

FULLY FURNISHED

or

THE CHRISTIAN WORKER'S EQUIPMENT

by

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CHAPTER TWENTY

THE WORKER'S WISDOM

ASTRONOMERS tell us that many of the stars, which seem to us to be single suns, are double when examined through a powerful telescope. For instance, the star known as Castor is a double one, although to the naked eye it appears to be a single star. Another feature about these stars is, they are so intimately related to each other, that the one influences the other.

Something similar may be said with regard to the Christian Worker's Wisdom in winning souls. It is a double subject. There is the Divine side to it, and there is the human side; there are certain conditions which the believer has to fulfil; and there are certain promises which God has pledged Himself to keep, as the believer keeps to those conditions. Let us look at the subject before us from these two standpoints.

I - The Human Standpoint.

There are five things to which we call attention, and these are; self-abnegation, singleness of aim, simplicity of utterance, stalwartness of faith, and steadfastness in labour.

1. Self-abnegation.

A lad, who was fishing on the banks of a stream, and who was very successful in his operations, was asked by a gentleman what rules he observed.

The boy's reply was, "I observe three rules: I keep myself out of sight; and second, I keep myself further out of sight; and third, I keep myself further out of sight still,"

These rules are absolutely essential in the Divine art of fishing for human souls. Unless self and all selfish interests are kept out of the work of the Lord, it will be marred and tarnished.

There is a Chinese fable, which tells of a potter who had received an order from the emperor to make for him a porcelain set of vases. He tried again and again, but he failed to make anything to his satisfaction, so at last in utter despair he flung himself into his furnace, that this self-sacrifice might give to the vases the luster he desired.

The fable says his end was achieved, for there came out of the furnace such wares of marvellous beauty as excited the admiration of all. The moral of the fable is plainly seen. When there is self-abandonment, self-effacement, and self-abnegation, then there is the luster of praise which brings glory to God. There is a great principle illustrated, in what the enemies of Christ said to Him, when He was on the Cross.

They said, “**He saved others, Himself He cannot save.**”

The fact is, He was able to save others, because He did not save Himself. This is a truth which runs through the whole of the Word of God. “**He that loseth his life shall find it.**” Whereas if we seek to conserve our life, we consume it. The only way we can be of use in the Lord’s service, is, as we are dead to self. If we engage in Christian work because others are occupied by it, or because we are asked to do it, or take it up merely as a hobby, then it resolves itself into self-effort alone, and will be an absolute failure in that deeper and God-glorifying sense. But if the work is for Christ, and Christ is in the work, it will be a success, for labour in the Lord can never be in vain (I Corinthians 15:58).

When Ignatius was placed in the amphitheater, waiting for the lions who were to kill him, he said,

“I am grain of God, I must be ground beneath the lions’ teeth to make bread for His people.”

It was a noble example, he was willing to be sacrificed to encourage God’s people.

We are not called to lay down our lives in this way, but the principle is the same, for the Word of the Lord is: “**Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren**” (I John 3:16).

This self-abnegation is no light matter, it will cost many a heart pang, for self is like our shadow, it follows us wherever we go, and it is only Christ who can cope with it. Someone has said “the number of the beast is not 666, but number one.”

We can only overcome self as we remember we are crucified with Christ, and as we reckon we are identified with Him.

We may illustrate this by the transposition of the letters of the words “Himself” and “Christ.” If we take away H-i-m from Himself, we have nothing left but self; but when we put Him before self, then self is swallowed up in Him. Or, to put the same thing another way, if we take the fourth letter in the name Christ, we have nothing but I, which is suggestive of proud “I,” as may be seen in the case of Nebuchadnezzar when he said, “**Is not this great Babylon which I built,**” or the letter I speaks of self-will as is illustrated in the words of Naaman, when he said, “**I thought the prophet would have done some great thing,**” but when C-h-r is put in front of the letter I, and s-t behind it, then I is lost in Christ. Let us look away to Christ when self would intrude itself, then all shall be well; for as we lose sight of our shadow in looking to the light, so we shall be able to deny self itself, as we look away to Him.

2. Singleness of aim.

The late Dr. A. A. Bonar once sat down to analyze modern zeal in Christian work, and the result of his analysis was as follows:-

Personal ambition	23 parts
Love of praise	19 parts
Pride of denomination	15 parts
Pride of talent	14 parts
Pride of authority	12 parts
Bigotry	10 parts
Love of God	4 parts
Love of Man	<u>3 parts</u>
	100 parts

According to this calculation, 93 parts of modern zeal are carnal, and only seven spiritual. How different from Christ, who could say, **“I do always the things that please My Father.”**

What the aim of the worker should be, was clearly stated by the Apostle Paul, when he said, **“Wherefore we labour, that . . . we may be accepted of him”** (II Corinthians 5:9).

The son of Confucius once said to his father, “I apply myself to every kind of study with diligence, and neglect nothing that could render me clever and ingenious; but still I do not advance.” “Omit some of your pursuits,” replied Confucius, “and you will get on better. Among those who travel constantly on foot, have you ever observed any who run? It is essential to do everything in order, and only grasp that which is within the reach of your arm; for otherwise you give yourself useless trouble. Those who, like yourself, desire to do everything in one day, do nothing to the end of their lives, while others who steadily adhere to one pursuit find that they have accomplished their purpose.”

“This one thing I do,” says the apostle. Yes, and he who has one thing to do, and does it, will, as Confucius said to his son, do more than he who attempts many. Thus, the Christian worker who remembers he has one thing to do in all his life and labour, namely, to please his Lord, will accomplish more than those who endeavor to please themselves, or please men, for those who seek to please others or themselves, only tease themselves to their own hurt, and blight and blur all they touch.

3. Simplicity of utterance.

One of the many things which impressed the hearers of the late C. H. Spurgeon, was the simplicity of his language. If he referred to a donkey, he would not speak of it as “that quadruped which has elongated appendages;” nor would he call any two names given to any two things, an illustration of the “binomial theorem,.” nor would he, in speaking of the number of farthings necessary to make up five pounds, say, “It was a demonstration of the theory known as differential calculus.”

It may sound well enough to call a spade “an agricultural implement,” but it would be meaningless to a simple countryman, while if a spade was spoken of as “a shovel,” he would know what was meant at once. We need to be simple in telling out the Gospel message, so that the most ignorant may understand.

The Lord Jesus in His ministry used the simplest possible language, and brought surrounding objects to illustrate and enforce truth; and by doing so, He was able to bring to the people the claims and teaching of the truth of God. He is our Example in this, as in everything else.

It is related of Sir Astley Cooper, on visiting Paris, that a certain surgeon asked him how often he had performed a certain feat in surgery.

He replied he had performed the operation thirteen times.

“Ah, but, Monsieur, I have done it one hundred and sixty times.”

“How many times did you save the life?” continued the curious Frenchman, after he had looked in blank amazement into the Englishman’s face.

“I,” said Sir Astley Cooper, “saved eleven out of the thirteen. How many did you save out of the one hundred and sixty?”

“Ah, Monsieur, I lose dem all, but the operation was very brilliant.”

The same may be said of some Christian workers, Their speech is eloquent, their elocution is perfect, and their rhetoric is magnificent, but the spiritual results are nil, for the simple reason, while the preacher is admired, the truth is ignored, because it is smothered by flowery language.

Let us in our speech be like the Apostle Paul, when he went to Corinth, as he himself says,

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (I Corinthians 2:1-5).

4. Stalwartness of faith.

As the roots of the oak take hold of the earth in which it is growing, so faith takes hold of the promises, and abides in them; thus the believer is strong and steady amid the storms and stress of life.

This is what the Old Testament saints did.

We read of them: **“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth”** (Hebrews 11:13).

They took the promises to themselves, and made them their own.

Faith always does this, for the ground of all faith’s action is, **“Thus saith the Lord.”**

When we have God’s **“Go forward”** we may be sure that every Red Sea of difficulty will roll back before us.

“When Mr. Webster, at the laying of the Bunker’s Hill shaft, besought the crowd to ‘stand back,’ lest the concourse of people should break the speaker’s platform down, at the peril of life and limb, the answer was, ‘It is impossible!’ ‘Impossible! thundered the American Demosthenes, ‘nothing is impossible at Bunker’s Hill.’ And when we remember who gave us our marching orders, and who left us the pledge of His perpetual presence - when we stand beside that Cross on which He bore our sins, we dare not talk of impossibilities. In the lexicon of the Christian life, there is not, and there should not be, such a word as fail. Nothing is impossible at Calvary.”

The one thing that shall make our faith strong, and give back-bone and spring to it, is simple and wholehearted faith in the Word of God.

When we have the authority of God’s Word, then we can speak with authority. The in-wrought conviction of the truth of God’s Word will tell in our testimony, in working upon others. The lamp of truth must be shining in the dwelling of our own being, before it can shine upon others to their illumination.

The reason why the Gospel came in power to the Thessalonians was, because it had first come home in power to Paul himself. When believers look at things from God’s standpoint, and keep in touch with Him by doing so, then faith is stalwart; but when they fail to do this, then faith is feeble and weak-kneed, and things which are small and insignificant, when faith is strong, look large and important. Was this not so in the case of the children of Israel? They looked at the sons of Anak and the walled cities of Canaan, and the consequence was they thought of themselves as **“grasshoppers,”** and shut themselves out of the land by their unbelief; whereas if they had looked at things from God’s standpoint, they would have seen that the sons of Anak were but **“grasshoppers”** (Numbers 13:33; Isaiah 40:22), and they would have entered the land.

5. Steadfastness in labour.

Some Christian workers have an up and down experience in the Lord’s work; they are like the gas which comes through a meter which needs water, they bob up and down. We should be like a dry meter, which does not require the application of any local agent between it and its source of supply.

The secret of steadfastness in every department of the life of faith, is given to us in Isaiah, where we read of Christ saying in prophecy, **“He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.”**

Then directly afterwards He says, “**For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint**” (Isaiah 50:5, 7). The fulfillment of this prophecy is in Luke 9:51, where we read, “**He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.**”

He knew what awaited Him there. Gethsemane with its agony, Gabbatha with its shame, and Golgotha with its awful death, were before Him; but for all this, He kept steadfastly on His way. A like spirit should characterize us. As Ruth was steadfastly minded to go with Naomi (Ruth 1:18), so we should be steadfastly minded to follow in the steps of Christ, in following His example of persistency in work.

II - The Divine Standpoint.

What we have dwelt upon, relates to our attitude towards God; now we come to His attitude towards us.

This latter presupposes receptivity and response on our part. As the leaves of the apple tree are in spirals of five, so there are five thoughts to this branch of our topic, namely, the interpenetration of the Holy Spirit, the instrument of the Spirit, the intercession of the Spirit, the illumination of the Spirit, and the inspiration of the Spirit.

1. The interpenetration of the Spirit.

The Lord wants the Spirit to penetrate every part of our nature.

As the light is diffused by the atmosphere, so it should be with the Spirit and us. He should penetrate every part of our nature.

When Gideon asked for a sign from God, he prayed that the fleece might be saturated with dew, while all around was dry.

This illustrates what the condition, and the position, of the child of God should be. The world is dry and barren all around, but we should be filled with the dew of the Spirit, that our Divine Gideon may press out from us the grace and love of the Spirit, to the refreshment and blessing of others (Judges 6:33-40).

Christ refers to this in His promise to the believer, “**Out of you shall flow rivers of living water**” (John 7:37).

Chrysostom says upon this, “Rivers, not river, to show the copious and overflowing power of grace; and living water, i.e., always moving; for when the grace of the Spirit has entered into, and settled in the mind, it flows freer than any fountain, and neither fails, nor empties, nor stagnates.” The well of water must be springing up in our inner life, before there can be the flowing out in effective testimony. When the electricity of the Spirit charges every part of our spiritual nature, then His power will touch others as they come in contact with us.

Webb tersely puts the whole subject, when he says,

“The Holy Spirit not only dwells in the Church as His habitation, but also uses her as the living organism whereby He moves and walks forth in the world, and speaks to the world, and acts upon the world. He is the Soul of the Church, which is Christ’s body.”

This implies that the measure of our influence upon the world is gauged by the influence we allow the Spirit to exercise upon us.

2. The instrument of the Spirit.

The believer in Christ is the instrument which the Spirit of God uses in His service.

All God’s servants are sons, and as such, the Lord says to each, “**Son, go work to-day in My vineyard;**” but as sons, they are not to act apart from the Lord, not even as agents, for the true position of every child is that of an instrument to be used by the Lord.

The Great Worker is the Holy Spirit. This is strikingly brought out in the Acts of the Apostles, or, to be more correct, “The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles.”

- The disciples speak, “**As the Spirit gives them utterance**” (Acts 2:4).
- When the people wonder at the peculiar phenomena on the Day of Pentecost, Peter at once repudiates any personal power, but attributes the working to the Spirit, saying, “**This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit**” (Acts 2:16, 17).

Disputants were not able to resist the burning words of Stephen, for the simple reason, the wisdom and power in which he spake were by “**the Spirit**” (Acts 6:10).

- The Spirit was the One who directed Philip to go and speak to the eunuch, and the same Power caught Philip away when his work was done (Acts 8:29, 39).
- The Spirit was the Speaker who told Peter there were three men waiting for him, and that he was to go with them to Caesarea; and who also told the Church at Antioch to separate Paul and Barnabas for the work of the ministry (Acts 10:19; 11:12; 13:2).
- The Spirit was the Power which proclaimed through Agabus, and Esaias, events which were to happen in the future (Acts 11:28; 28:25).
- The same Spirit gave Stephen spiritual vision to see Christ at the right hand of God, and enabled Paul to detect imposture, and also prevented him from preaching in Asia and Bithynia.
- The Holy Spirit directed Paul to preach the Gospel in Macedonia, and foretold that the Apostle would suffer at Jerusalem, and the same Spirit was the Appointer of the Elders at Ephesus (Acts 7:55; 13:9; 16:6, 7, 10; 21:4, 11; 20:28).

The one thought running through the whole of these passages is, the Holy Spirit is the Operator.

We are not to call in God to help us to carry out our plans, but we are to be instruments in His hands, for Him to execute His plan through us.

3. The Intercession of the Spirit.

“**The Spirit maketh intercession**” (Romans 8:26), is the Divine utterance as to the secret of effectual prayer, for the Spirit-begotten prayer is always the answered prayer.

We pray to the Father as the Granter of our petition; we pray through the Son as the Medium of our approach, and we pray by the Spirit as the Power which inspires. Praying in the Spirit is our responsibility, for that means the fulfillment of the conditions to answered prayer; but the Holy Spirit praying in us is the inspiration in prayer.

Sometimes we cannot voice our petitions. We are burdened with the weight of our inward necessity. The deepest prayers are often those which “**cannot be uttered.**” The sightless eye-balls of the blind beggar, and the muteness of the dumb, are the most pathetic appeal.

One of the impressive features of the ministry of the Lord Jesus, was His meeting the need of people, when there was no direct appeal made to Him.

- The disciples toiling in rowing (Mark 6:48),
- The hungry multitude in their need (John 6:5),
- The bowed woman in her infirmity (Luke 13:12),
- The widow in her sorrow (Luke 7:13),
- Peter’s wife’s mother in the fever (Matthew 8:14),
- The woman in her sin (Luke 7:44),
- Zaccheus in his curiosity (Luke 19:1, &c.), and
- Mary Magdalene in her grief (John 20:11).

These are a few of the many instances where Christ blessed people without any direct request being made to Him.

Andrew Murray says:

“In the life of faith and prayer, there are operations of the Spirit in which the Word of God is made clear to our understanding, and our faith knows how to express what it needs and asks. But there are also operations of the Spirit, deeper down than thoughts or feelings, where He works desires and yearnings in our spirit, in the secret springs of life and being, which God only can discover and understand.”

There are experiences which cannot be voiced in prayer; but it is then the Spirit, in a special way, appeals to Heaven in our voiceless need.

The Christian worker, burdened with a sense of responsibility, or his passing through some Gethsemane of suffering, or the spirit stirred at the inroads of sin, or the inward desire to please the Lord, are all the outcomes of the Spirit’s working within. All this leads us to see that it is not those who say most, who necessarily pray most, but they pray best who learn to keep “silent” before the Lord (Psalm 42:1),

- Who “**muse**” with the psalmist (Psalm 143:5),
- Who “**wait**” with the disciples (Acts 1:4), and
- Who “**tarry**” as the Lord directs (Luke 24:49).

4. The illumination of the Spirit.

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit” (I Corinthians 2:9, 10).

The quick eye of man’s keen observation, the attentive ear of man’s care to the voice of tradition, and the intellectual grasp of man’s intuitive inspirations, are not capable of mastering the things of the Spirit.

The eyes of the heart must be opened by the Holy Spirit before the things of God can be seen.

Worldly wisdom was, and is, aptly summed up in the dying words of Professor Clifford; he said, “My researches have revealed to me a soulless universe, looked down upon by a godless Heaven.”

Such men need to learn the lesson of Mrs. Prosser’s simple parable:

“See how much they think of me!” said a lantern to some dips that were hanging on a nail close by. “The master says he doesn’t know what he should do without me these dark nights.”

“No doubt,” said the candles; “but he’d sing a different song if it weren’t for one of us inside of you. Did it ever occur to you, friend, that you wouldn’t be of the least use to anybody if our light didn’t shine through you?”

The lantern of our being, however great its intellectuality, would be of no use without the Spirit’s inner shining.

The following seven things which the Spirit does, will give some little apprehension of the enlightening character of His ministry.

- *He is the Spirit of Truth* to unveil to us the personal glory of the Lord Jesus, and to show us things to come (John 16:13, 14);
- *He is the Spirit of Life* to communicate to us the wonderful grace and glory of the Gospel (II Corinthians 3:6-18);
- *He is the Spirit of Wisdom* to enable us to apprehend the three “**What’s**” of the Lord’s possessions in us, and His power for us (Ephesians 1:17,18);
- *He is the Spirit of Prophecy* to give us to understand the trend of the times, and what we may expect in these last days, for upon these things He speaks “**expressly**” (I Timothy 4:1);
- *He is the Spirit of Bestowment* to qualify believers to exercise the gifts which are given (I Corinthians 12:3-7);

- *He is the Spirit of Revelation* to disclose to us the glory which awaits the Church, and the doom reserved for the “**ungodly**” (Revelation 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10); and
- *He is the Spirit of Searching* to instruct in the deep things of God (I Corinthians 2:10).

5. The inspiration of the Spirit.

The word “**inspiration**” only occurs twice in the so-called “Authorized version” of the Bible - once in the Old Testament, and once in the New.

The passage in the New Testament refers to the inspiration of the Scriptures (II Timothy 3:16); and the verse in the Old Testament is found in relation to the speech of Elihu, where he speaks of the “**spirit in man,**” and the “**inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding**” (Job 32:8).

The meaning of the word “**inspiration**” is *to in-breathe*. The word, as applied to the Scriptures, gives to them a significance which makes them to be different from all other writings. As one has well said, “I am satisfied only with the style of Scripture. My own style, and the style of all other men, cannot satisfy me. If I read only three or four verses, I am sure of their divinity on account of their inimitableness. It is the style of the heavenly court.”

As the inspiration of the Bible makes it different from any other book, so the inspiration of the Spirit makes the servant of God a different man from any other. Adolphe Monod aptly sums up the whole case when he says, “All in Christ; by the Holy Spirit; for the glory of God. All else is nothing.”

“All is nothing.” Yes, all our efforts are nothing, all our organizations are nothing, and all our plans are nothing; only as they are the outcome and working of the Holy Spirit.

Darby, in his comments on I Corinthians 2:13, explains the latter part of the verse, which speaks of “**comparing spiritual things with spiritual,**” as: “Communicating spiritual things by a spiritual medium.” What is that spiritual medium? It is the Spirit of God. He alone is competent to communicate the things of God to us, and through us to others.

- This inspiration of the Spirit is what the insight given to Elisha’s young man was (II Kings 6:17), it enables us to see things we should not otherwise apprehend.
- The inspiration of the Spirit empowers us to do what we cannot accomplish without it, as Gideon experienced when “*clothed*” with the Spirit (Judges 6:34, margin).
- The inspiration of the Spirit will form the character in godliness, so that its influence shall be felt by others, as may be seen in the testimony of Pharaoh to the consistency of Joseph (Genesis 41:38).
- The inspiration of the Spirit will cause us to exercise such care, and bestow upon us such wisdom, that we shall fulfil the will of God in His Word, as Bezaleel did in making the tabernacle according to God’s plan (Exodus 31:3).
- The inspiration of the Spirit will energize us, so that we shall have strength to overcome our enemies, even as the Spirit of the Lord empowered Samson to defeat those who came against him (Judges 14:6, 9; 15:14).

- The inspiration of the Spirit will embolden us to faithfully deliver the message of God without fear or favour, as it did Azariah when he went to “**meet Asa**” (II Chronicles 15:1-8); and
- the inspiration of the Spirit will fill our hearts with an overflowing gladness, and make us to praise the Lord with acceptance (Ephesians 5:18, 19).

There is undoubted truth in the statement which is sometimes made, namely, “It is unscriptural to pray for the Holy Spirit, and to Him.”

Yet there is one hymn which seems to voice the need, promise, and work of the Holy Spirit, which might be voiced by all, for the simple reason that it takes in the whole of our need as sinners, saints, and servants. I refer to the hymn of Joseph Hart, written over a hundred years ago. He prayed then, and may we not pray?

“Come, Holy Spirit, come,
Let Thy bright beams arise;
Dispel the darkness from our minds,
And open ail our eyes.

“convince us of our sin,
Then lead to Jesus’ blood,
And to our wondering view reveal
The secret love of God.

“Show us that loving Man,
That rules the courts of bliss,
The Lord of Hosts, the mighty God,
The eternal Prince of Peace.

“‘Tis Thine to cleanse the heart,
To sanctify the soul,
To pour fresh life in every part,
And new-create the whole.

“Dwell, therefore, in our hearts.
Our minds from bondage free;
Then we shall know, and praise, and love,
The Father, Son, and Thee.”

~ end of chapter 20 ~

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