He was living behind the closed door of the Lord's presence; hence, his preservation from evil.

II - The shut door is the place of searching.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of Leviticus there are certain directions given as to cases which showed signs of leprosy. In an unmistakable case of leprosy these directions did not apply, but where there was mere suspicion of leprosy they did, whether it was an individual (Leviticus 13:1-46), a garment (Leviticus 13:47-59), or where there seemed to be indications of leprosy, but they were a house (Leviticus 14:33-57).

Let us take the case of the individual, not pronounced, then he was to be shut up for seven days. For instance, if the spot on the man was no deeper than the skin, and the hairs had not turned white, he had to be shut up for seven days to see if there was any development. On the seventh day the priest was to examine the man, and if he found the **“plague was at a stay,”** then the man had to be shut up seven days more, and on the fourteenth day if the priest found **“the plague spread not in the skin,”** then the priest pronounced him clean, for the spot was only **“a scab”** (Leviticus 13:1-6).

The one thing to which reference is made, is this: all the while the man was shut up it was a time of testing, and we can quite understand what heart searchings and fears he would have. We may take this as illustrative of what the believer will find in the secrecy of the Lord's presence.

We need not fear this searching process, for it will mean growth in grace.

- When the Lord touches the thigh of our self-will, and makes us conscious of our weakness, it is but to make Israel of us, having power with Himself.
- When the Lord makes us conscious of our sins of omission, and leads us to cry out with Isaiah, “I have been dumb, therefore I am a man of unclean lips,” it is that we may be better fitted for future service.
- When the Lord allows some bodily affliction to assail us, and we cry out for the removal of the thorn, we find, as we wait upon Him, that He Himself has “given” us the thorn; for He wants us to prove in our experience the reality of His all-sufficient grace, and to know the joy which comes in having fellowship with Him in the Gethsemane of suffering.
- When the Lord comes with the pruning knife and cuts away the superfluous growths, which have come through our association with the Gospel, it is that we may know that the Christian life in its very blessedness exposes us to peculiar temptations, and the Lord but seeks to remove from us the hindrances to our fruitfulness, when He uses the rod of chastisement.

He desires us not to go away from Him, nor to be discouraged by His dealings, but rather to remember that the reason of His action is found in His heart of love; for in every blow He gives, He has some lesson to teach, some gift to bestow.

- When He turns the search-light of His holiness upon our ways, and reveals us to ourselves, it is that we may see our defects, and remedy them by allowing Him to adjust us; for when He tells us the truth about ourselves, He always bids us buy the gold of His blessing; and
- When He rebukes our self-confidence, as He did in Peter's case, it is but to make us confident in Himself.

All these things are happily learned in the secret of His presence.

Unless we get there, despondency, murmuring, and complaining will fill our hearts to our worstment and grief.

- Alone with the Lord, Jacob found out his crookedness and the patience of God's grace.
- Alone with the Lord, Daniel discovered his uncomeliness, and the ravishing beauty of God's glory.
- Alone with the Lord, Job was made conscious of his vileness, and the almightiness of God's power.
- Alone with the Lord, Moses got to know his unfitness for God's service, and the secret of His plans.
- Alone with the Lord, Isaiah had revealed to him his uncleanness, and the sufficiency of God's atonement.
- Alone with the Lord, Peter owned his self-confidence, and learned the blessedness of God's love; and
- Alone with the Lord, John saw the evil of man, and the grandness of God's purposes.

George Müller, in unfolding the secrets of a life of sanctity and service, said:

"There came a day when I died utterly. First, to George Müller; and second, to my fellow men;" and so saying, he bowed himself down almost to the ground, expressing by his attitude what he sought also to express by word. He added: "Not till I became totally indifferent to what George Müller thought, desired, and preferred; to George Müller's opinions, tastes, purposes; and also to the blame and praise, the censure or applause of my fellow men; and determined henceforth I would seek no approbation but that of God, did I ever start on a life of happiness and holiness; but from that day until now, I have been content to live alone with God."

III - The shut door is the place of supply.

When the widow came with her complaint to Elisha, and told him that her sons were likely to be made slaves, because she could not meet the creditor's claim, one of the first things he wanted to know was, what she had got in the house.

At once, she responds, "**Thine hand-maid hath not anything in the house, save a pot of oil.**"

She had something, but it was not sufficient to meet her own need, leaving out the obligation of her liability.

How like many of God's people, They have the oil of God's grace within them, but even that has not been sufficient to satisfy them, for they have such a scanty supply.

They are like the saints at Corinth, they **"are sanctified in Christ,"** for that is a matter of God's grace, but they are babes in the spiritual life, when they ought to be men; and as such they are occupied with minor things, and neglect the major ones. We repeat, the widow with the pot of oil, but unable to meet her liabilities, is a picture of many believers to-day.

They have the oil of God's grace, and the presence of the indwelling Spirit, but they do not meet the obligations resting upon them, nor have they sufficient to satisfy their own need; and it is not until they have learnt to wait upon God in secret, that they will have satisfaction in their hearts, or give what the world's need is asking for.

The directions of the prophet to the widow, were, she was to get all the empty vessels she could, and then shut herself in her house with her sons, and pour out from the pot of oil she had. What did the woman do? She **"shut the door"** and did as Elisha told her (II Kings 4:2-6); the consequence was, she not only had sufficient to meet her own liabilities, but she and her sons had a source of supply for the time to come. She met her liability without, by the supply she got within; hence, she illustrates the main principle of the Christian life, the measure of our giving out is circumscribed by the quantity we take in.

Oil was used for many purposes in the East, but without going into the manners and customs there, we may note one reference to oil in Scripture, namely, **"oil for the light."** the **"oil for the light"** in the Tabernacle was to feed the seven-branched golden lamp stand, that it might give light in the holy place (Exodus 35:14). This may be taken as typical of the Spirit's indwelling presence in the believer, as his Source of supply to enable him to shine for the Lord.

Christian character must be formed and fed from the supply of the Spirit's grace and power. The command of the Lord is, **"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven"** (Matthew 5:16). If we are to shine before men in public, we must wait upon God in private.

"The connection is lost," remarked one friend to another, as they were riding in an electric car in the North of England, when the car suddenly stopped and the lights went out. As soon as the car was disconnected from the source of supply, there was no light and no power. The same thing is true in the lives of God's people, so long as they are in secret communion with the Lord, they have the power to shine before men, but let anything interrupt the communion with Him, then they are as helpless as shorn Samson in the lap of Delilah, as useless as Jonah when he fled from the Lord, and as helpless as the unbelieving disciples when they could not cast out the demon from the stricken child. One of the things which is patent to every prayerful and careful reader of the New Testament is, what we might call the *inness* of the spiritual things which feed and fashion the spiritual life. Let us call to mind a few. The sphere of the believer's walk is **"in the light"** (I John 1:7) of God's holy presence and truth, for as there are three properties in the rays of sun-light, namely, illumination, healing, and warmth, so as we walk in the light we are warmed by God's love into obedience, healed by His gracious word to our betterment, and enlightened by His truth to our knowledge.

The soil in which the believer grows is “in grace” (II Peter 3:18).

Grace is to the child of God, what the soil is to the plant; it nourishes and strengthens it. As the plant keeps in the soil, lays hold of it, and draws in its nutriment, the soil imparts its properties to it; so it is with us, as we lay hold of the grace of God, it infuses its nature into us, till men have to say of us, that we are full of grace.

The secret of the believer’s safety is to be “**kept by the power of God**” (I Peter 1:5). The power of God is not a power which keeps us as a prisoner is kept in a cell, but rather as the earth, which is kept habitable, because of the atmosphere which surrounds it. The power of God keeps in so far as we keep ourselves in it.

The source of the believer’s fruitfulness is found as he abides in the Divine Vine (John 15:4). This abiding is finely expressed as “**he that keepeth His commandments**” (I John 3:24). Obedience to the Lord is abiding in Him, and as we do so, the sap of the Divine life courses through our spiritual being as a consequence, and manifests itself in the fruit of the Spirit.

The spring of the believer’s action is known as he keeps himself “**in the love of God**” (Jude 21). What a difference may be seen in two persons as they walk along the street. The lethargic person moves with languid step, which proclaims a torpid liver or a want of energy; while the other person, by his alertness of manner and elasticity of step tells out his healthfulness and energy. Thus is it with the Christian life, when the love of God moves the heart, the walk of faith and the labour of love are prominent in their activity.

The sanctifier of the believer’s heart and life is the truth of God, for as he moves in it, he will answer Christ’s prayer, that he may be sanctified “**by the truth**” (John 17:17). The tropical plant languishes and dies in our cold atmosphere, but let it remain in its native surroundings, then it will flourish and bloom. Similarly is it the case with the child of God being begotten by the truth of God; he makes progress in grace, in so far as he keeps in the truth.

The supply of the believer’s need is ever met as he is “**praying in the Holy Ghost**” (Jude 20). This last is the secret of all the rest, for the only way to know the inness of the former things is as we abide in the attitude of prayer. The praying in the Holy Spirit will keep us in the secret of the Lord’s presence, press us into the soil of His grace, preserve us in the Lord’s keeping, keep us in the flow of the Divine life, cause us to move with holy energy, encircle us with God’s truth, and enable us to rejoice in the supplies of heaven’s blessing.

IV - The shut door is the place of intercession.

The story of the Shunammite woman and her son is most touching in its details. Without going into the minutiae of the story, we concentrate our thought upon the woman as she kneels before Elisha, telling out her grief in the death of her God-given son. In response to the woman’s pleading, Elisha tells his servant to go and put his staff upon the dead boy; but the woman is not satisfied with the servant’s mission, she wants the master’s presence.

The prophet grants the woman's request, but when he arrives at the house, he will not allow anyone in the room with him. He must be alone with God and the dead body. Alone with God he prays, and stretches himself upon the dead body. He pleads and he prays till the body is warm, and the child sneezes seven times. Then his task is done, and he is satisfied (II Kings 4:28-37).

Personal consecration is the essentiality in order to prevail in intercession for others.

At first the prophet sends Gehazi to place the staff upon the dead child, but there is no result as the servant confessed, "**The child is not awakened.**"

Gehazi is a type of those who, while they are acquainted with the exterior of the things of God, know nothing of their inward power and reality. They can handle the prophet's staff, but they do not possess the prophet's power.

Further, the prophet's staff is useless in itself.

It is only when the power of God courses through the man of God, and from him, to, and through the staff, that it becomes an instrument of blessing. The isolated staff, lying on the dead child, is an illustration of the utter insufficiency of religious organization and church machinery, apart from the power of God. The staff of dead formalism will never avail to quicken those who are dead in trespasses and sins.

Elisha, the man of God, is the one who is qualified to pray and prevail in bringing life to the dead. He is an illustration of those who are wholly consecrated to the Lord.

Elisha's previous experience, and the meaning of his name may be taken to illustrate the prerequisites to consecrated intercession. The meaning of the name Elisha is, "*The salvation of God.*"

Elisha had left all to follow Elijah (I Kings 19:20, 21).

In II Kings 2 we have a detailed account of Elisha's tenacity and devotion to Elijah. He would not leave Elijah, however much he might seem to discourage him. Elisha went with him from Gilgal to Bethel, from Bethel to Jericho, from Jericho to Jordan, and from Jordan till he received the double portion of his spirit.

All this may be taken as typical of the experience of every consecrated worker.

First, we must know the spiritual significance of Elisha's name in being partakers of God's salvation, in being saved by His grace through faith in the atoning Saviour (Ephesians 2:6).

Second, there comes the leaving all to follow our Divine Elijah in the paths of sanctification and service (Romans 12:1).

Third, then the absolute separation from the Egypt of the world, through the Gilgal of Christ's death (Joshua 5:9; Galatians 6:14).

Fourth, we come to the Bethel of communion with the Lord (Genesis 28:12-19; I Corinthians 1:9).

Fifth, we understand that the Jericho of the world is under the curse of God, hence we can have no fellowship with its evil aims (Joshua 6:26; I John 2:15,17), but keep ourselves from the “**accursed**” place (Joshua 6:17, 18; II Corinthians 6:17).

Sixth, then we apprehend that the old self-life is dead in the death of Christ, and that we are identified with Christ in resurrection power, even as the twelve stones which were placed in Jordan, and the twelve stones which were taken out of the Jordan represented Israel’s death to the old life in Egypt, and their new life in Canaan (Joshua 4:1-9; Romans 6:3-5).

Seventh, after we have passed through the Jordan of Christ’s death, then we receive the baptism of power for service. Like Christ, we must go through the Jordan of death, before we can receive the enduement of the Spirit’s enabling (Luke 4:1, 18).

Such are the workers who are qualified to plead for those who are dead in sins, and they shall not plead in vain.

Personal identification with those who are dead in sins follows intercession.

“He went up and lay upon the child” (II Kings 4:34).

There are many illustrations given to us in the Word of God of this personal identification in helping others.

- When Peter bade the lame man, “**In the name of Jesus Christ rise up and walk,**” he did more than utter those words. “**He took him by the right hand and lifted him up**” (Acts 3:6, 7).
- When Ananias greeted Saul of Tarsus, he not only said to him, “**Brother Saul,**” but he put “**his hands on him**” (Acts 9:17);
- When Christ healed the leper, He put forth His hand and touched him.

There must be the placing ourselves alongside of folk, if we would reach and win them to Christ.

The stand-off-ish-ness of patronage, and the put-on-ed-ness of pride will never interest, impress, and lead to the Saviour. But where there is the look of sympathy, the warm touch of help, and the ready aid of love, then there is sure to be the quickening into life of those who are dead in trespasses and sins.

One of the most striking illustrations of the power of this identification was seen in the life of the late F. W. Crossley, of Manchester.

In his biography, the writer seemingly addresses one who had been benefited by him, in the following words:

“You, sister H., do you remember the power that drink had over you, and how you came into the Star Hall one day after your husband, and had enough sense to know that you were too drunk to sit with him, and went into a corner and sat down where you thought no one could see you? You are well saved to-day, and a follower of the Lamb; but do you remember how Brother Crossley came down from the platform that day, and came to you and said:- ‘Sister H., Jesus loves you,’ and took you by the hand. And some one said, ‘Eh! no; if He does, He is the only One as does.’ Which wasn’t quite true, considering that there was some one helping the Lord in the business? And do you remember how he kept your hand, and went on saying, ‘Sister H., Jesus does love you,’ until someone went home with the thought in her heart that led her to salvation in spite of the devil and the drink? And as we are telling of love being stronger than the drink, and stronger than all sin, you won’t be likely to forget that when you were sick, Brother Crossley visited you himself and brought you the jugs of soup in his own hands; and when your eyes were bad, went home and fetched a lotion for you, and washed your eyes with it himself. You are like the rest of us in having learned a lot of what you know about the love of God by what you saw in Brother Crossley.”

V - The shut door is the place of manifestation.

When the disciples were gathered together in the upper room, on the morn of the resurrection, they not only closed the doors, but they made them fast. Rotherham emphasizes this fact in commenting upon the words, relating to their action, “The doors having been made fast.” The locked doors were to keep the Jews out, but they could not keep Jesus out, for He came and stood in their midst, greeting them with peace, gladdening them with joy, and quickening them by the in-breathing of the Holy Spirit.

This manifestation of Christ to His disciples may be taken to illustrate what comes to those who patiently wait upon the Lord in prayer and meditation. Christ manifests Himself in at least four characters, namely, as the Peace-Giver, as the Joy-Inspirer, as the Service-Sender, and as the Power-Bestower.

(1) Christ manifests Himself as the Peace-Giver.

His greeting of “**Peace be unto you,**” is more than an eastern salutation; it is the bestowment of the living Christ, the calm which comes into the spirit from being personally reconciled to God through His death. The peace which comes to the believer is like the summer breeze warmed by the setting sun, after everything has been stirred and drenched by the thunder storm.

Christ not only said to them “**Peace**” once, but He said to them again, “**Peace be unto you**” (John 20:19, 21). When Christ uses the word “**Again,**” it is either in the way of emphasis, as when He reminded the Jews, that He had already said He was going away (John 8:14, 21); or the word is used in speaking of something in addition, as when He says, “**I will come again**” (John 14:3). In this latter sense Christ uses this salutation. He has an additional and deeper blessing to bestow. He not only gives the peace of conscience, which He procured by the death of His Cross; but He gives peace of heart amid the storms of life, when we allow Him to live and rule in our hearts. Christ’s peace, like the garments of the virtuous woman (Proverbs 31:21, marg.), is double.

There are many of the Lord's people who have "**peace with God**" (Romans 5:1), but do not enjoy "**the peace of God**" (Philippians 4:7).

The former is the bestowment of God's grace through faith in the Christ; but the latter is conditional on prayerfulness in everything, anxiety about nothing, and thankfulness for anything.

There are many things which tend to disturb us.

- The *ague of fear* would make us shake with fearfulness, as when the disciples cried out, when tossed on the storm-troubled lake, "**We perish.**"
- The *terror of doubt* would frighten us out of our faith, as when Peter, dismayed at the wind and waves, exclaimed, "**Lord, save me.**"
- The *fret of anxiety* would prey upon our mind, and fill us with forebodings, as it did Hezekiah when he thought he was sick unto death, so that he said, "**He will cut me off with a pining sickness.**"
- The *nightmare of our sinful past* would disturb us with its spectral presence, as the spirit which appeared to Eliphaz, and made his hair to stand on end.
- The *worm of discouragement* would gnaw into the success of our service, and make us to flee from our work for God, as it did in the case of Elijah, when he ran away from his post, and laid himself under a juniper tree and prayed for death.
- The *root of bitterness* would embitter us with its foul growth, and fill us with its rankling presence, as it did the disciples when they quarreled among themselves, as to which should be the greatest; and
- The *foul presence of some besetting sin* would color our life, as worldliness did the life of Demas.

The cure for all disturbing and peace-killing things, is to live in the calm and holy presence of Christ.

"The Earl of Dundonald fought with his solitary ship a line of formidable forts in South America, whose fire proved so raking that his men could not be got to stand to their guns. Calling to his wife, he asked her to fire one of the guns, and show these men how to do their duty. She did so. Instantly they returned, burning with shame, to their posts, and soon the victory was theirs. The lady, in rehearsing the circumstances, said, the thing which was felt by her to be most terrible, was not the din of battle, not the raking fire, but the awful calmness that sat fixed on her husband's countenance, as it seemed to carry in itself the sure presage of victory."

In a far grander, deeper, and more realistic sense, as we look into the calm, true, sweet, holy, gentle, firm, and loving face of our Lord Jesus Christ, through abiding in unbroken communion with Him we catch His spirit, and His peace fills our hearts.

(2) Christ manifests Himself as the Joy-inspirer.

"**Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord**" (John 20:20).

The Greek word *kairo* is variously rendered. The following places where the word occurs will indicate some feeders of the believer's joy.

- We are "**glad**" in the Father's gladness in being welcomed to His heart and home (Luke 15:32).
- We "**rejoice**" that our names are written in Heaven (Luke 10: 20).
- We are going on our way "**rejoicing**," having found the Lord as our Sin-Bearer (Acts 8:39).
- We "**rejoice**" when we are called "**to be partakers of Christ's sufferings**" (I Peter 4:13; Matthew 5:13; Acts 5:41).
- We are "**rejoiced**" when we see others walking in the truth (II John 4); and
- When the Gospel blesses the lives of others we are "**glad**" (Acts 11:23);

but that which makes our gladness joyful is, when, like the disciples, we behold the glorious person of our adorable Saviour. The action of Christ in shewing His hands and side to His disciples convinced them that it was He Himself in their midst, and produced joy in their hearts in consequence. Johnson once said to Boswell, "You have only two subjects - yourself and myself - and I am sick of them both."

Something similar the believer says of himself, the more he knows of the sinfulness of his own heart, and the loathsomeness of iniquity; but this is not so with Christ - the more we know of Him, the better we trust Him, and the better we trust Him, the more ardent will be our love to Him.

The open side of Christ reveals:

- A heart of love which has poured out its life's blood to benefit us;
- A heart of sympathy which beats in tender feeling for us;
- A heart of regard which aches for our sufferings;
- A heart of mercy which compassionates us, while it makes no excuse for our weaknesses;
- A heart of grace which ever thinks how best to help us; and
- A heart of care which is ever planning to serve us.

The hands of Christ are studded with the jewels of blessing, and they are so, because they have been pierced by the nails, the cruel nails of the Cross.

The ordinary observer would not see anything peculiar in the hands of Christ, but the believer says;-

"His hands were rough, and His hands were hard,
For He wrought in wood, in Nazareth town;
With naught of worship, with no regard,
In the village street He went up and down.

"His hands were rough, but in them was light,
As they lay on the eyes of him born blind;
Or struck sick folk in their healing might,
And ministered joy to the hearts that pined.

“His hands were hard, but they spiked them fast
To the splintering wood of the cursed tree;
He hung in sight of the world, at last,
In His shame. And the blood trickled so free.”

Yes, and because “the blood” has “trickled free” from those hands,

- They are strong to save, as Peter found (Matthew 14:31);
- Potent to heal, as the leper experienced (Matthew 8:3);
- Almighty to create, as the Psalmist states (Psalms 95:5; 102:25; 119:73);
- Sufficient to supply, as David testifies (Psalm 104:28);
- Tender to bless, as the children knew (Mark 10:16);
- Strong to uplift, as the bowed woman felt (Luke 13:13); and
- Mighty to keep, as the Lord Jesus assures (John 10:28).

The hands of the Lord do all these things, and a great deal more, and all - let it be repeated - and all, because those hands were once gory with His blood of atonement.

There is only one letter more in the word glory than gory, and that letter is the initial letter for love, viz., the letter L. So that we may say, the gory Cross is the Christian’s glory, for it tells out in unmistakable language the provision Love has made for us in the propitiation of Christ.

“Look at the wounds of Christ,” said Staupitz to Luther.

Looking at those wounds, we shall find

- A mirror to show us the evil of sin,
- A microscope to reveal the purpose of God,
- A magnet to attract to consecrated service,
- A motor to move us in loving consideration for others,
- A motive to cause us to please God,
- A means of grace to enable us to endure suffering,
- A might to strengthen us in our conflict with evil, and
- Music which will make our whole being glad in the Lord’s presence.

(3) Christ manifests Himself as the Service-Sender.

The main thing to note, in thinking of Christ’s sending forth His disciples, is, the correspondingness of it, as brought out in the “**as**” and “**so**.”

“**As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.**” He says, in so many words, “What I have been, while I have been with you, you are to be when I am absent. As I have manifested My Father’s character, in fulfilling His will, you are to henceforth manifest My character to the world.” This is a great privilege, and a grave responsibility. Christ did His Father’s service in blessing mankind, we do His will in doing the same.

As we bring the sensitive plate of prayerful inquiry to the scene of Christ's life, what are the special traits which the sun of God's truth photographs upon it?

- The *might of His service* was the Holy Spirit. He ever filled the censer of His ministry with fire from off the altar of God's power.
- The *manner of His service* is well expressed in the frequent references to His being moved with compassion. The love of God was the secret force which caused Him to act in pity, mercy, and grace.
- The *music of His service* is aptly expressed in His Gethsemane prayer, "**Not My will, but Thine be done.**" The harmony of His life is found in that key-note. There were no false notes of self-will and self-seeking in His life.
- The *message of His service* was to tell men of the Father's heart of love, the Father's hearth of grace, and the Father's home in glory. They said of His speaking, "**Never man spake like this man;**" may we not further say, "Never man had a message like this Man?"
- The *majesty of His service* is unfolded in the great aim of His life, which was to bring glory to His Father. The gem of His perfect life only flashed out with greater contrast as the unholy light of the world's glitter played upon it.

Thus we see that Christ is the Model of our action in service.

All this is implied in the authoritative utterance of His commission.

As He was sent forth by the Father, and represented Him, so He sends us forth to represent Him. But in order to fully and faithfully do this, we must be much alone with Him, for how can we freshly manifest Him to others, if we are not continually receiving manifestations from Him?

(4) Christ manifests Himself as the Power-Bestower.

"He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John 20:22).

The actions of Christ, as well as His words, are profoundly significant and suggestive.

- When He groaned in spirit at the grave of Lazarus, it showed the intenseness of His feelings.
- When He lifted up His eyes to Heaven, ere He voiced that memorable prayer for His disciples, as recorded in John 17, He showed His unswerving confidence in His Father.
- When He brake the bread at the institution of the Lord's supper, it was typical of the breaking of His body in death on the Cross.
- When He gave the disciples the bread at the feeding of the 5,000, it was symbolical of His greater gift of Himself to benefit humanity.
- When He looked at Peter after his denial of Him, it was a searching reminder of what Christ had already told him he would do.
- When Christ touched the polluted leper, His act was expressive of His gracious sympathy; and now, when He breathes Upon His disciples, it proclaims the absolute power He possesses.

The question arises, how are we to understand the words which refer to the Holy Spirit.

Was the bestowment equivalent to the gift of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, or does it refer to some gift of power bestowed to qualify for service? I think the latter, and for the simple reason, that there is no definite article in the Greek, as Rotherham points out, “Receive ye Holy Spirit.”

There are three things suggested by these words, namely, impartation of abundant life, illumination of the understanding, and infusion of power for service.

Impartation of abundant life.

Breathing is equivalent to life.

Job, in vindicating himself to his friends, among other things, refers to his dealings with the owners of the land he possessed, and imprecates himself if he has caused “the owners thereof to breathe out” (Job 31:39, margin). Meaning, of course, if he had caused them to die. Again, at the creation of man, God “**breathed into his nostrils the breath of life**” (Genesis 2:7).

Yet one other illustration, when the prophet saw the valley of dead bones he cried to the Spirit of Life to come, in the words, “**Come from the four winds, O Breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live**” (Ezekiel 37:9).

The disciples had spiritual life, but lacked vitality.

- Their testimony wanted grit,
- Their love wanted glow,
- Their temper lacked grace,
- Their service needed go,
- Their faith called for grip,
- Their spirits needed gladdening, and
- Their whole nature needed grounding.

Christ, in resurrection power, seeks now to supply the need, for His blessing will mean their betterment.

Until we know Christ in resurrection power, we shall never rise above the petty annoyances of life; but when we know Him, and the power of His resurrection, then the morning of our life shall glow with the sun of His love and grace.

Living in the consciousness of His in-breathing power and living presence, we cannot do anything mean, selfish, worldly, unrighteous, or fleshly.

When Frederick Arnold was writing the life of F. W. Robertson, he went to Brighton to talk to Robertson’s friends, to find incidents for his biography. Among other places, he went to a bookseller’s shop, and learned that the proprietor had been a constant attendant upon Robertson’s ministry, and had in his parlour a picture of the great preacher.

The bookseller said to Mr. Arnold, ‘Do you see that picture? Whenever I am tempted to do a mean thing, I run back here and look at it. Then I cannot do the mean thing. Whenever I feel afraid of some difficulty, or some obstacle, I come and look into those eyes, and I go out strong for my struggle.’”

If the face of a dead friend inspired the man to such a degree as he states, how much more should the living presence of our Divine Lord. It will, if we only recognize that presence.

Illumination of the understanding.

The Hebrew word rendered “**breathed**” in Genesis 2:7, is given “**bloweth**” in Isaiah 54:16, in speaking of the smith who “**bloweth the coals in the fire.**”

Often the fire of the understanding burns low, because the breath of the Lord’s quickening is not allowed to blow upon it.

Govett says, “I understand those words, ‘**Receive ye Holy Spirit,**’ to be parallel with the words in Luke relating to this scene, ‘**Then opened He their understandings that they might understand the Scripture**’ (Luke 24:45).

It was a gift of inspiration in relation to the Old Testament Scriptures; and it was by virtue of this inspired intelligence that Peter acted in the first of the Acts, according as the Psalm directs - that another apostle should be chosen in the place of Judas. It did not make needless the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, of which our Lord in this Gospel had abundantly testified as the near hope of the disciples.”

Shut in with the Lord, this consequence always follows, a deeper insight into the things of God.

Those who dwell deep in communion with God, are sure to be initiated in the deep things of His purpose.

The late F. W. Crossley relates a similar experience which he had to that of the disciples. He says: “I was praying, when the Lord filled me with a new kind of faith and joy - a faith and a consciousness of cleansing (somewhat wavering, but quite different from any previous sense). I felt, and feel loosed from my infirmity to testify . . . The beginning of the matter was a quite new appetite for His Word. I hungered for it, and ate it up as never exactly before, then to prayer, and then this blessing.”

The study of the Word led him to prayer, but what was it that led him to study the Word?

It was prayer, too; this gave him the appetite for the study of the Word. How often have we heard it said, “The Bible has been a new book to me since I have been filled with the Spirit.”

Infusion of Power for service.

The power which equipped Bezaleel for service is tersely expressed in the following words of the Lord: **“I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship”** (Exodus 31:3).

The Hebrew word for spirit in some places is translated **“breath.”** So that we might read, “The Breath of God” for **“The Spirit of God,”** especially where the gracious influence is referred to.

Yet we need to guard against a misapprehension, for the Holy Spirit is as much a person as the Father and the Son.

The one practical thought for the believer is, we require supernatural power to serve God.

There is a striking illustration of this in the Epistle to the Corinthians. The lowest status of society in the apostle’s day was that of a slave. The natural advice men would give to such an one would be, “Make every effort to get out of the position you are in.”

Does the apostle give this advice? No. He says, **“Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God”** (I Corinthians 7:24).

This statement makes the drudgery of the slave, the action of the saint.

Godet put it finely, when he said, “This is what raises the humblest duties it can impose on him to the supreme acts of worship . . . In fact, this principle has been of incalculable importance in the development of the Church. It is by the means of it that Christianity has been able to become a moral power, at once sufficiently firm and sufficiently elastic to adapt itself to all human situations, personal, domestic, national, and social. Thereby it is, that, without revolution, it has worked the greatest revolution, accepting everything to transform everything, submitting to everything to rise above everything, renewing the world from top to bottom, while condemning all violent subversion.”

Such a thought gives new meaning to service for God.

It proclaims the fact, that the duties of earth done to the Lord Himself, make them to reflect the glory of Heaven. It is not without reason that the common duties of life follow the command to **“be filled with the Spirit,”** for it is only as we are filled with Him that we can fulfil them. Out of all this there comes a sweet contentment with one’s lot, which makes one acquiesce in the sentiment expressed in the following lines:

“Do what you can,
Being what you are;
Shine as a glow-worm,
If you cannot be a star:
Work like a pulley,
If you cannot be a crane:
Be a wheel-greaser,
If you cannot drive a train.

“Be the pliant oar,
If you cannot be the sailor;
Be the little needle,
If you cannot be the tailor:
Be the cleaning besom,
If you cannot be the sweeper;
Be the sharpened sickle,
If you cannot be the reaper.”

In the biography of George Müller, the following incident is related:

“On April 20th, Mr. Müller left for Bristol. On the journey he was dumb, having no liberty in speaking for Christ, or even in giving away tracts, and this led him to reflect. He saw that the so-called work of the Lord had tempted him to substitute action for meditation and communion. He had neglected that still hour with God, which supplies to spiritual life alike its breath and bread. No lesson is more important for us to learn, yet how slow we are to learn it - that for the lack of habitual seasons set apart for devout meditation upon the Word of God and for prayer, nothing else will compensate.”

We are too apt to forget, that we need the polishing by the pierced hand of our Redeemer in secret, in order to more effectually reflect His glory in public.

The importance of entering into the closet for communion, before there is a going forth in service, is repeatedly emphasized in God’s Word.

The exercise of the holy priesthood in offering up spiritual sacrifices, is the forerunner of the qualification for the royal priesthood to show forth God’s praises (I Peter 2:5, 9); even as the High Priest on the Day of Atonement entered the Holiest of All, wearing the holy linen garments (Leviticus 16:4), before he came forth to bless the people, having on the garments of glory and beauty (Exodus 28:43). The holy garments of a consecrated life, as formed through fellowship with the Lord, must be worn before the royal robes of a faithful testimony.

We must tarry in prayer before we can testify in power. The early disciples moved God by their prayer of faith, God in response moved them by His Spirit, and they in turn moved the people (Acts 4:23-32). The shining face of Moses was not obtained by looking into the faces of men, but was the result of being alone with God in the glory (Exodus 34:29) .

Waiting upon God is the way to obtain strength to walk after Him in obedience. Running well in obedience to the Lord’s directions, mounting high in the Divine life, and an untiring walk in love, are all consequent upon the strength obtained in secret from the Lord’s presence. Before David conquered Goliath in public, he had learned to overcome the lion and bear in secret. The required skill to overcome our enemies is the result of long and patient practice in secret.

To have the tongue of the taught, we must have the willing ear of attention (Isaiah 1:4).

Before Moses could be the leader of Israel, he must spend forty years at the back side of the desert. In his self-evolved zeal he could smite the Egyptian, but the Lord had to put Him on the grindstone of His training, to get off the encrustations of impatience. Moses learned his lesson well, for afterwards, he did everything according to the word of the Lord (Exodus 40:16), except in his striking the rock when the Lord told him to speak to it (Numbers 20:12).

To have effective Martha service, we must have the humble posture of Mary, and also her teachable spirit (Luke 10:39).

The secrets of the Master are not to be got while we are in the hurry of work, they are obtained while quietly listening to His voice as He speaks to us in His Word. The Mary spirit precedes all true, real, and effective service. There would be less tartness in our testimony, if there were more tarrying in His presence.

We shall understand many of the Lord's refusals to our petitions through abiding in the Lord's presence. Paul besought the Lord thrice to remove the thorn in the flesh. His prayer was not granted as he desired. The Lord did not remove the thorn, but He told His servant, "**My grace is sufficient for thee.**" From that interview with the Lord, Paul learned that he had a greater blessing with the trial, than if he had been without it. He found that the messenger of Satan brought a gift from Heaven.

Prayer to the Lord was the feeder of the consistent life of Daniel. The king suffered no damage, because Daniel did not suffer his spiritual life to be hurt. He demonstrated the saying, "The soul of all prosperity, is the prosperity of the soul."

When we receive the plan of our conduct from the hand of God's Word, as Moses received the plan of the tabernacle, the glory of the Lord's grace will shine out from the tabernacle of our character, even as the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle of old (Exodus 40:34).

There is one chapter in the life of F. W. Crossley, of Manchester, which is most suggestive. It is headed "Machinery and Religion," and in it, it is again and again stated, that he would not engage in any business transaction which was not straight. He would not send out a faulty engine. His religion was in his machinery. The reason of this is not far to seek, for all who knew him, testify to the thoroughness of his consecration to Christ, and the spirituality of his life, so much so that his biographer speaks of his conscience as a "Franciscan conscience."

All this goes to prove, that they who live for God, live best before men. The secret of a consistent life is a consecrated one.

~ end of chapter 22 ~

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