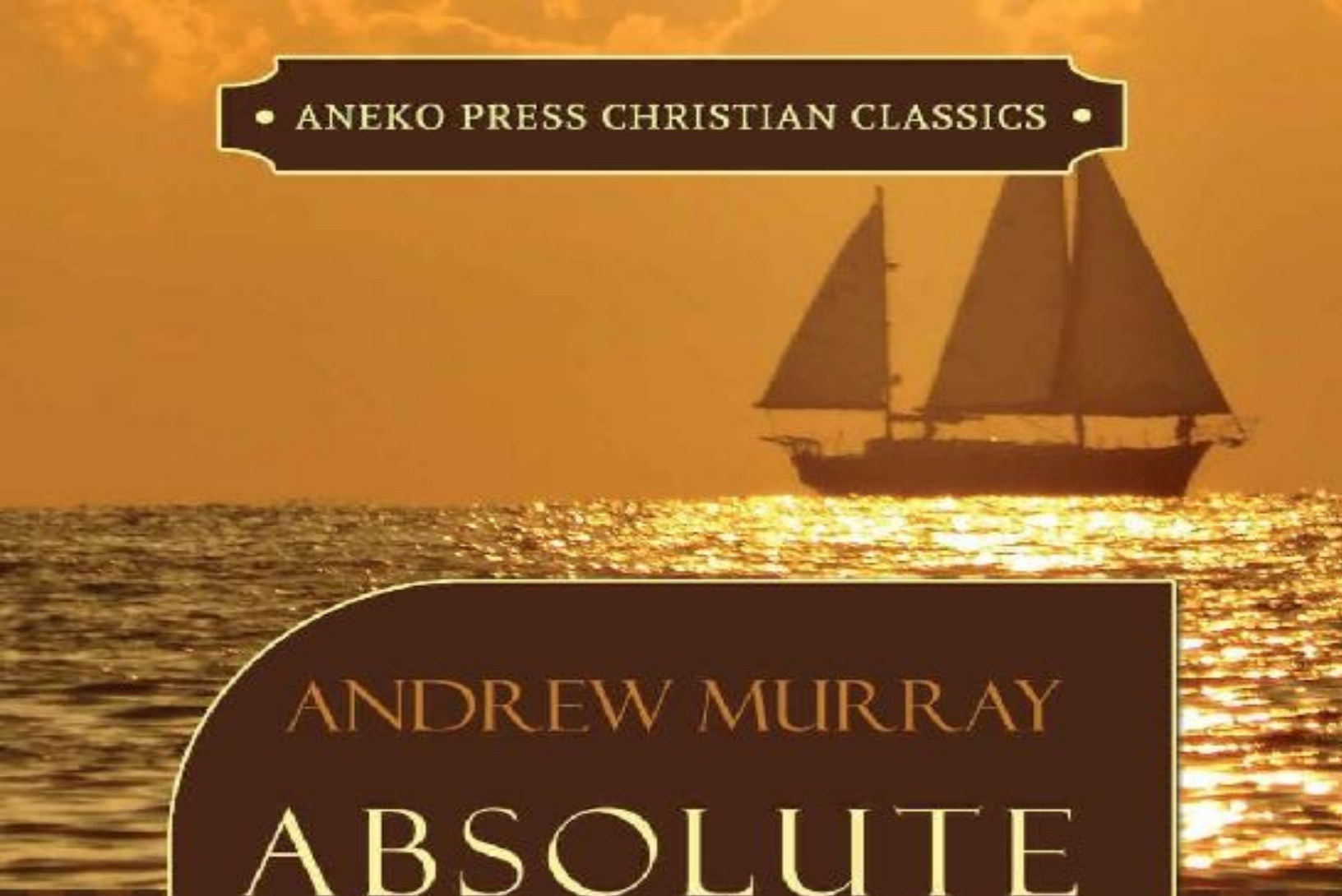
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ANDREW MURRAY

ABSOLUTE SURRENDER

The Blessedness of Forsaking All and Following Christ

For it is God who works in you both to will
and to do of his good pleasure
– Philippians 2:13

UPDATED, MODERN ENGLISH

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Absolute

Surrender

The Blessedness of Forsaking All and Following Christ

Andrew Murray



Chapter 1

Be Filled with the Holy Spirit

The following words from Scripture are probably familiar to most Christians: *They were all filled with the Holy Spirit* (Acts 2:4), and *Be filled with the Spirit* (Ephesians 5:18). The first text is a narrative; it tells us what actually happened. *They were all filled with the Holy Spirit*. The other text is a command; it tells us what we ought to be. *Be filled with the Spirit.* In case there might be any doubt in our minds about whether or not it is actually a command to be filled with the Spirit, we find it linked to another command: *Be not drunk with wine . . . but be filled with the Spirit*.

If I ask if you obey the command to not be drunk with wine, you would probably answer at once, “Of course, as a Christian, I obey that command.” But have you obeyed the other command to *be filled with the Spirit*? Is that the life you are living? If not, why not? Are you willing to take up that command today? Will you say, “By God’s help I am going to obey. I will not give myself any rest until I have obeyed that command, until I am filled with the Spirit”?

I want to say at the very beginning that this is a simple question of listening to a command of God’s Holy Spirit from His Word. We do not want to have a theological discussion here about all that could be said about the filling of the Holy Spirit, because that may lead you away into ideas and thoughts that are really of no value in helping us reach our purpose.

Instead, we want to begin at once by saying that God has this message for every Christian: “My child, I want you to be filled with the Spirit.”

Let your answer be, “Father, I want it too. I am ready. I yield myself to obey You; let me be filled with Your Spirit.”

To prevent wrong impressions of what it means to be filled with the Spirit, let me just say that it does not mean a state of high excitement, a state of absolute

perfection, or a state in which there will be no growth. No. Being filled with the Spirit is simply this: having my whole nature yielded to His power. When the whole soul is yielded to the Holy Spirit, God Himself will fill it.

Search Me, O God

Now the question I want to ask is, "What is needed in order to be filled with the Spirit?" The question is of the utmost importance, and if we try to find the answers that must be given, we will need to search ourselves.

Frank Bottome wrote a hymn called "Search Me, O God, My Actions Try," which has words that are relevant to our topic:

> Search me, O God, my actions try,
> And let my life appear
> As seen by Thine all-searching eye:
> To mine my ways make clear.
>
> Search all my sense, and know my heart,
> Who only canst make known;
> And let the deep, the hidden part
> To me be fully shown.
>
> Throw light into the darkened cells,
> Where passion reigns within;
> Quicken my conscience till it feels
> The loathsomeness of sin.
>
> Search all my thoughts, the secret springs,
> The motives that control;
> The chambers where polluted things
> Hold empire o'er the soul.
>
> Search, till Your fiery glance hast cast
> Its holy light through all,
> And I by grace am brought at last
> Before Your face to fall.
>
> Thus prostrate I shall learn of Thee

What now I feebly prove—
That God alone in Christ can be
Unutterable love!

David prayed, *Search me, O God, and know my heart* (Psalm 139:23). That verse and the hymn above are prayers asking God to search us. We do not usually see our hearts as God sees them, so we need God to search us. As God searches our hearts, we need to pay attention and notice the results. This will help us look into our hearts and lives and ask, “Am I ready and open so God can fill me with the Spirit?” I think the answers we find may also help to encourage us.

Some people may be honestly ready for God to search them. They might thank God, and they might even see that they are kept back from this full blessing simply by some ignorance, or prejudice, or unbelief, or wrong thoughts of what the blessing is.

We can best find the answer to our question by looking at the way in which Christ prepared the disciples for the day of Pentecost. In some countries, when a missionary preaches and leads people to Jesus, the missionary forms a class for these new Christians to teach them God’s Word, make them disciples, and prepare them for baptism. He may keep some of these young converts in the baptismal class for a year or longer to educate, train, and test them – to prepare them for the Christian life.

In the early church were similar groups of new converts, called catechumens, who were instructed in the principles of the Christian faith and observed for a while to be sure their lives were consistent with those who were followers of Jesus. Jesus taught His disciples for three years; He trained and prepared them throughout that time. It was not a magic thing or an arbitrary thing when the Holy Spirit came down upon them. They were prepared for it. John the Baptist told them what was to come. He not only preached the Lamb of God who was to shed His blood, but he told us that it was by special revelation from God that He on whom he saw the Holy Spirit descend would baptize with the Holy Spirit. Of what did the training of those disciples consist? How were they prepared for the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

Forsake All

I ask you to remember that *the disciples* were men who had forsaken all to follow Jesus. The Lord Jesus went to a fisherman and said, “Leave your net behind and follow Me.” To another man He said, “Leave your position as a tax collector and come and follow Me.”

They did it. They left those things behind and followed Jesus. They could later say by the mouth of Peter, *We have forsaken all and followed thee* (Matthew 19:27). They left their homes, their families, and their good names. Men mocked and laughed at them. Men called them the disciples of Jesus, and when He was despised and hated, they were hated too. They identified themselves with Him and gave themselves up entirely to follow Him. This is the first step to being filled with the Holy Spirit. We must forsake all to follow Christ.

I am not speaking about forsaking sin, though you ought to do that when you are converted. Forsaking all is something that has a far wider meaning. Many Christians think of Jesus as someone who can save them and help them, but they practically deny Him as Master. They think they have a right to have their own will in a thousand things. They speak however they like, do whatever they want to do, and use their property and possessions however they choose. They are pleased with themselves and their lives, and they never stop to consider that they might not have forsaken all for Jesus. They are their own masters, and they have never dreamed of saying, “Jesus, I forsake all to follow You.”

Yet this is the demand of Christ. Jesus has such infinite riches and glory that He deserves it, and He is such a heavenly, spiritual, divine gift that unless we give up everything, our hearts cannot be filled with Him. So Jesus comes and says, “Forsake all and follow Me.”

I was once at Johannesburg, South Africa, at a convention. Let me share just one simple story of what has been done there in God’s kingdom. I held some services, and on an afternoon when there was a gathering of believers testifying of what God had done for them, one poor woman rose and told how, six months before, she had received a wonderful blessing through the inflowing of God’s Spirit. At a consecration meeting, which she had attended in a very poor neighborhood, the minister who gave an address asked if any were ready to give

themselves up entirely for Jesus. He used the words, “Suppose He wanted you to go to China or to give up your wife and children, would you be willing to do it?”

The woman said earnestly, “I did want to say that I would give up everything to Jesus, but I could not. When he asked those to rise who were willing, I was in a great state of turmoil, but I could not remain sitting. I rose and said, ‘Yes, I will give up everything.’ Yet I felt as if I could not give up my husband and children. I went home, but I could not sleep. I could not rest, for there was the struggle; must I give up *everything*? I wanted to do it for the sake of Jesus. It was past midnight, and I said, ‘Lord, yes, for You – *everything*!’ And the joy and the power of the Spirit flowed into my heart.” She testified, and her minister testified of her, too, that she walked in the joy of the Lord.

Dear friends, maybe you have never sincerely said it because you never thought it was needed; but say it now if you mean it. “Oh Christ, let me be filled with the Holy Spirit. I will give up anything and everything. Accept my surrender of all to You!”

Each of us must examine himself. Some of us may have never thought that this was a necessity. Some have never understood what it meant when Jesus said, *If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, and even his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. . . . Any one of you that does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple* (Luke 14:26, 33). Isn’t this the reason for our feeble spiritual lives and the reason that the Holy Spirit does not fill us? We have never forsaken all to follow Christ.

Fellowship with Jesus

Not only were they men who had forsaken all to follow Jesus, but they were also intensely attached to Him. Jesus said, *If ye love me, keep my commandments; and I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter* (John 14:15-16).

They *did* love Him intensely. They had seen Him crucified, but their hearts could not be separated from Him. They had no hope or joy or comfort on earth without Him, and friends, this is what is so often lacking in our Christianity. We trust Jesus and His work on Calvary; we trust Him as our only Savior. That is

well and may be sufficient to bring salvation, but many do not realize that true Christianity consists in an intense, close, personal attachment to Jesus and fellowship with Him every day. Many think of Jesus as their Savior, yet never realize that Jesus ought to be their friend and guide and keeper all day long, their leader and master whom they gladly obey. Many Christians might talk about Him, yet not know what it means to walk with Him.

One of the strong elements of Keswick teaching is this intimate walk with Jesus.[1] Two or three years ago a young lady missionary came to South Africa, and she spoke about the blessing she had received at Keswick. She told me how, from a child, she had loved the Lord Jesus, had been educated in a circle of godly friends, and was raised in a godly home; but what a difference it had made to her when she found what it is to receive the deeper blessing. I said to her, “From your childhood you have lived in a happy, godly atmosphere; tell me what you think is the difference between the life you lived then and the life you enjoyed afterwards.”

Her answer was simple and ready and cheerful. “It is just this,” she said. “It is the personal fellowship with Jesus.”

Oh, friends, we must have such a beginning. Some people would forsake everything for the sake of their religion. For a false religion multitudes have given up all. Some people would forsake all for the sake of their church. Some people would forsake all for the sake of their fellow citizens. That is not what is needed though. We need to forsake all for the sake of Jesus. We need to let Him come into our lives and take possession of our hearts. Do we have a life of tender personal attachment to Jesus and joy in Him? I do not ask if you have perfectly achieved this, but I do wonder if we can honestly say, “It is what I am striving after. It is my main desire and goal. It is what I long for above everything else. Jesus Christ must have my heart and my will every moment of every day.”

Self

These disciples of Jesus were men who had been led to despair of themselves. At the beginning of their three years of instruction, they had to give up everything they possessed; but only at the end of that time could they begin to give up

themselves. They had given up their nets, and their homes, and their friends, and that was right and good to do; but their self, their self-will and their self-desire remained strong all three years! Jesus had often spoken to them about humility, but they did not understand Him. Time after time contention arose among them as to who should be the greatest. At the table at the Last Supper, they were still talking about who would be first among them. They had not given up self. As was made plain more than once, they struggled to live in the Spirit of Jesus!

However, Christ taught them and trained them. He revealed to them, time after time, what the sin of pride is and what the glory of humility is; when He died upon the cross, they died a terrible death too. Think of Peter, the impulsive, hasty disciple who denied his Lord. Do you not think that in all the sorrows of those three days, from the crucifixion day to the resurrection day, Peter's deepest and bitterest sorrow was this – the shame at the thought of how he had treated his Lord? Then he learned to despair of himself. At the Last Supper, how self-confident he had been! *Though all men shall be offended in thee, yet I will never be offended* (Matthew 26:33). But Jesus took Peter's self-will down with Him into death and the grave, and then Peter realized that there was in him, indeed, no good thing. He had learned to despair of himself.

Some may say, "I think I have given up all for Jesus – my property, my home, my friends, my position – and I think I do love Him, but somehow things are not right. I still am not near Jesus. I still lack holiness and His love and power."

Dear friends, are you willing that God, with His searchlight, should reveal to you how much self-will and self-trust is in you? Take, for instance, your judgment of people. You say whatever you like and whatever you think and even boast that you say whatever is on your mind, yet you have not yet learned to study the humility and tenderness and gentleness of Jesus. You say what you think, even though you might not always think before you say it. That is *self.*

You work for Him. You try to do good, but all the time you are doing your own work. You, as a Christian, are doing the work, and you look to God to help and bless; but that cannot be. God must first bring each one of us down into the place of death. Do you know what the death of Jesus means? It means that Jesus said to His Father, in effect, "Here is My life, so precious to Me, My life which has been sinless. I have yielded it to You in life, but now I am going to yield it to

You in death." Jesus went into the grave saying, *Into Thy hands I commend* – I give away, I entrust – *my spirit* (Luke 23:46).

You know what happened. Because He gave up His life so entirely and sank into the thick darkness of death and the grave, God raised Him up into a new life and a new glory and a new power. God raised Him from the grave to glory. Death was the secret of the resurrection. If you want to be filled with the Spirit and the risen life of glory, you must first die to self. The apostles were men who had been brought to utter self-despair; they were men who had lost all and were ready to receive all from God in heaven.

God's Promise

These apostles were men who had accepted the promise of the Spirit from Jesus in faith. On that last night Christ had spoken to them about the Holy Spirit more than once, and when He was ready to ascend, He said again, *Ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days from now* (Acts 1:5). If you had asked those disciples what that meant, I am sure they could not have told you. They did not understand it, perhaps, as much as we do now. They had no concept of what would come, but they took the word of Jesus, and if they had any need for talking or arguing during those ten days, I am sure they said, "If while He was on earth, He did such wonderful things for us, now that He is in glory, He will do things infinitely more wonderful." And they waited for that.

I want you to accept this promise by faith and say, "That promise of the filling of the Holy Spirit is for me. I accept it at the hand of Jesus." You may not understand it; you may not feel as you would like to feel; you may feel yourself weak and sinful and far away from Jesus; but you may come today and say, "That promise is for *me*." Are you ready to do so? Are you ready in faith to trust the promise, and the Word, and the love of Jesus?

I am sure many believers struggle to find out what they are lacking and what is missing. They might have given themselves up most heartily and fully to Jesus. They love Him, and they have sought to humble themselves in the dust. What is missing is simply that they have not learned to say, "He has promised, and He will do it."

Let me say for your encouragement that a promise from God is worth just as

much as a fulfilment. A promise brings you into direct contact with God, so honor Him by trusting the promise and obeying Him. If there is any preparation that you still need, God knows about it. If there is anything that is to be opened up to you, He will do it, if you depend on Him to do it. Trust the promise and say, “This fullness of the Holy Spirit is for me.”

Wait in Prayer

On the strength of that promise, the disciples waited in united prayer. Wait on God in prayer! They waited and they prayed with one accord. Prayer and supplication went up to God, mingled with praise. They expected God in heaven to do something. I wish I could tell you the importance of that! I find Christians – and I have found it in my own experience – who read, understand, think, and wish. They want to claim, want to take, and want to get, and yet what they crave eludes their grasp. Why? Because they do not wait for God to give it.

Don’t look to what we say or what you think and understand with a view of getting a blessing out of it. Look to God, and expect God to do something. It is not enough to believe. I find that many people mistake faith for the blessing that faith is intended to bring. By faith I am to inherit the promises. Oh, believe and trust God; then look to Him to give the blessing. Be filled with the Holy Spirit.

[1] Keswick teaching refers to the teaching and preaching at the annual Keswick Convention held in Keswick, England. Holiness, sanctification, and victorious Christian living are often emphasized at the convention. The annual conference was first held in 1875 and continues today.

Chapter 2

Changed by the Spirit of God

I want to tell you what the blessedness is of a life filled with the Holy Spirit. It may please God to make our desire so strong and make us see so clearly that He may bring us to receive more than we ever expected. We need to get to the point where we say, “This is just what I need. I cannot live any longer without it.” Our God is willing and able to do above what we ask or think (Ephesians 3:20).

I cannot put the blessedness of being filled with the Spirit more clearly before you than by simply pointing to the wonderful change that Pentecost made in the lives of the disciples. That is one of the most wonderful object lessons in all of Scripture: those twelve men under Christ’s training for three years, yet apparently remaining far from the life they should have been living; then all at once, by the blessed filling of the Holy Spirit, being made just what God wanted them to be.

Changed from the Inside Out

Look first at the change that Pentecost wrought in the disciples’ relationship to Jesus. During His life on earth with them, He could not live within them. He was on the outside, separated from them, very near and very loving, but they did not really understand Christ’s teaching until the Holy Spirit came. Christ often taught them about humility. He said, *Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart* (Matthew 11:29). He said, time after time, *He that humbles himself shall be exalted* (Luke 14:11). Yet at the holy communion table at the Last Supper, there they were, still contending which of them should be the greatest. Christ did not conquer their pride but not for the lack of divine teaching.

Why was it, then? It was because of one thing: Christ was still outside of them, and He could not get into their hearts to dwell there. It was impossible; the

time had not come, and on earth they had the divine, almighty, blessed Redeemer along with them, but still outside. How different they were from Him! From this we learn that no outward instruction, even from Christ Himself or His words in Holy Scripture, can bring us the true and full blessing until the Holy Spirit works it in us.

What a change took place on the day of Pentecost! *At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you* (John 14:20). What does that mean? Christ in us, just the same as we are in a church building? No, we are in the building, but we can go out of it again. I live in a house, but I can leave that house and go elsewhere. The church building and the house and I are not vitally, organically connected. But, the Lord Jesus came to be part of those disciples and fill their hearts and thoughts and affections; what Peter and James and John had when they had Christ alongside of them, you and I have in a much larger measure, if we have the living Christ within us.

How did that change come? By the Holy Spirit. *At that day* – when the Spirit comes – *ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you . . . and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and dwell with him* (John 14:20, 23).

Doesn't your heart long for this? I have thought and thought and thought of Jesus in Bethlehem, on Calvary, and upon the throne, and I have worshipped and loved and rejoiced exceedingly in Him; but all the time I wanted something better and something deeper and something nearer. Don't you want to have the living Jesus within you? That is what the Holy Spirit will give you, and that is why I plead with you now. Won't you give yourselves up for this blessing – to be filled with the Spirit – that the blessed Jesus may be able to take possession of you? Isn't that what your heart longs for? Jesus within – the very Jesus who is the Almighty One, who died on the cross, sits upon the throne, and is willing to dwell in us and be our life.

That is why the Spirit comes. Jesus said, *He shall take of that which is mine and shall cause you to know it* (John 16:14). What is the glory of Jesus? His love and His power. The Holy Spirit will reveal Christ in us, so that the wonderful love of Christ will be a possession and a reality in its divine nearness, and the power of Christ shall have the victory within us. You know that wonderful

prayer in Ephesians 3 – that the Father might strengthen them with might by the Spirit in the inner man and Christ might dwell in their hearts. The mighty power of the Holy Spirit can do it. The Holy Spirit makes Jesus present with us.

Unbroken Fellowship

The second thought in connection with the change made in the disciples is that not only was Jesus outside of them, but Jesus was not always with them. They could not be with Him every moment. At one time, He sent them across the sea, and He stayed on the mountain to pray. At another time, He took three of them with Him up into the mountain, while the others stayed down below; they had to meet the scribes, when they could not cast out the evil spirit. There came times of separation, and at last there came that terrible death, that awful separation from them in this world. Yes, Christ was their life, but they were sometimes with Christ, and sometimes not with Him. They were sometimes near Him, and sometimes they could not get near Him because of the crowd around Him.

Friends, the presence of Jesus by the Holy Spirit is meant to be unbroken, continual, and forever. Isn't that what your heart longs for? Don't you know what it is like to live a week or a month with joy that makes your heart sing all day long? Then the change comes, and the cloud and the darkness come, and you do not know why it is. Sometimes it is because of bodily sickness or depression, sometimes with the cares and the difficulties of this life, or sometimes with the consciousness of your own failure. Oh, child of God, I wish I could tell it to you and see it all clearly myself!

Jesus does love you. He does not wish to be separated from you one minute. We want to believe in the love of Jesus. No mother ever delighted in the baby in her arms as much as Jesus delights in you. He wants to be near you and to have unceasing fellowship with you. Take that in, beloved believer, and say, "If that is possible, God helping me, I must have this filling of the Holy Spirit, so I may always have Jesus dwelling in my heart."

What a Difference!

Another thought. Look at the change it made in their own inner lives. Up until Pentecost, they lived lives of failure and weakness. I have spoken of their pride.

Christ often had to reprove them for their pride. They longed to be faithful to Him, and yet their pride and their self-confidence was the cause of continual failure. Peter said to Him, *Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee*, and all the others said the same; yet within a few hours they did it, as the result of pride and self-confidence (Matthew 26:35, 70). They did not know the evil of their own nature. Jesus had done everything to teach them humility, but they did not comprehend, resulting in their weakness. Peter had said, *Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death*, but at the word of a maidservant he began to swear and to declare that he never knew Him (Luke 22:33, 56-57). What utter weakness!

What a change, though, when Pentecost came! I will not say they had victory over sin, for I do not think it came in the way of direct fighting. But when the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, became their life, they were filled with the might and the power of the living Jesus, the Savior from sin.

The great work of Jesus is to take away sin. How does He take it away? Many Christians just look upon Him as taking it away on the cross. Others get a step beyond that and say, “He takes it away from heaven; He cleanses and keeps me.” But the true taking away of sin is this: if the light comes in, the darkness is expelled. It is the presence of Jesus, dwelling in us by the Holy Spirit, that can make us holy. What a change came over the disciples! See how boldly after Pentecost, time after time, they spoke in the presence of those who threatened them with death. *We must persuade* [obey] *God rather than men*, they said (Acts 5:29). They went to prison, and there they could sing praises to God at midnight. Oh, the wonderful change produced in their lives by the Holy Spirit!

What does that teach us? We very often speak about the self-life and the life of the Holy Spirit. Have you ever (or maybe often) said to God, “Lord, how can I be rid of this self-life?” Well, has it been made known to you? Has God’s finger reached the deep place of your heart? Have you been brought to say, “O God, my failure is all my self-confidence, self-will, and self-pleasing”? The accursed self will have its say in everything, and no power can expel it but the power of the presence of Jesus.

You might get stuck on some theological definition as to how it is all done, how much sin remains, and how much there is cast out; but what we want you to

believe is that even though you cannot explain and expound it all, believe that the Spirit of holiness which will be given is the holiness of Jesus in your heart and be content with that. Filled with the Spirit, you have within you the power of the holiness of God to do the blessed work of sanctification.

United in Love

The third thought in regard to this wonderful blessedness of being filled with the Spirit is to look at the love that united them into one body. I wrote earlier about their contention. There was selfishness among them and often lack of love; but when the Holy Spirit came down (do not just look at what He did for each one of them individually), He molded them into one body. They felt conscious that they were members of one Lord Jesus, and they loved each other, so they did things which were utterly unheard of at that time. Though most of those in the early church were perfect strangers to each other, they began to sell their goods and give away their property and have all things in common. This was the result of the Holy Spirit having come down, as the very love of God in heaven, to dwell in their hearts.

Don't you find that your greatest difficulty in life is your relationship to your fellow Christians? Aren't you often tempted to sin regarding your association with fellow Christians? Very often people who have to work together differ in temperament and character, and friction easily enters in. People differ in regard to some theological truth or practical way of doing Christ's work, and they even speak or write against each other! It is shameful how many divisions there are in Christ's church on earth! Even among those who profess to love God and profess holiness and entire consecration, what divisions unceasingly come! It is such a sad thing.

How many earnest Christians there are who have so much to say about each other! They can point out where I am wrong, and I can point out where they are wrong; but how few Christians there are, plainly differing from each other, who can say, "Above all our differences, there is a unity which we must express; we desire continual fellowship in the presence of our Father."

Do you want to have a heart overflowing with love to every child of God – to all the children of God outside your own circle? Do you want a heart of love that

can set others on fire? Do you want the very love of heaven to flow out from you? Do you want the self-sacrificing love of Jesus to take possession of you to help you bear and forbear, so that with the patience and tenderness and gentleness and the very meekness of Christ, the Lamb of God, you are willing to be the helper and servant of everyone, however unlovable or unlovely?

Then you need to be filled with the Spirit. Cry for it, claim it, accept it, and do not rest until you have it. The Spirit is the Spirit of God's love. He is the Spirit of the crucified love of Jesus. If we receive the Holy Spirit, the love of God will be shed abroad in our hearts, and God will melt us into one as never before.

Work in His Power

One more thought about the change made in the disciples by the filling of the Holy Spirit is in regard to their work. See what a difference Pentecost made! I suppose many of us feel that this is one of the important things in connection with speaking about being filled with the Holy Spirit. I do not doubt that there are many Christian workers who can thank God for the way He has led them, but who still feel that they need something very different. They say that they do not always have joy in speaking of Jesus, and they lack the awareness that God is using them as one of His instruments; yet that is what God wants every worker to have. How many Sunday school teachers and leaders of Bible classes have that awareness? I am weak, stammering, and have much to learn, but I know my God is using me, for I have given myself into His hands, and I am willing to be anything for Him. I do not mind whatever He has for me to do; though my work is feeble and I sometimes feel ashamed of it, I have put myself into God's hands as an instrument for Him to use.

Do you not feel that it would be an unutterable joy always to work in that spirit of absolute humility and dependence and nothingness, and with it all, to have a childlike trust that God will use you? Oh, how am I to get that? Look at the apostles; look at the disciples. The Lord Jesus sent them out to do three things: to preach the gospel, to heal the sick, and to cast out devils. When they came back, they told about the last two – the healing of the sick and the casting out of devils; but I do not hear them tell about conversions. I do not think their

preaching of the gospel really helped very much. It had to be done, but I do not know that it produced much result.

When the day of Pentecost came, though, listen to their preaching of the gospel. Not only Peter, but they all proclaimed the mighty works of God. What a blessing came! It went on and on. What boldness they had and what largeness of heart! They went on to Samaria and to Caesarea, and then to Antioch, and there waited upon God; and within a very few years, the gospel had been brought into Europe! The power of the Holy Spirit did this. We need that power for our work, and we need that spiritual light and wisdom to see the large fields of work that are before us, even in our immediate neighborhood.

I thank God for all the interest He is awakening in us for the heathen and in support of foreign missions, but I am afraid something is neglected. What is that? I thank God for all the interest in the darkest cities, in the poor neglected people, in the drunkards and those in danger of becoming drunkards, and in the poor outcasts. But your middle classes, your richer and higher classes – is there power in your Christianity to boldly take the gospel to them?

Aren't many of you members of churches and congregations where you sit Sunday after Sunday with multitudes around you, and you know that some of them are unconverted? Isn't there a need of divine wisdom and power to fit us for this work? Don't we need divine light and inspiration? Don't we need power with a new love and boldness to pray and wait and work, to see that not only those who are in China, or Africa, or other parts of the world have the gospel, but that those with whom we associate every day also hear the gospel? We thank God that during the last thirty years He has aroused Christians to work as never before; but let us understand that it is just a beginning. If Christians will seek God's Word, hear Him, wait upon Him in prayer, and tell Him they are ready for His work, isn't God able to do far more than He has already done?

One thing is needed. The Spirit did it all on the day of Pentecost and afterwards. It was the Spirit who gave the boldness. The Spirit gave the wisdom. The Spirit gave the message. The Spirit gave the converting power.

Now I speak to all workers, especially to those who feel the need of power to work for Christ. My brother, my sister, may your whole heart be ready to say, "That is what I want. I see it. Jesus did not send me to war at my own expense

and in my own power. He did not ask me to go and preach and teach in my own strength. Jesus intended for me to have the fullness of the Holy Spirit, even when I am at home in my house teaching my children. That may be my main Christian work now, but for that I need the power of the Holy Spirit. Whether I have a little Sunday school class or a Bible class, or some larger work, the one thing I need is the power of the Holy Spirit – to be filled with the Spirit."

Let me ask if you are prepared to receive this from our Jesus. He loves to give it. God delights in nothing so much as to honor His Son, and we honor Jesus when souls are filled with the Holy Spirit, because then He proves what He can do for them. Will we not claim it?

Let me give you four very little steps. Let everyone who longs for this blessing now say, first of all, **"I must be filled."** Say it to God in the depth of your heart. God commands it; I cannot live my life as I should live without it.

Then, say as the second step, **"I may be filled."** It is possible that the promise is for me. Settle that, and let all doubt vanish. These apostles, once so full of pride and of self-life, were filled with the Holy Spirit because they held onto Jesus. With all your sinfulness, if you will but cling to Him, you may be filled.

Thirdly, say, **"I must be filled."** To get the pearl of great price, you must sell all; you must give up everything. Are you willing? "Everything, Lord, if I may only have that. Lord, I am desperate to have it from You today."

Then comes the last step. **"I will be filled."** God wants to give it; I will have it. Never mind whether it comes tonight as a flood or in deep silence, or whether it does not come tonight, because God is preparing you for it tomorrow. Say, "I will be filled." If I entrust myself to Jesus, He will not disappoint me. It is His very nature. It is His work in heaven. It is His delight to give souls the Holy Spirit in full measure. Claim it at once: "I will. My God, it is so solemn, it is almost fearful; it is too blessed and too true. Lord, will You not do it? My trembling heart says I will be filled with the Holy Spirit." Say to God, "Father, I will; for the name of my Savior is Jesus, who saves from all sin and who fills with the Holy Spirit. Glory to His name!"

Chapter 3

From Carnal to Spiritual

And I, brothers, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ (1 Corinthians 3:1). The apostle Paul begins the chapter by telling these Corinthians there are two stages of Christian experience. Some Christians are carnal and some are spiritual. By the discernment which God's Spirit gave Paul, he saw that the Corinthians were carnal, and he wanted to tell them so. You will find the word *carnal* four times in the first four verses of 1 Corinthians chapter 3.

The apostle felt that all his preaching would do no good if he talked about spiritual things to people who were unspiritual. They were Christians, real Christians, babes in Christ; but there was one deadly fault – they were carnal. So the apostle seems to say, "I cannot teach you spiritual truth about the spiritual life; you cannot take it in." That was not because they were stupid. They were very clever and full of knowledge, but they were unable to understand spiritual teaching. This teaches us the simple lesson that all the trouble in the church of Christ among Christians who are not filled with God's Holy Spirit and are not walking in holiness is that these Christians are carnal and need to become spiritual. We must choose what style of Christian life we would like to live: the carnal life or the spiritual. Choose the spiritual, and God will be delighted to give it to you.

If we are to understand this teaching, we must begin by thoroughly trying to know what the carnal state is. I will point out four very distinct characteristics of the carnal state.

Prolonged Infancy

The first characteristic of the carnal state is a state of prolonged infancy. You

were converted long ago, and you should be a young adult by this time, but you are still a baby in Christ. *I have fed you with milk, and not with solid food, for until now ye were not able to bear it* (1 Corinthians 3:2). You know what a baby is, and you know what a beautiful thing babyhood is. You cannot have a more attractive little thing than a six-month-old child with its ruddy cheeks, laughing and smiling face, little kicking feet, and tiny gripping fingers. What a beautiful object! But suppose after I saw such a child, I came back after six months, and the child was not a bit bigger. The parents would begin to say, "We are afraid there is something wrong; the child won't grow." If after three years I came back and saw that the baby was still no bigger, the parents would be sad. They would tell me, "The doctor says that the child has some terrible disease and cannot grow. He says it is a wonder the baby is alive, and yet it is." If I return after ten years and find that child still a helpless infant, it would be clear that there was something wrong.

You see, babyhood at the proper time is the most beautiful thing in the world, but babyhood continued too long is a burden and a sorrow and a sign of disease. That was the condition of many of those Corinthian Christians. They continued as babies.

Now, what are the characteristics of a baby? There are two specific characteristics: a baby cannot help itself, and a baby cannot help others.

First, a baby cannot help itself, and that is the life of many Christians. They make their ministers spiritual nurses of babies. It is a grim matter that those spiritual babies keep their ministers occupied all the time in nursing them and feeding them, and they never help themselves. They do not know how to feed on Christ's Word, so the minister must feed them. They do not know what contact with God is, so the minister must pray for them. They do not know what it is to live as those who have God to help them; they always want to be nursed.

Take care that the reason you go to church is not to get your nurses to give you spiritual meat, because you cannot or will not feed yourself. Praise God for the preaching of the gospel and for the fellowship of Christians; but you know that a baby always keeps the house busy, and very often the mother cannot go out because of the baby, or a babysitter must be there. Someone must always care for the baby. You cannot leave the baby alone.

There are many spiritual infants to whom ministers are always going and who are always wanting some help. Instead of allowing themselves to be trained up to know their God and be strong, they live a prolonged infancy. They cannot help themselves and, therefore, cannot help others. Isn't that what we read in the book of Hebrews? There was the very same condition; those who had been so long converted and should have been teachers needed to be taught the very basic principles of Christianity. *For you should now be teaching others, if we look at the time, yet you need to be taught again which are the first elements of the oracles of God and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong food.For any one that uses milk is not qualified in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe* (Hebrews 5:12-13). There are people who are always wanting to be helped instead of being a help to others.

As Paul said, for a little child, a three-month-old spiritual baby, to be carnal and not to know what sin is or have victory over it is not worrisome. But when a man continues, year after year, in the same condition of always being conquered by sin, then something is radically wrong. Nothing can keep a child in prolonged infancy except a disease of some sort. If we have to say continually, "I am not spiritual," then let us say, "O God, I am carnal; I am in a diseased state and want to be helped out of it."

Sin is in Control

The second mark of a carnal state is that sin and failure are in control. Sin has the upper hand. What proof does Paul give that those people were carnal? After first calling them carnal, he asks, *For whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men?* (1 Corinthians 3:3). Then Paul says, *For while one says, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal?* (1 Corinthians 3:4). You act like other people; you are not acting like heavenly, renewed followers of Jesus who live in the power and love of the Holy Spirit. You know that God, who loves us, dwells in light, and love is the great commandment. The cross of Christ is evidence of God's love, and the first fruit of the Holy Spirit is love. The whole of John's gospel means love.

When people give way to their tempers and pride and envying and divisions; when you hear people saying hurtful things about others; when a man cannot

open his whole heart to a brother who has done him wrong and forgive him; when a woman can speak about her neighbor with contempt and says things such as “That miserable lady” or “Oh, how I dislike that woman” – all these are fruit of the carnal spirit. Every touch of unlovingness is nothing but the flesh. The word *carnal* is a form of the Latin word for *flesh,* and all unlovingness is nothing but the fruit or work of the flesh. The flesh is selfish and proud and unloving; therefore, every sin against love is proof that the person is carnal.

You say, “I have tried to conquer it, but I cannot.” That is what I want to impress upon you. Do not try to bear spiritual fruit while you are in the carnal state. You must have the Holy Spirit in order to love, and then the carnal will be conquered. God will give you His Spirit to help you walk in love.

The struggle between the carnal state and the spiritual state is not only true in regard to the sins against love, but it also encompasses so many other sins. Take worldliness, which has filled the church; take the love of money; take the pursuit of business, making people sacrifice everything to increase their riches; take our love of sports and being entertained – at home and even in the church; and see that so much of our lives is spent seeking after luxury and pleasure and position. What is all that but the flesh? It gratifies the flesh. It is exactly what the world thinks is desirable and delights in, and if you live like the world, it is proof that the spirit of the world which is in the flesh is in you. The carnal state is proved by the power of sin.

Someone asked me recently, “What about the lack of love of prayer?” He wanted to know how the art of loving fellowship with God could be attained. I answered him:

“My brother, that cannot be attained in any way until you discover that it must come outside of the carnal state. The flesh cannot delight in God; that is your difficulty. You must not say or write down a resolution in your journal that you will pray more. You cannot force it. Let the ax come to the root of the tree; cut down the carnal mind. How can you cut it down? *You* cannot, but let the Holy Spirit of God come with the condemnation of sin, and let the cross of Christ give the flesh over to death, and the Spirit of God will come in. Then you will learn to love prayer and love God and love your neighbor, and you will be possessed with humility and spiritual mindedness and heavenly mindedness.”

The carnal state is the root of every sin.

Gifts without Grace

If we want to know this carnal state thoroughly, we must take special notice that the carnal state can coexist with great spiritual gifts.

Remember, there is a great difference between spiritual gifts and spiritual graces, and that is what many people do not understand. Among the Corinthians, for instance, there were wonderful spiritual gifts. In the first chapter, Paul said, *I thank my God . . . that in every thing ye are enriched in him in all word and in all knowledge* (1 Corinthians 1:4-5). That was something wonderful to praise God for. In the second letter to the Corinthians, he said in effect, "You do not lack in any gift; see that you also have the gift of generosity." In the twelfth chapter of 1 Corinthians, Paul wrote about the gifts of prophecy, faith that could remove mountains, and knowledge as things that they were fervently seeking for; but he told them that these spiritual gifts would not profit them unless they had love. They delighted in the gifts but did not care for the graces. Paul showed them a more excellent way. He told them to learn to love and be humble. Love is the greatest thing of all, for love is the characteristic most like God, above everything else.

It is a very solemn thing for us to remember that a man may be gifted with prophecy and a faithful and successful worker in some particular sphere among the poor and needy, and yet by the sharpness of his judgment and the pride he exhibits, he may give proof that while his spiritual gifts are wonderful, his spiritual graces are too often absent. Take care that Satan does not deceive you with the thought, "But I work for God, and God blesses me, and others look up to me, and I am the means of helping others." Beloved fellow Christians, it is an unspeakably solemn matter that a carnal man may have spiritual gifts. It ought to bring the most earnest and successful man to his knees before God with the thought, "After all that God's Spirit works in me as a matter of a spiritual gift, am I not possibly giving way to the flesh by lacking humility, love, purity, or holiness?" May God search us and try us for His name's sake.

Carnality Hinders Spirituality

The carnal state makes it impossible for a person to receive spiritual truth. You might see hundreds of Christians hungering for the Word, and they listen and say, “What beautiful truths, what clear doctrines, what beautiful expositions of God’s Word!” and yet they do not get helped one bit; or they get helped for two or three weeks, and the blessing passes away. What is the reason? An evil lurks at the bottom; the carnal state hinders the reception of spiritual truth.

In our churches we often make a terrible mistake. We preach to carnal Christians what is only fit for spiritual men; they think it is so beautiful, and they take it into their heads and delight in it and say, “That is great; what a view of the truth that man can give!” Yet their lives remain unchanged. Even with all the spiritual teaching they hear, they are carnal. If there is one thing that we each ought to ask God at all times, it is this: “Lord, deliver me from putting spiritual teaching into a carnal mind!” The only evidence that you get a blessing is that you are lifted out of the carnal and into the spiritual state. God is willing to do it, so let us plead for it and accept it.

Chapter 4

Conviction and Confession

Now come the very important and solemn questions: Is it possible for a person to get out of the carnal and into the spiritual state? How is it possible?

I want to answer those questions and point out the steps which must be taken to that end. I have asked God that He may help me write as simply as to little children, for I want to tell every honest, earnest heart that is longing to be spiritual that you can get out of the carnal state and into the spiritual state today. What is needed for that?

See and Believe

The first thing needed is that a person must have some sight of the spiritual life and some faith in it. In reality, our hearts are so full of unbelief without our knowing it that we do not really believe we can become spiritual people today.

I once heard a most interesting story. I was talking to a man with much Christian experience about coming over to England, and I said to him, “Tell me, what is the state of the Christians in England? You have worked among them, and you know them well.”

He replied, “I believe there is nothing so terrible among them as unbelief.” Then he told me a story of a young man with much potential who was in England working for Christ. That young man had great gifts, but my friend could not understand why, with all those gifts, he did not get more blessing. Well, these two men spent a whole day trying to find out what it was that hindered the younger of them from being a greater blessing. Only gradually did they discover that the root of the trouble was unbelief. He did not think it was possible to live out the consecrated life. He was not sure that God was ready to give the blessing.

The younger man was supposed to speak at a meeting, but the other man said,

“I will take your meeting. Go home, and come back tomorrow morning at nine o’clock.” He came back the next morning, and they spoke and prayed again. During the course of the day, the young man saw what it was to trust God for the power of a life in full surrender; he received a blessing from God, and since that time, he has been ten times more blessed in his work than ever before. Believe that if you are ready and willing, God is able to make a spiritual man or woman out of you. Try to get a vision of the spiritual life.

What is that vision? The Word of God speaks about two powers of life – the flesh and the Spirit. The flesh is our life under the power of sin. The Spirit is God’s life coming to take the place of our life. What we need, and what the Bible tells us, is to give our whole life away unto death with every idea of strength or power; we must become nothing and receive the life of Christ and of the Spirit to do all for us. Do you believe that this can be?

You say, “That is so high and holy and glorious, I do not think I can reach it.” No, you cannot, but God will send it down to you. Reaching up is the great danger; you cannot reach it, but if you believe that God, in a supernatural way and according to His everlasting love, wants to give you the power of the Holy Spirit from heaven, then God will do more for you than you can ask or think.

I believe that it is possible for a person to live every day led by the Holy Spirit. I have read in God’s Word that His love is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). I have read in God’s Word that as many as are led by the Spirit are the children of God (Romans 8:14). And, I have read in God’s Word that if we are born again, we are to walk by the Spirit, or in the Spirit (Galatians 5:25).

Dear friends, it *is* possible; it is the life that God has called us to and that Christ redeemed us for. After He shed His blood, He went away to heaven to send the Spirit to His people. As soon as He was glorified, His first work was to give the Holy Spirit. If you will believe in the power of Christ’s blood to cleanse you and in the power of the glorified Christ to give His Spirit in your heart, you have taken the first step in the right direction.

Though you should feel ever so wretched, hold fast to Jesus. He can fill you with the Spirit, for He has commanded you to *be filled with the Spirit*.

Convicted of Carnality

It is not enough that you have a vision of what that spiritual life is; it is also necessary for a person to be convicted of his carnality. This is a difficult and serious lesson, but needful. A great difference exists between the sins of the unconverted person and the sins of the believer. As an unconverted person, you had to be convicted of sin and make confession of it; you all admit that. But what were you mainly convicted of? You were convicted of the wickedness of sin and of the guilt and punishment of sin but very little conviction of inward, spiritual sins. You had no knowledge of them or your inward sinfulness. God does not usually give that until conversion.

How is a person to get rid of these two things – the more hidden sins and the deep inner sinfulness? In this way: after he has become a Christian, the Holy Spirit convicts him of the carnal, fleshly life; then the man begins to mourn over it and be ashamed of it and cry out like Paul, *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* (Romans 7:24). He begins to look for help and to ask, "Where am I to get deliverance?" He seeks it in many ways through struggles and resolve, but he does not get it until he casts himself absolutely and entirely at the feet of Jesus. Do not forget that if you are to become a spiritual man or woman, if you are to be filled with the Holy Spirit, it must come from God in heaven. God alone can do it.

How different our living and praying and preaching would be if the presence of the Holy One, who fills eternity and the universe, were revealed to us! To that end, God wants to bring us to a condition of utter brokenness. Somebody said to me, "That call to die to self and sin is dreadful."

Yes, it is dreadful, if you had to do it in your own strength. If you would only understand that God gave Jesus to die, and He wants to plant you into Jesus, you may be delivered from the accursed power of the flesh! Believe that it is a blessing to be utterly broken down and to be utterly in despair; then you may learn to trust in God alone. Paul said, *But we had the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead* (2 Corinthians 1:9).

That is the place we must come to under conviction of our carnality. We must cry out, "The flesh prevails and triumphs in me, and I cannot conquer it. Have

mercy, my God! God help me!" And God will. Oh, become willing to bow before God in conviction and confession.

In a Moment of Time

Another thing to know and believe is that we can pass from the carnal to the spiritual condition in one moment of time. People want to grow out of the carnal and into the spiritual, but they never can. They seek more preaching and teaching, in order, they think, to grow out of the carnal and into the spiritual. That child that I wrote of earlier, though ten years old, remained as a baby of six months; it had a disease and it needed healing. Once the disease was cured, then growth could come. Now, the carnal state is a state of terrible disease. The carnal Christian is a baby in Christ. He is a child of God, but he has this terrible disease, and consequently he cannot grow. How is the healing to come?

The cure must come through God, and God longs to give it to you this very hour.

Let me say here that a man does not become a man of spiritual maturity immediately. I cannot expect the same from a young Christian who has just recently known the Holy Spirit in His fullness, as I can expect from a mature Christian who has been filled with Him for twenty years. A great deal of growth and maturity occurs in the spiritual life. But what I speak of is one step; you can change your place, and instead of standing in the carnal life, you can enter the spiritual life in one moment.

Note the reason the two expressions are used. In the carnal man there is something of the spiritual nature, but you know that things often get their names from their most prominent characteristic or quality. A thing may be used for two or three purposes, but it will likely get its name from the most prominent. Even with several characteristics, the name will be given according to the most striking. So, Paul said to those Corinthians, whose prominent characteristic was their carnality, "You babies in Christ are carnal; you are under the power of the flesh, giving way to temper and unloveliness; you are not growing and are incapable of receiving spiritual truth, even with all your gifts."

The spiritual man has not reached final perfection. There is abundant room for growth, but if you look at him, the main quality of his nature and conduct is

that he is a man given up to the Spirit of God. He is not perfect, but he is a man who has taken the right position and has said, “Lord God, I have given myself to be led by Your Spirit. You have accepted me and blessed me, and the Holy Spirit now leads me.” Let us recognize that with God helping us, we can leave the carnal side and begin life on the spiritual side.

You may have heard the story that is often used in evangelistic services about the man who was converted by a minister drawing a line and talking to him about it. A seventy-year-old man was sick, and a minister visited him faithfully and talked to him about the blood of Christ. “Oh, yes,” responded the man, “I know about the blood of Christ; it can save us. I know about pardon; if God does not pardon us, we cannot enter heaven.”

Yet the minister saw that the man didn’t have the slightest sense of sin. Whatever the minister said, the man said yes to, but there was no life in it and no conviction of sin. The minister said that one day when he himself was beginning to despair, he prayed, “O God, help me to show this man his lost spiritual condition.” All at once a thought came into his mind. The floor of the man’s room was covered with sand, and the minister drew a line with his stick in the sand, and on the one side he wrote the words *sin*, *death*, and *hell*, and on the other side of the line he wrote *Christ*, *life*, and *heaven*.

The old man asked, “What are you doing?”

The minister answered: “Listen! Do you think one of these letters on the left side could get up and go over the line to the right side?”

“Of course not,” was the answer.

Then the minister said solemnly, “It’s just as unlikely for a sinner who is on the left side to get over to the right side. That line divides all mankind; those who are saved are on the right side, and the unsaved are on the left side. It is Christ who must take you from the left side to the right side. On what side are you?”

There was no answer. The minister prayed with him and went home praying that God would bless him. He went back next day, and the question was, “Well, my friend, on what side are you?”

He at once answered with a sigh, “On the wrong side.” But it was not long before that man welcomed the gospel and accepted Christ.

I would like you to imagine a line straight through the center of your room; then if you believe and confess that God has given you His Holy Spirit to lead you, and you know what the joy of the Holy Spirit is, take your place at the right side.

However, if you are still carnal, go to the left side and say, “O God, I must confess that my Christian life is for the most part carnal, under the power of the flesh.” Then I would plead with you and tell you that you cannot save yourself from the flesh, or even get rid of it, but if you come and accept Christ in you right now, He can lift you over into the new life. You belong to Christ, and He belongs to you; but what you need is simply to cast yourselves upon Him, and He will reveal the power of His crucifixion in you, to give you victory over the flesh. Cast yourselves, with the confession of sin and with utter helplessness at the feet of the Lamb of God. He can give you deliverance.

Kept by Jesus Christ

That brings me to my last thought. The first was that a person must see the spiritual life; the second, a person must be convicted of and confess his carnal state; the third, a person must see that it is but one step from the one to the other; and lastly, he must take the decisive step in the faith that Christ is able to keep him.

Yet, this step is not a mere understanding. It is not a consecration in any sense of its being in our power. It is not a surrender by the strength of our will. No. These elements may be present, but the great thing is that we must look to Christ to keep us tomorrow, and the next day, and always. We must get the life of God within us. We need a life that will stand against any temptation, a life that will last not only until another spiritual crisis but until death. We need, by the grace of God, to experience what the almighty indwelling and saving power of Christ can do and all that God can do for us.

God is waiting. Christ is waiting. The Holy Spirit is waiting. Don’t you see what has been wrong and why it is you have been wandering in the wilderness? Don’t you see the good land, the land of promise, in which God is going to keep and bless you? Remember the story of Caleb and Joshua and the spies (Numbers 13). Ten men said in effect, “We can never conquer those people.” Two men

said, “We are able, for God has promised.” Step out now upon the promises of God. Listen to God’s Word: *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ, Jesus, has made me free from the law of sin and death* (Romans 8:2). Take a word like that, and claim that God will do for you through His Holy Spirit what He has offered you.

Come now, and do not be concerned if you have no new experience, no feeling, no excitement, and no light, but apparent darkness. Come and stand upon the Word of the everlasting God. As the Father, God promises His Holy Spirit to every hungering child. Will He then not give the Spirit to you? How shall He not give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? (Luke 11:13). How could He not do it?

Brothers and sisters, as truly as Christ gave Himself for you on Calvary and you have believed in the blood, so truly the Holy Spirit has been given for you and me. Open your hearts and *be filled with the Spirit*. Come and trust the blood of Christ for cleansing, confess the carnality of every sin, and cast them into the fountain of the blood; then believe in the living Christ to bless you with the blessing of His Spirit.

Chapter 5

Separated unto the Holy Spirit

> *Now there were in the congregation that was at Antioch prophets and teachers: Barnabas and Simeon that was called Niger and Lucius of Cyrene and Manaen . . . and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work unto which I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they released them. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, departed unto Seleucia.* (Acts 13:1-4)

In the story in Acts 13:1-4, we find some precious thoughts to guide us as to what God would have from us and what God would do for us. The great lesson is that the Holy Spirit is the director of the work of God upon the earth. What we need to do if we are to work rightly for God and if God is to bless our work is (1) stand in a right relationship with the Holy Spirit, (2) give Him the place of honor that belongs to Him, and (3) allow the Holy Spirit to have first place in all our work and in all our private inner life. Let me point out some of the precious thoughts our passage suggests.

God Has His Own Plans

First of all, we see that God has His own plans regarding His kingdom. His church at Antioch had been established. God had certain plans and intentions regarding Asia and Europe. He had conceived the plans; they were His, and He made them known to His servants. We might talk about and plan some work for the Lord, but we do not know all the details. We know that our great Commander is in charge, and even His generals and officers do not always know the plans. They often receive sealed orders, and they have to wait on Him for what He

gives them as orders. God in heaven has work for us to do. God has wishes and a will in regard to the work to be done and the way it must be done. Blessed is the man who gets into God's secrets and works under God, doing God's work God's way.

Some years ago at Wellington, we opened a mission institute. It was a fine large building. At our opening services, the principal said something that I have never forgotten. He remarked:

"Last year we gathered here to lay the foundation stone, and what was here then? Nothing but rubbish, and stones, and bricks, and the ruins of an old building that had been pulled down. There we laid the foundation stone, and very few knew what the building was to become. No one knew it perfectly in every detail except one man, the architect. In his mind it was all clear, and as the contractor and the mason and the carpenter came to their work, they took their orders from him, and the humblest laborer had to obey orders. The structure rose, and this beautiful building has been completed. This building that we open today is only laying the foundation of a work that only God knows what it will be."

God has His workers and His plans clearly mapped out, and our duty is to wait, so God can communicate to us as much of His will as He determines is needful. We simply have to be faithful in obedience and carry out His orders. God has a plan for His church upon earth and for His church in London or Chicago or wherever you are. But too often we make our own plan, and we think that we know what ought to be done. We ask God to bless our feeble efforts, instead of absolutely refusing to go unless God goes before us. God has planned for the work and the extension of His kingdom. The Holy Spirit is in charge of that work. *The work unto which I have called them*. The work in East London is Holy Spirit work. May God therefore help us all to be afraid of touching the ark of God except as we are led by the Holy Spirit (2 Samuel 6:6-7). Let us do God's work in His way, and not try to work for Him in our own way.

God Will Lead Us

God is willing and able to reveal His will to His servants. Yes, blessed be God, communications still come down from heaven. As we read here what the Holy

Spirit said, so the Holy Spirit will still speak to His church and to His people. In these later days, He has often done it. He has come to individual people, and by His divine teaching He has led them out into fields of labor that others could not understand or approve and into ways and methods that the majority of people did not recommend.

The Holy Spirit still teaches His people. Thank God, in our missionary societies and in our home missions and in a thousand forms of work, the guiding of the Holy Spirit is known; but we are all ready, I think, to confess that we know far too little of His leading. We have not learned to wait upon Him. We need to make our solemn declaration before God, "O God, we want to wait more for You to show us Your will."

Do not ask God only for power. Many Christians have their own plan of working, but God must send the power. A man works in his own will, and he expects God to give the grace. That is one reason God often gives so little grace and so little success. We make our own plans, say a quick prayer, and think that we are doing God's will His way. Instead, let us take our place before God and seek His will. The strength of God will not be withheld from what is done in the will of God. What is done in the will of God must have the mighty blessing of God. Let our first desire, then, be to have the will of God revealed to us.

If you ask me if it is an easy thing to get these communications from heaven and to understand them, I can give you the answer. It is easy for those who are in right fellowship with heaven and who understand the art of waiting upon God. There are not many people like this though. We often ask how a person can know the will of God. When people are confused or uncertain of what to do, they often pray very earnestly that God would answer them at once. But God can only reveal His will to a heart that is humble and tender and empty. God can only reveal His will in perplexities and special difficulties to a heart that has learned to obey and honor Him loyally in little things and in daily life.

Seek God's Will

Notice the nature of those to whom the Spirit reveals God's will. What do we read here in Acts 13? A number of men ministered to the Lord and fasted, and the Holy Spirit came and spoke to them. Some people liken this passage to a

missionary committee of our day. We see that there is an open mission field, and since we already have our missions in other fields, we are going to get on to that new field. We have virtually settled that in our own minds, and we pray about it.

But that situation is different from that in Acts 13. I doubt whether any of them thought of Europe, for later even Paul himself tried to go back into Asia, until the night vision called him by the will of God. Look at those men. God had done wonders. He had extended the church to Antioch, and He had given rich and large blessing. Now, these men ministered to the Lord and served Him with prayer and fasting. What a deep conviction they had; they knew it all came directly from heaven. We are in fellowship with the risen Lord; we must have close union with Him, and somehow He will let us know what He wants. At Antioch they were empty, ignorant, helpless, glad, and joyful, but deeply humbled. “O Lord,” they seem to say, “we are Your servants, and in fasting and prayer we wait upon You. What is Your will for us?”

Was it not the same with Peter? He fasted and prayed on the housetop and little did he think of the vision and the command to go to Caesarea. He was ignorant of what his work might be. May we realize that it is in hearts entirely surrendered to the Lord Jesus, in hearts separated from the world and ordinary religious exercises, and in hearts given to intense prayer to their Lord – that the heavenly will of God will be made manifest.

That word *fasting* occurs a second time in our passage: *They fasted and prayed* (Acts 13:3). When you pray, you love to go into your closet (a place of privacy and without distractions), according to the command of Jesus, and shut the door. You shut out business and company and pleasure and anything that can distract, and you want to be alone with God. But in one way, even the material world follows you there. You must eat. These men wanted to shut themselves out from the influences of the material and the visible, and they fasted. What they ate was simply enough to supply the needs of nature, and in the intensity of their souls, as they fasted before God, they let go of everything else on earth. Oh, may God give us that intensity of desire, that separation from everything, because we want only to wait upon God, so the Holy Spirit may reveal to us God’s blessed will.

Set Apart for Him

What is now the will of God as the Holy Spirit reveals it? It is contained in one phrase: separation unto the Holy Spirit. That is the keynote of the message from heaven. *Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work unto which I have called them.* God said, "The work is Mine and I care for it, and I have chosen these men and called them. I want you who represent the church of Christ upon earth to set them apart unto Me."

Look at this heavenly message in its twofold aspect. The men were to be set apart to the Holy Spirit, and the church was to do this separating work. The Holy Spirit could trust these men to do it in a right spirit. They were abiding in fellowship with the heavenly, and the Holy Spirit could say to them, "You do the work of separating these men." The Holy Spirit had prepared these men, and He could say of them, "Let them be separated unto Me."

Here we come to the very root, the very life of our need as workers. The question we must now answer is, "What is needed so the power of God can rest upon us more mightily and the blessing of God can be poured out more abundantly among those poor wretched people and perishing sinners among whom we labor?" The answer from heaven is, "I want men separated unto the Holy Spirit."

What does that imply? You know that there are two spirits on earth. When Christ was once speaking about the Holy Spirit, He said that the world could not receive Him (John 14:17). Paul said, *We have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God* (1 Corinthians 2:12). That is the great need in every worker – the spirit of the world going out, and the Spirit of God coming in to take possession of the inner life and of the whole being.

I am sure there are workers who often cry to God for the Holy Spirit to come upon them as a Spirit of power for their work, and when they feel that measure of power and get a blessing, they thank God for it. But God wants something more and something higher. God wants us to seek for the Holy Spirit as a Spirit of power in our own heart and life to conquer self and cast out sin and work the blessed and beautiful image of Jesus into us. Being in Christ and living in the power of the Holy Spirit is a life to be lived, not just a tool that we can use.

A difference exists between the power of the Spirit as a gift and the power of

the Spirit for the grace of a holy life. A man may often have a measure of the power of the Spirit, but if there is not a large measure of the Spirit as the Spirit of grace and holiness, the defect in his work will be clear. He may be used to lead others to Jesus, but he never will help people on to a higher standard of spiritual life, and when he passes away, a great deal of his work may pass away too. A person who is separated unto the Holy Spirit is one who can and does sincerely say, “Father, may the Holy Spirit have full dominion over me: in my home, in my character, in every word of my tongue, in every thought of my heart, in every feeling towards my fellowmen; may the Holy Spirit have entire possession.”

Is that the longing and the covenant of your heart with God – to be a man or a woman separated and given up unto the Holy Spirit? I urge you to listen to the voice of heaven. “Separate unto me,” said the Holy Spirit. Yes, separated unto the Holy Spirit. May God grant that His Word may enter into the very depths of our being to search us, and if we discover that our hearts have not left the world entirely, if God reveals to us that we still cling to the self-life, self-will, self-exaltation, let us humble ourselves before Him.

We need to take time to humble ourselves before God and ask Him to humble us under His mighty hand. Man, woman, brother, sister, you are a worker separated unto the Holy Spirit. Is that true? Has that been your longing and desire? Has that been your surrender? Has that been what you have expected through faith in the power of our risen and almighty Lord Jesus? If not, here is the call of faith, and here is the key of blessing: separated unto the Holy Spirit. May God write the Word in our hearts!

The Holy Spirit spoke to the Antioch church as a church capable of doing that work. The Holy Spirit trusted them. God grant that in our churches, our missionary societies, and our Christian organizations, all our directors and councils and committees may be those who are fit for the work of separating workers unto the Holy Spirit. We can ask God for that, too, and I trust God may lead us, so each one should separate himself unto the Holy Spirit and ask his brothers and sisters to join with him in prayer to that end. How often we say prayers, but how little we really pray! May God make us worthy of doing the work for each other.

Do His Work

This holy partnership with the Holy Spirit in His work becomes a matter of consciousness and of action. What did these men do? They set apart Paul and Barnabas, and then it is written that they were sent forth by the Holy Spirit down to Seleucia. Oh, what fellowship! The Holy Spirit in heaven doing part of the work, and man on earth doing the other part. After the consecration of the men upon earth, God's inspired Word says they were sent forth by the Holy Spirit.

See, too, how this partnership calls for new prayer and fasting. They had for a certain time, perhaps for days, ministered to the Lord and fasted; then the Holy Spirit spoke, and they did the work and entered into partnership, and at once they came together for more prayer and fasting. That is the spirit in which they obeyed the command of their Lord, and it teaches us that it is not only in the beginning of our Christian work but through the entire journey that we need to have our strength in prayer. If there is one thought with regard to the church of Christ, which at times comes to me with overwhelming sorrow; if there is one thought in regard to my own life, of which I am ashamed; if there is one thought, which I feel that the church of Christ has not accepted or grasped; if there is one thought, which makes me pray to God, "Oh, God, teach us, by Your grace, new things" – it is the wonderful power that prayer is meant to have in the kingdom. We have so little availed ourselves of it.

We have all read the expression of Christian in Bunyan's great work, *Pilgrim's Progress,* when he realized that he had the key that would unlock the dungeon. (Bunyan's book used to be read by nearly all Christians and should still be read by Christians today.) We have the key that can unlock the spiritual dungeons of London and New York and Chicago and Washington, D.C. and of all heathendom. But, we are far more occupied with our work than we are with prayer. We believe more in speaking to men than we believe in speaking to God. Doesn't this convict us when we are too busy to pray or rush through prayer in order to get on with our work or are so caught up with work that we never sit at the feet of Jesus?

Learn from these men that the work which the Holy Spirit commands must call us to new fasting and prayer, to new separation from the spirit and the pleasures of the world, and to new consecration to God and to His fellowship.

Those men gave themselves up to fasting and prayer, and if we prayed more in our ordinary Christian work, we would experience more blessing in our own inner life. If we felt and proved and testified to the world that our only strength is our contact with Christ every minute, every moment allowing God to work in us – if that were our spirit, by the grace of God, wouldn't our lives be holier? Wouldn't they be more abundantly fruitful? May we stop trying to justify our love for the world and the things of the world, and may we return again to imitating Jesus Christ and walking as He walked!

I hardly know a more solemn warning in God's Word than we find in Galatians 3:3, where Paul asked, *Having begun by the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?* Do you understand what that means? A terrible danger in Christian work, just as in a Christian life that is begun with much prayer and in the Holy Spirit, is that it may be gradually diverted to the flesh; and the Word comes, *Having begun by the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*

In the time of our first dilemma and helplessness, we prayed much to God, and God answered and blessed, and our organization grew, and the number of workers increased; but gradually, the organization and the work and the rush have so captivated us that the power of the Spirit in which we began when we were a small group has almost been lost. I implore you, note it well! With new prayer and fasting, with more prayer and fasting, this group of disciples was able to carry out the command of the Holy Spirit. *My soul, rest thou only in God* (Psalm 62:5). That is our highest and most important work. The Holy Spirit comes in answer to believing prayer.

When the exalted Jesus had ascended to the throne, for ten days the footstool of the throne was the place where His waiting disciples cried to Him. That is the law of the kingdom: the king upon the throne, and the servants upon the footstool. May God find us there unceasingly.

Honor the Spirit

Now comes the last thought about this passage. What a wonderful blessing comes when the Holy Spirit is allowed to lead and direct the work and when we carry out the work in obedience to Him! You know the story of the mission on which Barnabas and Saul were sent out. You know what power there was with

them. The Holy Spirit sent them, and they went from place to place with great blessings. The Holy Spirit was their leader. Do you remember how it was by the Spirit that Paul was prevented from going again into Asia and was instead led to Europe? Oh, the blessing that rested upon that little company of men and upon their ministry unto the Lord!

Let us learn to believe that God has a blessing for us. The Holy Spirit, into whose hands God has put the work, has been called “the executive of the Holy Trinity.” The Holy Spirit has not only power, but He has the Spirit of love. He is troubled over this dark world and is troubled over our country. He is concerned about every sphere of work within it, and He is willing to bless.

Why isn’t there more blessing? There can be only one answer. We have not honored the Holy Spirit as we should have done. Is there anyone who can honestly say that we have? Every thoughtful and sincere heart should be ready to cry out, “God, forgive me that I have not honored the Holy Spirit as I should have done, that I have grieved Him, that I have allowed self and the flesh and my own will to work where the Holy Spirit should have been honored. May You forgive me that I have allowed self and the flesh and the will to have the place that You intended for the Holy Spirit.” Oh, the sin is greater than we know. No wonder there is so much feebleness and failure in the church of Christ!

Chapter 6

Peter’s Repentance

> *Then the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord how he had said unto him, Before the cock crows, thou shalt deny me three times. And Peter went out and wept bitterly.* (Luke 22:61-62)

That was the turning point in the history of Peter. Christ had said to him, *Thou canst not follow me now* (John 13:36). Peter was not in a proper state to follow Christ, because he had not been brought to the end of himself; he did not know himself, and he therefore could not follow Christ. But when he went out and wept bitterly, then came the great change. Christ previously said to him, *When thou art converted, strengthen Your brethren* (Luke 22:32). As Peter wept bitterly, he reached the point where he was converted from self to Christ.

I thank God for the story of Peter. I do not know a man in the Bible who gives us greater comfort. When we look at his character, so full of failures, and at what Christ made him by the power of the Holy Spirit, there is hope for every one of us. But remember, before Jesus could fill Peter with the Holy Spirit and make a new man of him, Peter had to go out and weep bitterly; he had to be humbled.

If we want to understand this, I think there are four points that we must look at. First, let us look at Peter the devoted disciple of Jesus; next, Peter as he lived the life of self; then Peter in his repentance; and lastly, what Christ made of Peter by the Holy Spirit.

Devoted Disciple

First look at Peter as the devoted disciple of Christ. Christ called Peter to forsake his nets and follow Him. Peter did it at once, and afterwards he could say rightly to the Lord, *We have forsaken all and followed thee* (Matthew 19:27). Peter was a man of entire surrender; he gave up everything to follow Jesus. Peter was also a man of true obedience. Remember, Jesus said to him, *Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch* (Luke 5:4). Peter the fisherman knew there were no fish there, for they had been fishing all night and had caught nothing; but he said, *At Your word I will let down the net* (Luke 5:5). He submitted to the word of Jesus.

Further, Peter was a man of great faith. When he saw Christ walking on the sea, he said, *Lord, if it be thou, bid me to come unto thee*; and at the voice of Christ, he stepped out of the boat and walked upon the water (Matthew 14:28-29). Peter was a man of spiritual insight. When Christ asked the disciples, *But who say ye that I am?* Peter was able to answer, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*. Christ replied, *Blessed art thou, Simon son of Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in the heavens* (Matthew 16:15-17). Jesus spoke of Peter as the *rock* man and of his having the keys of the kingdom. Peter was a splendid man, a devoted disciple of Jesus, yet how much there was lacking in him!

The Self-life

Look next at Peter living the life of self, pleasing self, trusting self, and seeking the honor of self. Right after Jesus had said to him, *Flesh and blood has not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in the heavens*, Christ began to speak about His sufferings. Peter then dared to say, *Lord, be it far from thee; in no wise shall this happen unto thee*. Then Christ rebuked him, *Remove Yourself from before me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me, for thou dost not understand that which is of God, but that which is of men* (Matthew 16:22-23).

That was Peter in his self-will, as he trusted his own wisdom and actually forbade Christ to go and die. Where did that come from? Peter trusted in himself and his own thoughts about divine things. We see later, more than once, that the disciples questioned among themselves who should be the greatest. Peter was one of them, and he thought he had a right to the very first place. He sought his

own honor above the others. The life of self was strong in Peter.

When Christ had spoken to Peter about His sufferings and said, *Remove Yourself from before me, Satan,* He followed it up by saying, *If anyone will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me* (Matthew 16:24). No one can follow Jesus unless he does that. Self must be utterly denied. What does that mean? When Peter denied Christ, we read that he said three times, *I do not know the man*. In other words, "I have nothing to do with Him; He and I are not friends; I deny having any connection with Him."

Christ told Peter that he must deny self. Self must be ignored and its every claim rejected. That is the root of true discipleship, but Peter did not understand it and could not obey it. And what happened? When the last night came, Christ said to him, *Before the cock crows twice, thou shalt deny me three times*. But with self-confidence, Peter said, *Though all men shall be offended in thee, yet I will never be offended.* And, *Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death* (Matthew 26:33; Luke 22:33). Peter meant it honestly, and Peter really intended to do it; but Peter did not know himself.

A hymn by James Nicholson says, "Nothing unclean can enter in," and we perhaps think of individual sins that come between us and God. But what are we to do with that self-life which is all unclean, our very nature? What are we to do with that flesh that is entirely under the power of sin? Deliverance from that is what we need. Peter did not yet understand that, so he went in his self-confidence; as a result, he denied his Lord.

Notice how Christ used that word *deny* twice. He told Peter the first time to deny self. He said to Peter the second time, *Thou shalt deny Me.* It is either one or the other. There is no other choice for us; we must either deny self or deny Christ. These two great powers fighting each other: the self-nature in the power of sin and Christ in the power of God. One of these must rule within us.

Repentance

Look now at Peter's repentance. Peter denied his Lord three times, and then the Lord turned and looked at him. That look of Jesus broke Peter's heart, and all at once there opened up before him the terrible sin that he had committed, the terrible failure that had come, and the depth into which he had fallen, and *Peter*

went out and wept bitterly (Luke 22:62).

Who can tell what that repentance was like and what Peter went through after he denied his Lord? During the following hours of that night and the next day, when he saw Christ crucified and buried, and the next day, the Sabbath – oh, in what hopeless despair and shame he must have spent that day! "My Lord is gone, my hope is gone, and I denied my Lord. After that life of love, after that blessed fellowship of three years, I denied my Lord. God have mercy upon me!"

I do not think we can realize Peter's depth of humiliation. But that was the turning point and the change. On the first day of the week, Peter saw Jesus, and in the evening, Jesus met him with the others. Later at the Sea of Galilee, He asked Peter, *Lovest thou Me?* until Peter grieved when the Lord reminded him of his three denials. In sorrow, but in uprightness, Peter answered, *Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee* (John 21:15-17).

Changed

Peter was then prepared for the deliverance from self. Christ took Peter with the others to the footstool of the throne and directed him to wait there. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came, and Peter was a changed man. I do not want you to think that you can only see the change in Peter in that boldness and power and insight into the Scriptures and the blessing with which he preached that day. Thank God for that, but there was something for Peter that was deeper and better. Peter's whole nature was changed.

If you want to see more about that, read the book of 1 Peter. You know where Peter's failings lay. When he said to Christ, in effect, "You will never suffer; it cannot be," it showed he did not even have a basic understanding of what it was to pass through death into life. Christ told Peter to deny himself, and in spite of that, he denied his Lord. When Christ warned him that he would indeed deny Him, Peter insisted that he never would, demonstrating how little he understood of what there was in himself. But when I read his book that we call 1 Peter and I hear him say, *If ye are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are ye; for the glory and the Spirit of God rests upon you*, then I know that is not the old Peter but the very Spirit of Christ breathing and speaking within him (1 Peter 4:14).

When I read how he says, *Because for this were ye called: for the Christ also*

suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps, I understand what a change had come over Peter (1 Peter 2:21). Instead of denying Christ, he found joy and pleasure in having denied and crucified and given up "self" to death. That is why when he was called before the council, Peter could boldly say, *We must persuade God rather than men* (Acts 5:29). That is why he could return with the other disciples and rejoice that they had been counted worthy to suffer for Christ's name.

Dear friends, I plead with you to look at Peter utterly changed. He was changed from the self-pleasing, self-trusting, self-seeking Peter to the man filled with the Spirit and the life of Jesus. Christ had done it for Him by the Holy Spirit, and He can do it for you, too.

What is my purpose in briefly pointing to the story of Peter? That story must be the history of every worker who is to be made a blessing by God. That story is a prophecy of what every one of us can receive from God in heaven. We must not only pray for God's work and speak about that; we must not only pray for an outpouring of the Spirit of love, and that God would unite all workers together in the power of love; but we must pray and seek for God to deal with every individual life. It is when the individual workers are blessed that the work will prosper and the body will be healthy and strong.

Let us just take a quick look at two lessons we can learn from this.

1. To be an earnest, godly, devoted, and successful worker is even possible when the power of the flesh is still strong.

That is a very solemn truth, and only God knows how many such people have been working for Him in our churches for five, or ten, or twenty years. Peter, before he denied Christ, had cast out devils and had healed the sick. Some have served God with success, and they want to praise Him for the blessing, but like Peter, the flesh has power, and the flesh has room.

We need to realize that because we have so much of that self-life in us, the power of God cannot work in us as mightily as God desires. Do you realize that the great God longs to double His blessing, to give tenfold blessing through us? But something hinders Him, and that something is proof of nothing but the selflife. We talk about the pride of Peter, the impulsiveness of Peter, and the self-

confidence of Peter. It is all rooted in that one word – *self*. Christ had said, "Deny self," yet Peter had never understood, so he never obeyed; every failing came from that.

So I say there may be children of God, servants of God – they may be pastors or missionaries, they may be leaders of large ministries, they may be Sunday school teachers or helpers, they may be people of power and position and talent, and they may simply be humble workers working earnestly for God – in whom the self-life prevails.

What a solemn thought, and what an urgent plea for us to cry, "O God, show this to us, that none of us may be living the self-life!" Many a man has worked for twenty years and occupied a prominent position, but God found him out and taught him to find himself out; he became utterly ashamed and fell down broken before God. Oh, the bitter shame and sorrow and pain and agony that came to him, until at last he found that there was deliverance! Peter went out and wept bitterly, but there are still many godly people in whom the power of the flesh still rules. What a great pity it would be if we lived our entire Christian life in the flesh, too proud to realize it and too busy to honestly and fervently seek God.

2. It is the work of our blessed Lord Jesus to reveal the power of self in us. How was it that Peter – the carnal Peter, self-willed Peter, Peter with the strong self-love –ever became a man of Pentecost and the writer of his epistles? It was because Christ was in charge, and Christ watched over him, and Christ taught and blessed him. The warnings that Jesus had given him were part of the training, and last of all, there came that look of love. In His suffering, Christ did not forget him but turned around and looked upon him, and *Peter went out and wept bitterly*. The Christ who led Peter to Pentecost is among us today, and He is waiting to take charge of every heart that is willing to surrender itself to Him.

Aren't there some of you saying, "Yes, that is the problem with me; it is always the self-life, and self-comfort, and self-consciousness, and self-pleasing, and self-will; how am I to get rid of it?" My answer is that Jesus Christ can rid you of it; no one else but Jesus can give deliverance from the power of self. What does He ask you to do? He asks only that you should humble yourself before Him.

Chapter 7

Absolute Surrender

Then Benhadad, the king of Syria, gathered all his host together; and there were thirty-two kings with him and horses and chariots; and he went up and besieged Samaria and warred against it. And he sent messengers to Ahab, king of Israel, into the city and said unto him, Thus hath Benhadad said, Your silver and Your gold is mine; Your wives also and Your children, even the goodliest, are mine. And the king of Israel answered and said, My lord, O king, according to Your word, I am thine and all that I have. (1 Kings 20:1-4)

What Benhadad asked was absolute surrender; and Ahab gave what was asked of him – absolute surrender. I want to use these words, *My lord, O king, according to Your word, I am thine and all that I have*, as the words of absolute surrender with which every child of God ought to yield himself to his Father. We have heard it already, but we need to hear it very clearly: the condition of God's blessing is absolute surrender of all into His hands. Praise God! If our hearts are willing for that, there is no end to what God will do for us and to the blessing God will bestow.

Absolute surrender. Let me tell you where I got those words. I have often used them myself, and you have heard them numberless times. In Scotland, I was in a group where we were talking about the condition of Christ's church and what the great need of the church and believers is. In our group was a godly worker who was very involved in training Christian workers. I asked him what he thought was the great need of the church and what message ought to be preached. He answered quietly and simply and determinedly: "Absolute

surrender to God is the one thing."

The words struck me as never before. That man then began to tell how, if the workers he dealt with were solid on that point, even though they were weak elsewhere, they were willing to be taught and helped and always improved; whereas, others who were not interested in absolute surrender to God often went back and left the work. The condition for obtaining God's full blessing is absolute surrender to Him.

I desire by God's grace to give you this message – that your God in heaven answers the prayers, which you have offered for blessing on yourselves and for blessing around you, by this one demand: are you willing to surrender yourselves absolutely into His hands?

What is your answer? God knows that some hearts have said it, and many more long to say it but hardly dare to do so. Some hearts have said it but have miserably failed and feel themselves condemned, because they did not find the secret of the power to live that life. May God have a word for us all!

God Demands Absolute Surrender from Us

Let me say, first of all, that God claims, requires, and demands it from us. Yes, it has its foundation in the very nature of God. God cannot do otherwise. Who is God? He is the fountain of life, the only source of existence and power and goodness, and throughout the universe there is nothing good except what God works. God has created the sun, the moon, the stars, the flowers, the trees, and the grass; are they not all absolutely surrendered to God? Do they not allow God to work in them just what He pleases? When God clothes the lily with its beauty, is it not yielded up, surrendered, and given over to God as He works in it its beauty? God's redeemed children, can you think that God can work His work if there is only half or a part of the lily surrendered? God cannot do it. God is life, love, blessing, power, and infinite beauty, and God delights to communicate Himself to every child who is prepared to receive Him; but lack of absolute surrender is the thing that hinders God. Now He comes, and as God, He claims it. It is His right to expect it from us.

You know in daily life what absolute surrender is. You know that everything has to be given up to its special definite object and service. I have a pen in my

pocket. That pen is absolutely surrendered to the one work of writing, and it must be absolutely surrendered to my hand if I am to write properly with it. If someone else partly holds the pen, I cannot write properly. My coat is absolutely given up to me to cover my body. This building is entirely given up to religious services. And now, do you expect that in your immortal being, in the divine nature that you have received by regeneration, God can work His work, every day and every hour, unless you are entirely given up to Him? God cannot. The temple of Solomon was absolutely surrendered to God when it was dedicated to Him. Every one of us is a temple of God in which God will dwell and work mightily on one condition: absolute surrender to Him. God claims it, God is worthy of it, and without it, God cannot work His blessed work in us.

God Will Work in Us

God not only claims it, but God will work it Himself. I am sure many hearts say, "But absolute surrender implies so much!" A while ago I received an appealing little note in which someone wrote, "I have passed through much trial and suffering, and there is still much of the self-life remaining in me; I dare not surrender fully to God, because I know it will cause me much more trouble and agony." How sad it is that God's children have such thoughts, such cruel thoughts, of Him.

I come to you who are fearful and anxious with a message. God does not ask you to perfectly surrender in your own strength or by the power of your will; God is willing to work it in you. Don't we read in Philippians 2:13 that *it is God who works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure*? That is why we come together – to get on our faces before God until our hearts believe that the everlasting God Himself will come in to turn out what is wrong, to conquer what is evil, and to work what is well-pleasing in His blessed sight. God Himself will work it in you.

Look at the men in the Old Testament like Abraham. Do you think it was by accident that God found that man, the father of the faithful and the friend of God, and that it was Abraham himself, apart from God, who had such faith and obedience and devotion? You know it is not so. God raised him up and prepared him as an instrument for His glory. God said to Pharaoh, *I have placed thee to*

declare my power in thee (Exodus 9:16). If God said that of Pharaoh, won't He say it far more of every child of His?

I want to encourage you, and I want you to cast away every fear. Come with that feeble desire. If there is fear, if you say, "My desire is not strong enough. I am not willing for everything that may come. I do not feel bold enough to say that I can conquer everything," then I implore you, learn to know and trust your God entirely. Say, "My God, I am willing that You would make me willing."

If there is anything holding you back or any sacrifice you are afraid of making, come to God at once and prove how gracious He is. Do not be afraid that He will ask from you what He will not first give to you. God comes and offers to work this absolute surrender in you. All these searchings and hungerings and longings that are in your heart are the attraction of the divine magnet, Jesus Christ. He lived a life of absolute surrender. He has possession of you. He is living in your heart by His Holy Spirit. You have hindered Him and hindered Him greatly, but He has brought you here to be humbled and to wait upon Him, so you might be helped to submit to Him entirely. He comes and draws you now by His message and words. Won't you come and trust God to work in you that absolute surrender to Himself? Yes, blessed be God, He can do it, and He will do it.

God Accepts Surrender from Us

God not only claims it and works it, but God accepts our absolute surrender when we truly bring it to Him. God works it in the secret of our hearts. God urges us by the hidden power of His Holy Spirit to bring to God and yield to Him that absolute surrender.

When you bring God that absolute surrender, it may be, as far as your feelings or your consciousness go, a thing of great imperfection, and you may doubt and hesitate and ask if it is really absolute. Remember, though, that there was once a man to whom Christ had said, *If thou canst believe this, all things are possible to him that believes*; and his heart was afraid, and he cried out, *Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief* (Mark 9:23-24). That was a faith that triumphed over the devil, and the evil spirit was cast out. If you come and say, "Lord, I yield myself in absolute surrender to You," even though it is with a trembling

heart and with the thought that you do not feel the power, determination, or assurance, it will succeed. Don't be afraid, but come just as you are, and even in the midst of your trembling, the power of the Holy Spirit will work.

Haven't you ever yet learned the lesson that the Holy Spirit works with mighty power, while on the human side everything appears weak? Look at the Lord Jesus Christ in Gethsemane. We read that He, *through the eternal Spirit,* offered Himself a sacrifice unto God (Hebrews 9:14). The almighty Spirit of God enabled Him to do it; yet what agony and fear and exceeding sorrow came over Him, and how He prayed! Externally, you can see no sign of the mighty power of the Spirit, but the Spirit of God was there. Even so, while you are feeble and fighting and trembling, do not fear, but yield yourself in faith in the hidden work of God's Spirit.

When you do yield yourself in absolute surrender, let it be in the faith that God really does accept it. That is the great point and what we so often miss – that believers should be so absorbed with God in this matter of surrender. I urge you, be consumed with God. We each want to get help, so in our daily lives God shall be clearer to us, have the right place, and be our all in all.

If we are to have that kind of life, we need to begin right now and look away from ourselves and look up to God. Let each person now believe. We must realize that each of us is a poor worm on earth and a trembling child of God, full of failure and sin and fear; we bow here, and no one knows what passes through our hearts. In simplicity say, "O God, I accept Your terms; I have pleaded for blessing for myself and others. I have accepted Your terms of absolute surrender."

While your heart prays that prayer in deep silence and sincerity, remember that God is present, takes note of it, and writes it down in His book, God is present at that very moment to take possession of you. You may not feel it. You may not realize it; but God takes possession if you will trust Him. Oh, Christians, at any time there can be a work done that would affect this entire nation, now and for all eternity, if God's people would each say, "I make an absolute surrender to my God."

God Maintains Surrender for Us

God not only claims it and works it and accepts it when I bring absolute surrender to Him, but God maintains it. That is the great difficulty with many people. They say, “I have often been stirred at a meeting or at a convention, and I have consecrated myself to God, but the zeal has passed away. It may last for a week or for a month, but away it fades, and after a time it is all gone.”

Listen! It is because you do not believe what I am now going to tell you and of what I will remind you. When God has begun the work of absolute surrender in you, and when He has accepted your surrender, then God holds Himself bound to care for it and to keep it. Will you believe that?

In this matter of surrender two beings are involved: God and you. You are an unworthy sinner. God is the everlasting and omnipotent Yahweh. Will you be afraid to trust yourself to this mighty God? God is willing. One of God’s servants once pleaded in prayer that everyone might hear God’s voice asking them, “Do you believe that I can do this, that I can keep and sustain you continually, day by day and moment by moment?”

Daniel Whittle wrote a beautiful song, “Moment by Moment.” The chorus says:

> Moment by moment I’m kept in His love,
> Moment by moment I’ve life from above;
> Looking to Jesus till glory doth shine;
> Moment by moment, O Lord, I am Thine.

If God allows the sun to shine upon you moment by moment without intermission won’t God let His life shine upon you every moment? Why haven’t you experienced it? Because you have not trusted God for it, and you do not surrender yourself absolutely to God in that trust.

A life of absolute surrender has its difficulties. I do not deny that. It has something far more than difficulties; it is a life that is absolutely impossible for us to live on our own. But by the grace of God, by the power of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, it is a life to which we are destined and a life that is possible for us, praise God! Let us believe that God will maintain it.

Some of you have read the words of that aged saint, George Müller, who on

his ninetieth birthday, told of all God's goodness to him.[1] What did he say he believed to be the secret of his happiness and of all the blessing with which God had given him? He said he believed there were two reasons. The one was that by God's grace he had maintained a good conscience before God day by day; the other was that he loved God's Word. Ah, yes; a good conscience in wholehearted obedience to God day by day, fellowship with God every day in His Word, and prayer. That is a life of absolute surrender.

Such a life has two sides. On the one side, absolute surrender to work what God wants me to do; on the other side, surrender to let God work what He wants to do.

First, to do what God wants me to do. Give yourselves up absolutely to the will of God. You know something of that will but not enough, and certainly not everything. Just say absolutely to the Lord God, "By Your grace I desire to do Your will in everything, every moment of every day. Lord God, not a word upon my tongue but for Your glory, not a movement of my body or emotions but for Your glory, not an affection of love or hate in my heart but for Your glory, and according to Your blessed will."

Someone says, "Do you think that is possible?"

I ask, "What has God promised you, and what can God do to fill a vessel absolutely surrendered to Him?" God waits to bless us in a way beyond what we expect. From the beginning, ear has not heard, neither has the eye seen, what God has prepared for those who wait for Him (Isaiah 64:4). God has prepared unheard of things, things you never can think of, blessings much more wonderful than you can imagine and mightier than you can conceive. They are divine blessings. Oh, come at once and say, "I give myself absolutely to God, to His will, to do only what God wants." God will enable you to carry out the surrender.

On the other side, come and say, "I give myself absolutely to God, to let Him work in me to will and to do of His good pleasure, as He has promised to do" (Philippians 2:13). Yes, the living God wants to work in His children in a way that we cannot understand but that God's Word has revealed; He wants to work in us every moment of the day. God is willing to maintain our life; only let our absolute surrender be one of simple, childlike, and unbounded trust.

God Will Bless Us

This absolute surrender to God will wonderfully bless us. What Ahab said to his enemy, King Benhadad, "*My lord, O king, according to Your word, I am thine and all that I have*," shall we not say to our God and loving Father? If we do say it, God's blessing will come upon us. God wants you to be separate from the world; you are called to come out from the world that hates God. *Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and do not touch the unclean thing* (2 Corinthians 6:17). Come out for God and say, "Lord, anything for You." If you say that sincerely and speak that into God's ear, He will accept it, and He will teach you what it means.

I say again, God will bless you. You have been praying for blessing. But remember, there must be absolute surrender. At every coffee shop you see it. Why is coffee poured into that cup? Because it is empty, and it is set apart for the coffee. If you put ink, or vinegar, or wine into it, will they pour the coffee into the cup? No. And can God fill you and bless you if you are not absolutely surrendered to Him? He cannot. God can fill an empty vessel, but He cannot fill one that has the love of the world inside. Let us believe that God has wonderful blessings for us, if we will but come out and stand up for God and say with a believing heart, "O God, I accept Your demands. I and all that I have are Yours. Absolute surrender is what my soul submits to You by divine grace."

You may not have such strong and clear feelings of deliverance as you would desire to have, but humble yourselves in His sight and acknowledge that you have grieved the Holy Spirit by your self-will, self-confidence, and self-effort. Bow humbly before Him in the confession of that, and ask him to break your heart and to bring you into the dust before Him. Then, as you bow before Him, just accept God's teaching that in your flesh *dwells no good thing,* and nothing will help you except another life which must come in (Romans 7:18).

You must deny self once and for all. Denying self must be the power of your life every moment; then Christ will come in and take possession of you. When was Peter delivered? When was the change accomplished? The change began when Peter wept; then the Holy Spirit came down and filled his heart. God the Father loves to give us the power of the Spirit. We have the Spirit of God dwelling within us. We come to God confessing that and praising God for it and

yet confessing how we have grieved the Spirit. Then we bow our knees to the Father to ask that He would strengthen us with all might by His Spirit in the inner man and that He would fill us with His mighty power (Ephesians 3:14-16). As the Spirit reveals Christ to us, Christ comes to live in our hearts forever, and the self-life is cast out.

Confession

We need to bow before God in humiliation, and in that humiliation we need to confess before Him the state of the whole church. No words can tell the sad state of the church of Christ on earth. I wish I had words to speak what I sometimes feel about it. Just think of the Christians around you. I do not speak of nominal Christians or of professing Christians, but I speak of hundreds and thousands of honest, earnest Christians who are not living their lives in the power of God or to His glory. Many respected Christians live lives of little power, of little devotion and consecration to God, and of little understanding of the truth that a true Christian must be utterly surrendered to God's will!

We need to confess the sins of God's people all around us. We need to humble ourselves. We are members of that sickly body, and the sickness of the body will hinder us and break us down, unless we come to God, and in confession, separate ourselves from partnership with worldliness, confess our coldness toward each other, and give ourselves up to be entirely and wholly His.

How much is being done in the spirit of the flesh and in the power of self! How much work, day by day, in which human energy – our will and our thoughts about the work – is continually manifested and in which there is little waiting upon God and upon the power of the Holy Spirit! Let us confess, but as we confess the state of the church and the weakness and sinfulness of work for God among us, let us come back to ourselves. Who is there among us today who truly longs to be delivered from the power of the self-life, who truly acknowledges that it is the power of self and the flesh, and who is willing to cast all at the feet of Christ? There is deliverance available.

Separation

I heard of someone who had been an earnest Christian and spoke about the

“cruel” thought of separation and death. But you don’t think that, do you? What are we to think of separation and death? Death was the path to glory for Christ. For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross (Hebrews 12:2). The cross was the birthplace of His everlasting glory. Do you love Christ? Do you desire to be *in* Christ and not just *like* Him? Let death be to you the most desirable thing on earth: death to self for the sake of fellowship with Christ.

What do you think about separation from the world? Do you think it is a difficult thing to be called to be entirely free from the world and by that separation to be united to God and His love? By separation we become prepared to live and walk with God every day. Surely one ought to say, “Anything to bring me to separation, to death, for a life of full fellowship with God and Christ. I come and cast this self-life and fleshlife at the feet of Jesus.” Then trust Him. Do not worry yourselves and try to understand all about it, but come in the living faith that Christ will come into you with the power of His death and the power of His life. Then the Holy Spirit will bring the whole Christ – Christ crucified and Christ risen and Christ living in glory – into your heart.

[1] George Müller (1805-1898) is known for his life of faith. He was a preacher, teacher, missionary, evangelist, and more. He also was the director of orphanages and schools, and much of his ministry was based in Bristol, England.

Chapter 8

Christ Our Life

Christ, who is our life. (Colossians 3:4)

I am certain that many who have joined in the act of surrender have felt as I have felt: “O God, how little we understand it!” They may have prayed, as I have prayed: “Lord God, You Yourself must take possession, if we are to know what it really means.” But we believe that through faith on our part He does accept it, although the experience and the power of that absolute surrender do not come at once, and that it is our responsibility to hold firm our attitude before God until the experience and power come.

Let me add that if this absolute surrender is to be maintained and lived out, it must be by having Christ come into our lives in new power. It is only in Christ that we can draw near to God, and it is only in Christ that God can draw near to us. Christ must truly be our life. Beloved, we plead with God to work mightily in the power of the Holy Spirit for the sanctification of His people and for the conversion of sinners.

We need God to do in us what we ask Him to do in others. We need to let God reveal Christ in us and through us and take entire possession of us; then Christ will be able to work through us above what we ask or think.

I want to present four simple truths in illustration of this great truth of Christ as our life. If we want to understand “Christ our life,” let us consider first, Christ before us as our example; secondly, Christ for us as our propitiation; thirdly, Christ with us as our Savior from sin; and lastly, Christ in us as our strength and our life.

“O Lord, give us Your grace, that we may not cover ourselves with any

covering but the covering of Your Spirit. Lord God, awaken in the heart of those reading this the realization that we are all children of Your family, bowing before Your feet. Awaken in every heart a deep faith that our God, by the Holy Spirit, is going to reveal Jesus Christ to us even now. Our Father, we wait on You. Our soul waits, and our hope is in Your Word."

Christ Before Us as Our Example

If Christ is to be our life, we must look first at Christ before us as our example. When I speak of Christ as my life, it must not be a vague indefinite thing, but I must know for certain. Life always works itself out in conduct and action, and I must realize that if Christ comes into me as my life, He must not only be something hidden in my heart, but His presence must emanate in every action and in every moment of my existence. If I want to know how His presence will show itself and what my feelings and attitude and words and actions and habits will be if I have Christ's life, I must go to the life of the Lord Jesus upon earth and study that. As I study the life and walk of God's own beloved Son, I must remember that before God took Him up to heaven, God let Him live here upon earth, and in His life I have a picture, a revelation, a complete representation of what my God wanted me to be and is willing to make me. That is the light in which we must study the life of Christ in the Gospels; it is not the only light, but it is the most important light.

What do we find, then, as we look at Christ? The very root of Christ's life was absolute surrender to God. He came as a man whom God had sent into the world and as a man who had nothing to do but fulfil the will of God. Jesus came as a man who had nothing in Himself but who every day depended upon God and waited for God to teach Him and speak words through Him – to show Him the works He had to do. *The Son can do nothing of himself* (John 5:19).

Jesus lived a life of absolute surrender to God. He lived and He died for God's will, God's honor, and God's kingdom. He did not live this way as a burden or as a duty, like many Christians do, as they put it aside at times in order to seek relaxation in the world and forget or neglect communion with God. Religion to some is a strain and a burden and a duty, and they enjoy putting it aside occasionally to relax in the things of the world. Not so with Jesus, for His

work and His rest, His joy and His pleasure, were found in God. God was Christ's joy and the fountain of living waters to Him, and it was His delight and His strength to live in God and for God. The will of God was His meat and refreshment and strength.

God is willing and ready to come to all who ask with sincere hearts. Let us go to God, emptied of self, and say, "My God, I come to You in absolute surrender. You know that although it is done in weakness and in trembling, it is done in honesty and in uprightness; but, my God, what does it mean? How am I to live that life?"

The Father points to the beloved Son, and He says, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased* (Matthew 3:17). Hear Him, follow Him, live like Him, and let Christ be the law of your life.

Let us yield our hearts to God in prayer. Ask Him to search us and reveal to us whether the life of Christ has actually been the law that we have taken for the guide of our lives.

I am not asking if you have reached this goal, but I am asking if this is what you actually desire more than anything else. Do you wait upon God for this? Do you really want to live for God in the way Christ lived? It almost sounds as if it were too high and presumptuous, but what does Jesus mean when He said so often: *A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another* (John 13:34); *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love* (John 15:10)? What does the Holy Spirit mean when He says, *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross* (Philippians 2:5-8)? The mind of Christ must be my mind, my disposition, and my life.

Many people want eternal life in heaven with Christ but do not want the life here on earth which Christ lived. Many believers think we cannot imitate and follow Jesus with any measure of accuracy. These believers do not aim to come near to Christ but are content following at a distance. But if you have once

honestly said, “Father, You have a right to my absolute surrender, and my heart gives absolute surrender to You from this point on,” then say now, “The life of Christ must become mine.”

Christ For Us as Our Propitiation

If we want to know what “Christ our life” means, we must not only look at Christ and His work for us as our example, but we must see Christ for us as our propitiation.[1] In His life, Jesus prepared the path in which we are to walk. He left us an example that we should follow in His footsteps. *He that says he abides in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked* (1 John 2:6). Jesus marked out the road in which we were to move on the way to eternal life, but that was not enough, for we were shut out from that path and that life by sin and its curse – death.

So Christ, after He prepared and marked out the blessed path, went down into the suffering and the death of Calvary; He gave up His will to God unto death. There He bore our sins and our curse, and *the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and by his stripes healing was provided for us* (Isaiah 53:5). He gave His precious blood, the blood of the everlasting covenant, that by it He might gain an entrance for us into the very presence of our God (Hebrews 13:20).

Now Christ is seated at the right hand of the throne of God as our High Priest to apply within our hearts, as a living Savior, the divine power of that propitiation (Hebrews 8:1). Whenever you think of drawing near to God, of serving God, and of offering yourself unto God, you might rightly wonder how you in your sinfulness with your transgressions and backslidings since you were converted and received Christ, you with the sinfulness of your nature, can actually have fellowship with God every day. The answer then comes: *In Christ Jesus ye who at another time were far off are made near by the blood of the Christ* (Ephesians 2:13). *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus . . . let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith* (Hebrews 10:19, 22).

Are there any of you who feel afraid to make the great surrender – absolute surrender – because you feel too unworthy? Oh, think of this: your worthiness is not in yourself or in the intensity or uprightness of your consecration; your

worthiness is in Jesus Christ. We read in God's Word that it is *the altar that sanctifies the gift* (Matthew 23:19). We also know that Christ is not only the Priest and *the Lamb that was slain,* but that the living Christ is Himself the altar (Revelation 5:12).

The altar was to be sanctified for seven days. *For seven days thou shalt reconcile the altar and sanctify it; and it shall be a most holy altar; whatever touches the altar shall be made holy* (Exodus 29:37). In the New Testament, we are taught that the altar sanctifies the gift. Christ is our altar. If there is any one afraid and asking if God can accept you in your weakness, then come, child of God, and be not afraid. Lay yourself upon Christ, the living altar, the everlasting propitiation, who can make you acceptable to God every moment. Rest there. Rest upon Him intentionally and in faith. Unworthy and feeble though I may be, the altar sanctifies the gift, and in Jesus, as I rest in Him, God accepts my weakness, and I am well-pleasing in His sight.

Oh, Christians, seek to maintain this truth, not only as a doctrine for the comfort and salvation of the unconverted to tell them there is full and immediate pardon but also as the power of continual access to God. *If we walk in the light, as he is in the light . . . the blood of Jesus Christ . . . cleanses us from all sin* (1 John 1:7). It is in Christ that the door to the heart of my Father is open every moment; it is in the blood of the blessed Lamb of God that every moment from above, the inflowing of the divine life can come into your heart and mine.

Christ With Us as Our Savior

Not only do I have Christ before me as my example and Christ for me as my propitiation, but I have Christ with me as my Savior from sin. He is my friend, my leader, and my guide. Yes, that was the precious promise of our gracious Lord before He left: *Behold, I am with you always* (Matthew 28:20). Earlier than that, when the disciples could not yet understand what He meant, He had told them, *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them* (Matthew 18:20).

What you and I need to realize is this: Jesus Christ is nearer to us than our nearest earthly friend. If we would but take time to turn our eyes and heart away from this world, away from all the loving faces and friends that surround us,

away from all the joys that attract us and all the love that greets us, and fix our eyes and heart steadfastly and humbly and trustingly on the face and the love and the joy of Jesus, we would learn that He is able to manifest Himself to us so that our hearts could be filled with the consciousness that Jesus is with us.

You know how deep in the consciousness is the thought of a father, for example, every morning when he gets up, that he has a beloved wife and children. It is so natural, his whole heart is filled, and he does not need to think about if he wants to see his family. It can be the same with Jesus. We can wake up and know He is with us, and we will immediately desire to commune with Him. Can it be that Christ can make His presence as near and as clear and as dear to me as the fellowship of the dearest ones upon earth? Christ can do it, He longs to do it, and He is worthy that we should let Him do it. “O God, when will the time come when Your Son will be nearer to us than father or mother, wife or husband, child or brother? Oh, may that blessed hour come quickly!”

Jesus Christ wants to live with you and walk with you, so that He may do this blessed work for you. He wants to be with you as your close friend, so that you will never be alone. You will not pass through any trial, any difficulty, any fire, or any water alone; the promise of God will be fulfilled to you in Christ Jesus. No battle that you have to fight with sin or temptation and no feebleness that makes you tremble in the consciousness of what you are yourself will you face alone, but Christ will be at your side every moment. Jesus Christ will lead you and show you the way in which you need to walk. Jesus Christ will be with you to comfort you by His presence and make your heart glad. Jesus Christ, Savior from sin, will watch over you in His mighty power and work in you all God’s good pleasure. Oh, that God might show us that the life of absolute surrender is a life that can be lived in Christ Jesus. It is a life that can be lived because Christ Himself will care for us and watch over us.

Christ in Us as Our Life and Strength

Then comes the last thought: Christ can be in us as our life and our strength. That is the crown of all. The young convert ordinarily understands very little of that. Many believers have lived a while aware that Christ is with them as guide and helper but have never yet come to realize what it means to have Christ in

them, their very life and their very strength. Yet that is what the apostle Paul tells us is the great gospel mystery, the mystery that was hid for ages and generations but has now been revealed. It is the mystery of God's people, of which he says *the riches of the glory of this mystery in the Gentiles, which is Christ in you* (Colossians 1:27). Christians, the riches and glory of our God in heaven are manifest to you in this – that God wants you to have Jesus, His Son, living in you. Oh, may we come to that at once, not to ask for a little blessing, a beginning of blessings, but to have our whole life opened up to the power of the Holy Spirit, to the control and sanctifying power of Jesus Christ.

I write now to Christian workers. Our main concern has been that of work. What is needed if God is to bless all the Christian leaders, teachers, and other servants of God in your town? How is God's power to come and to work? Beloved, Christ is the power of God, and we need more of Christ; we need the whole Christ; we need Christ in every one of us revealed by the Holy Spirit; then the power of God will work.

I mentioned earlier a church so filled with the Holy Spirit that the Holy Spirit could say to that church, "Set apart for Me the men whom I have called for My work." They were workers who were able and ready and willing to be set apart for the Holy Spirit. How can each church be brought to this condition? In one way only. John the Baptist preached Christ who baptized *in the Holy Spirit and fire* (Matthew 3:11). That tells me that Jesus Christ is the One from whom the Holy Spirit must flow into us in ever new and larger measure. If you want the power of God's Spirit to be revealed in your city or far away on the other side of the world, it must come from a closer attachment to Christ, a closer union with Him, and a larger revelation of Christ dwelling in Christian people. A blessing then must come.

Jesus said, *He that believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water* (John 7:38). It is by faith, by believing, that Christ comes and dwells in the heart and becomes the fountain out of which the Holy Spirit flows. What do we read in the last chapter of Revelation? *And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb* (Revelation 22:1). Yes, the Lamb went and sat down upon the throne of glory, and the river of water of life flowed out. It is the

Lamb who must lead you and me to the fountains of living water and give them within our hearts, so that we will have power to work among men. It is not the power of reason or the power of human love, zeal**,** earnestness, or diligence but the power that comes from God.

Are you ready for that power? Are you ready to surrender yourself absolutely to God and receive it? Sincerely say, “Lord, I am utterly surrendered to You. I am feeble and trembling, but I surrender, Lord God; it is done. I have received but little of what I know You can give, but as an empty vessel, cleansed and lowly, I place myself at Your feet again, day by day and moment by moment, and I wait upon You.” Child of God, what the eye has not seen nor the ear heard, and what you and others have not before understood, God will do for them that wait for Him and love Him.

This message will profit us very little unless it leads us closer to God. We must expect much from God and desire closer fellowship with Him. How can that be? Jesus can do it for us. Christ is our life. He will live in us the same life that He lived upon earth. Shall we not expect Him to do it in the fullness of His promise? Shall we not come with every sin and every hindrance and every shortcoming and everything that causes self-condemnation and cast it all at His feet, believing that the blood cleanses and that Jesus gives deliverance? Believe, and then expect and accept that God Himself will reveal Christ within us in the power of the Holy Spirit.

[1] Propitiation here means the turning away of God’s wrath toward us by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

Chapter 9

The Fruit of the Spirit is Love

The fruit of the Spirit is this: charity [love]. (Galatians 5:22)

One of the main reasons God does not bless is the lack of love. When the body is divided, there cannot be strength.

In the time of Holland's great religious wars, when that country stood out so nobly against Spain, one of their mottoes was, "Unity gives strength." It is only when God's people stand as one body, one before God in the fellowship of love, one towards another in deep affection, one before the world in a love that the world can see, that they will have power to secure the blessing which they ask of God.

If a drinking glass that ought to be one whole piece is cracked into many pieces, it cannot be filled. You can take a piece of broken glass and dip out a little water into that, but if you want the glass to be full, the glass must be whole. That is literally true of Christ's church, and if there is one thing we must pray, it is this: "Lord melt us together into one by the power of the Holy Spirit; let the Holy Spirit, who at Pentecost made them all one heart and one soul, do His blessed work among us."

Praise God, we can love each other in a divine love, for the fruit of the Spirit is love. Give yourselves up to love, and the Holy Spirit will come; receive the Spirit, and He will teach you to love more.

God's Love for Us

Why is it that the fruit of the Spirit is love? Because God is love (1 John 4:8). What does that mean? It is the very nature and being of God to delight in

communicating Himself. God has no selfishness. God keeps nothing to Himself. God's nature is to be always giving. You see it in the sun and the moon and the stars, in every flower, in every bird in the air, in every fish in the sea. God communicates life to His creatures. The angels around His throne, the seraphim and cherubim who are flames of fire, from where does their glory come? It is because God is love, and He imparts to them of His brightness and His blessedness.

God delights to pour out His love into us, His redeemed people. Why? Because, as I said, God keeps nothing for Himself. From eternity, God had His only begotten Son, and the Father gave Him all things; nothing that God had was kept back. God is love. One of the old church fathers said that the best way to understand the Trinity is as a revelation of divine love. The Father is the loving One, the fountain of love; the Son is the beloved One, the reservoir of love in whom the love was poured out; and the Spirit is the living love that united both and then overflowed into this world. The Spirit of Pentecost is love. The Spirit of the Father is love. The Spirit of the Son is love. When the Holy Spirit comes to us and to others, will He be less a Spirit of love than He is in God? It cannot be; He cannot change His nature. The Spirit of God is love, and the fruit of the Spirit is love.

Why is that so? The one great need of mankind and the thing that Christ's redemption came to accomplish was to restore love to this world. Why was it that man sinned? Selfishness triumphed; he sought self instead of God. Adam at once accused the woman of having led him astray. Love to God had gone, and love to man was lost. Of the first two children of Adam, one murdered his brother. Doesn't that teach us that sin had robbed the world of love? The whole history of the world proves that love has been lost!

The Lord Jesus Christ came from heaven as the Son of God's love. *God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son* (John 3:16). God's Son came to show what love is, and He lived a life of love here upon earth − in fellowship with His disciples, in compassion for the poor and miserable, in love even to His enemies, and He died the death of love. When He went to heaven, whom did He send down? The Spirit of love, to come and expel selfishness and envy and pride, and bring the love of God into the hearts of men and women. The fruit of

the Spirit is love.

Divine Love for Each Other

What was the preparation for the promise of the Holy Spirit? Before Christ promised the Holy Spirit, He gave a new commandment, and He said some wonderful things about that new commandment (John 14). One thing was, *That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another* (John 13:34). To them His dying love was to be the only rule of their conduct and interaction with each other. What a message to those fishermen, to those men full of pride and selfishness! “Learn to love each other,” said Christ, “as I have loved you.” And by the grace of God they did it. When Pentecost came, they were of one heart and one soul. Christ did it for them.

What more did He say? *By this shall everyone know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another* (John 13:35). You know that wearing a badge or a ribbon usually has some meaning behind it. Christ said to His disciples, in effect, “I give you a badge, and that badge is love; that is to be your symbol. It is the only thing in heaven or on earth by which people can know Me.” Don’t we wonder if love has fled from the earth? If we were to ask the world, “Have you seen us wear the badge of love?” the world would say, “No; what we have heard of the church of Christ is that it is full of quarrelling and separation.” Let us ask God with one heart that we may wear the badge of Jesus – love. God is able to give it.

Divine Love Conquers Self

The fruit of the Spirit is love. Why? Because nothing but love can expel and conquer our selfishness. Self is the great curse, whether in its relation to God, or to our fellow men, or to fellow Christians. We usually think of ourselves and seek our own benefit. Self is our greatest curse, but praise God, Christ came to redeem us from self. We sometimes talk about deliverance from the self-life and praise God for every word that can be said about it to help us. I am afraid, though, that some people think deliverance from the self-life means that now they are no longer going to have any trouble in serving God. They forget that deliverance from the self-life means to be a vessel overflowing with love to

everybody all day.

There you have the reason many people pray for the power of the Holy Spirit, and they get something, but oh, so little! They prayed for power for work and power for blessing, but they have not prayed for power for full deliverance from self. That means not only the righteous self in interaction with God but the unloving self in interaction with men. But there is deliverance. The fruit of the Spirit is love. I bring you the glorious promise of Christ – that He is able to fill our hearts with love.

Many of us try hard at times to love. We try to force ourselves to love, and I do not say that is wrong; it is better than nothing. But the end of it is always very sad. I must confess that I fail continually. What is the reason? The reason is simply this: because I have never learned to believe and accept the truth that the Holy Spirit can pour out God's love into my heart. That blessed text, how often it has been limited! *The love of God is poured out in our hearts* (Romans 5:5). It has often been understood that it means the love of God to me. Oh, what a limitation! That is only the beginning. The love of God always means the love of God in its entirety, in its fullness as an indwelling power, a love of God to me that leaps back to Him in love and overflows to my fellow men in love. It is God's love to me, and my love to God, and my love to my fellow men. The three are one; you cannot separate them. Believe that the love of God can be poured out in your heart and mine, so that we can love all the day.

"Ah!" you say, "how little I have understood that!" Why is a lamb always gentle? Because that is its nature. Does it cost the lamb anything to be gentle? No. Why not? It is so beautiful and gentle. Does a lamb have to study to be gentle? No. Why does that come so easily? It is its nature. A wolf does not have to learn to be cruel and to put its fangs into the poor lamb or sheep That is its nature. It does not have to summon up its courage; the wolf-nature is there.

How can I learn to love? I cannot, until the Spirit of God fills my heart with God's love, and I long for God's love in a very different sense from which I have sought it so selfishly, as a comfort and a joy and a happiness and a pleasure to myself. I cannot learn to love until I learn that God is love and to claim it and receive it as an indwelling power for self-sacrifice. I cannot learn to love until I see that my glory and my blessedness is to be like God and like Christ in giving

up everything in myself for my fellow men. May God teach us that! Oh, the divine blessedness of the love with which the Holy Spirit can fill our hearts! The fruit of the Spirit is love.

Proof of Love

Once again I ask, “Why must this be so?” My answer is, “Without this, we cannot live the daily life of love.” How often, when we speak about the consecrated life, we speak about our character or our nature, and people have sometimes said, “You make too much of this.” I do not think we can make too much of it. Think of a clock. You know what those hands mean. The hands tell me what is within the clock, and if I see that the hands stand still or that the hands point wrong or that the clock is slow or fast, I say there is something inside the clock that is wrong. Character is just like the revelation that the clock gives of what is within. Our nature, our attitude and our temperament, is a proof of whether the love of Christ is filling the heart.

Many find it easier to be holy and happy in church or in a prayer meeting, or in diligent, earnest work for the Lord than in their daily life with wife and children. Many find it easier to be holy and happy outside of the home than in it. Where is the love of God? In Christ. God has prepared for us a wonderful redemption in Christ, and He longs to make something supernatural of us. Have we learned to long for it, ask for it, and expect it in its fullness?

Then there is the tongue! Just think what liberty many Christians give to their tongues. They say that they have a right to think and say what they like; and when they speak about each other, when they speak about their neighbors, when they speak about other Christians, how often there are sharp and cruel remarks!

May God keep me from saying anything that would be unloving. May God shut my mouth, if I am not speaking in tender love. What I am saying is a fact. How often among Christians who are joined together in work, there is found sharp criticism, sharp judgment, hasty opinion, unloving words, secret contempt of each other, and secret condemnation of each other. Oh, just as a mother’s love covers her children and delights in them and has the most tender compassion with their weaknesses or failures, so there ought to be in the heart of every believer a motherly love towards every brother and sister in Christ. Have you

aimed at that? Have you sought it? Have you ever pleaded for it? Jesus Christ said, *As I have loved you . . . love one another.* He did not put that among the other commandments, but He said, in effect, "This is a new commandment, the main commandment: love one another as I have loved you."

Proof of Lack of Love

What is the reason that God's Holy Spirit cannot come in power? Is it not possible? Remember the comparison I used in speaking of the glass. I can dip a little water into a piece of broken glass; but if a glass is to be full, it must be whole. Wherever the children of God come together, to whatever church or mission or society they belong, they must love each other intensely, or the Spirit of God cannot do His work.

This pertains to all the Christians in a town and not just the Christians in one of the many churches in a town. We sometimes think that we have love because we get along with those in our own church, while we have no love or fellowship with those in other churches. We compete with each other, refuse to work together with other groups of Christians, and boast of what "our" church does. This, too, grieves the Spirit of God. We talk about grieving the Spirit of God by worldliness and ritualism and formality and error and indifference, but the one thing above everything that grieves God's Spirit is this lack of love. Let every heart search itself and ask that God may search it.

Why are we taught that the fruit of the Spirit is love? Because the Spirit of God has come to make our daily lives an exhibition of divine power and a revelation of what God can do for His children. Think of the church in general. What divisions! Think of the different groups of Christians. Take the question of holiness, take the question of the cleansing blood, take the question of the baptism of the Spirit: what differences are caused among dear believers by such questions! It doesn't bother me that there are differences of opinion. We do not all have the same constitution and temperament and mind. How often, though, hate, bitterness, contempt, separation, and unlovingness are caused by those claiming to follow the holiest truths of God's Word!

It was so in the time of the Reformation between the Lutheran and Calvinist churches. What bitterness there was then in regard to the Lord's Supper, which

was meant to be the bond of union between all believers! And so, down through the ages, the very dearest truths of God have become mountains that have separated us. If we want to pray today in power, if we want the Holy Spirit to come down in power, and if we want God to pour out His Spirit, we must enter into a covenant with God that we will love one another with a heavenly love. Are you ready for that? That is the only true love that is large enough to take in all God's children, even those considered by some to be the most unloving and unlovable, the unworthy, the unbearable, and the troublesome. If our vow of absolute surrender to God was true and sincere, then it must mean absolute surrender to the divine love to fill me and to be a servant of love to love every child of God around me. The fruit of the Spirit is love.

God did something wonderful when He had Christ, who sat at His right hand, send the Holy Spirit down from the heart of the Father and His everlasting love. Yet we have degraded the Holy Spirit into a mere power by which we have to do our work! May God forgive us. Oh, that the Holy Spirit might be held in honor as a power to fill us with the very life and nature of God and of Christ! The fruit of the Spirit is love.

Learn of His Love

Why is that so? The answer is that it is the only power in which Christians really can do their work. Yes, that is what we need. We not only need love that is to bind us to each other, but we also need a divine love in our work for the lost around us. Don't we often undertake a great deal of work just as people undertake a work of giving to or helping others from a natural spirit of compassion for our fellow men? Don't we often undertake Christian work because our minister or friend calls us to it, and don't we often perform Christian work with a certain energy without being filled with God's love?

People often ask what the baptism of fire is. I have answered more than once, that I know no fire like the fire of God, the fire of everlasting love that consumed the sacrifice on Calvary. The baptism of love is what the church needs, and to get that we must begin at once to get down upon our faces before God in confession and plead, "Lord, let love from heaven flow down into my heart. I am giving up my life to pray and live as one who has given himself up for the everlasting love,

to dwell in and fill him." Yes, if the love of God were in our hearts, what a difference it would make! There are many who say, "I work for Christ, and I think that I could work much more, but I do not have the gift. I do not know how or where to begin. I do not know what I can do."

Brother, sister, ask God to baptize you with the Spirit of love, and love will find its way. Love is a fire that will burn through every difficulty. You may be a shy, hesitating man who cannot speak well, but love can burn through everything. May God fill us with love! We need it for our work.

Live His Love

You have probably read many touching stories of love demonstrated and thought how beautiful they were. I heard one not long ago. Mrs. Butler had been asked to speak at a place of charity where there were a number of poor women. As she arrived there and got to the window with the woman in charge, she saw a desolate woman sitting outside. She asked, "Who is that?"

The supervisor answered, "She has been in the house thirty or forty times, and she has always gone away again, and nothing can be done with her, she is so downcast and depressed."

Mrs. Butler said, "She must come in."

The supervisor then told Mrs. Butler, "We have been waiting for you. The women are assembled, and you only have an hour to speak to them."

Mrs. Butler replied, "No, this is of more importance," and she went outside where the woman was sitting and said, "My sister, what is the matter?"

"I am not your sister," was the reply.

Then Mrs. Butler laid her hand on her and said, "Yes, I am your sister, and I love you," and so she spoke until the heart of the poor woman was touched. The conversation lasted some time, and the women inside were waiting patiently. Ultimately, Mrs. Butler brought the woman into the room. There was the poor, wretched, degraded creature, full of shame. She would not sit on a chair but sat down on a stool beside Mrs. Butler's seat, and Mrs. Butler let her lean against her with her arms around the poor woman's neck, while she spoke to the assembled people. That love touched the woman's heart. She had found one who really loved her, and that love gave access to the love of Jesus. Praise God!

There is love upon earth in the hearts of God's children; but oh, if only there were more!

Why is it written, I again ask, that the fruit of the Spirit is love? Because without love we cannot do our work. "O God, baptize our ministers, our missionaries, our Sunday school teachers, our Bible readers, our workers, and all who serve You with a tender love." Oh, that God would begin with us now and baptize us with heavenly love!

Only love can fit us for the work of intercession. Love must equip us for our work. Do you know what the hardest and the most important work is that has to be done? It is the work of intercession, the work of going to God and taking time to lay hold of Him. A man may be an earnest Christian or an earnest minister and may do good, but how often he has to confess that he knows but little of what it is to tarry with God! He may prepare sermons and outlines and visit the sick yet be too much in a hurry to take time to fervently seek God and patiently wait upon Him. May God give us the great gift of an intercessory spirit – a spirit of prayer and supplication! Let me encourage you now in the name of Jesus not to let a day pass without praying for all saints and for all God's people.

I find there are Christians who think little of that. I find prayer meetings where they pray for the members but not for all believers. Take time to pray for the church of Christ. Pray for those in other countries who are being persecuted. Pray for your brothers and sisters around the world who are in prison for the sake of Jesus. Pray for them as you would pray if you were in prison with them. *Remember those that are in bonds as bound with them* (Hebrews 13:3). It is right to pray for the heathen, as I have already said. God help us to pray more for them. It is right to pray for missionaries and for evangelistic work and for the unconverted. But Paul did not tell people to pray for the heathen or the unconverted. Paul told them to pray for believers.

Make your first prayer every day, "Lord, bless Your saints everywhere." The state of Christ's church is indescribably low. Plead for God's people that He would visit them; plead for each other; plead for all believers who are trying to work for God. Let love fill your hearts. Ask Christ to pour it out afresh into you every day. Try to understand by the Holy Spirit of God: "I am separated unto the Holy Spirit, and the fruit of the Spirit is love." May God help us to understand it.

I have mentioned about waiting upon God. May God grant that we learn day by day to wait more quietly upon Him. Do not wait upon God only for yourselves, or the power to do so will soon be lost. Give yourselves up to the ministry and the love of intercession, and pray more for God's people, for God's people round about you, for the Spirit of love in yourselves and in them, and for the work of God with which you are connected. The answer will surely come. Your waiting upon God will be a source of untold blessing and power. The fruit of the Spirit is love.

We must go again to God in intercession. Let us take time right now to pray. Let us plead for the children of God throughout America and Canada and England and Wales and Scotland and Ireland and Africa and Asia and all throughout the world. Let us pray in faith that God will pour out a spirit of love upon us.

Have you a lack of love to confess before God? Then confess it to God and say before Him, "O Lord, I confess my lack of love and of a clean, sincere, surrendered heart." Then, as you cast your prayer at His feet, believe that the blood cleanses you, that Jesus comes in His mighty, cleansing, saving power to deliver you, and that He will give His Holy Spirit.

Chapter 10

We Cannot. God Can.

And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God. (Luke 18:27)

Jesus had said to the rich young ruler, *Sell all that thou hast . . . and come, follow me.* The young man went away sorrowful. Christ turned to the disciples and said, *How difficult it is for those that have riches to enter into the kingdom of God.* The disciples, we read, were greatly astonished and asked that if it was so difficult to enter God's kingdom, *Who then can be saved?* Jesus gave this blessed answer: *The things which are impossible with men are possible with God* (Luke 18:22-27).

The text contains just two thoughts – that in religion, in the question of salvation and of following Christ by a holy life, it is impossible for man to do it. And then alongside that is the thought that what is impossible with man is possible with God. Let us look at these two sides.

The two thoughts mark the two great lessons that we have to learn in the religious life. It often takes a long time to learn the first lesson – that in religion we can do nothing, that salvation is impossible to us. Even when someone learns that lesson, he often does not learn the second lesson – that what has been impossible to us is possible with God. Blessed is the one who learns both lessons.

The learning of these two lessons marks two stages in the Christian's life. The one stage is when someone is trying to do his utmost and fails, then tries to do still better and fails again, and tries still more and always fails. Very often he does not even then learn the lesson. It is impossible. Peter spent three years in

Christ's school, and he never learned that lesson, that it is impossible, until he had denied his Lord and went out and wept bitterly. Then he learned the lesson that with man it is impossible to serve God and Christ.

Impossible with Man

Just look for a moment at a person who is learning the lesson that it is impossible with man. At first he fights against it; then he submits to it, but reluctantly and in despair; at last he accepts it willingly and rejoices in it. At the beginning of the Christian life, the young convert has no concept of this truth. He has been converted; he has the joy of the Lord in his heart, and he begins to run the race and fight the battle. He is sure he can conquer, for he is earnest and honest and is confident that God will help him. Yet, somehow, very soon he fails where he did not expect it, and sin gets the better of him. He is disappointed, but he thinks he was not watchful and careful enough and did not make his resolutions strong enough. Again he makes promises to God. Again he prays, and yet he fails. He questions, "Am I not a saved man? Have I not the life of God within me?" He answers, "Yes, and I have Christ to help me; I can live the holy life."

Later, he comes to another state of mind. He begins to see that such a life is impossible, but he does not accept it. Multitudes of Christians have come to this point. They say they cannot do it and then think God never expected them to do what they cannot do. If you tell them that God does expect it, they do not understand. Perhaps they are living a life of failure and sin instead of rest and victory. They began to see that they cannot succeed, that it is impossible; yet they do not fully understand it. So, under the impression that they cannot succeed in holiness, they give way to thoughts of despair. They will try their best, but they never really expect to make much progress.

God, though, leads His children on to a third stage. When a person fully understands that it is impossible to lead a victorious life on his own yet at the same time says, "I must do it, and I will do it; it is impossible for man, and yet I must do it," he is beginning to understand God's truth in this matter. The renewed will begins to exercise its whole power and in intense longing and prayer cries out to God, "Lord, what is the meaning of this? How am I to be freed from the power of sin?"

That is the state of the saved person whom the apostle Paul described:

> *For that which I do, I do not understand, and not even the good that I desire is what I do; but what I hate, that is what I do. If then I do that which I do not desire, I approve that the law is good. So that it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. And I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing; for I have the desire, but I am not able to perform that which is good. For I do not do the good that I desire; but the evil which I do not desire, that I do. And if I do that which I do not desire, I am not working, but sin that dwells in me. So that, desiring to do good, I find this law: evil is natural unto me. For I delight with the law of God with the inward man, but I see another law in my members which rebels against the law of my mind, bringing captive unto the law of sin which is in my members.*
>
> *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God, by Jesus, the Christ, our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.*
> (Romans 7:15-25)

There you find the Christian trying his very utmost to live a holy life. God's law has been revealed to him as reaching down into the very depth of the desires of the heart, and he can dare to say, "I really do delight in the law and Word of God. I really do want to do what is good. My heart loves the law of God, and my will has chosen that law."

Can a person like that fail, with his heart full of delight in God's law and with his will determined to do what is right? Yes. That is what Romans 7 teaches. There is something more needed. Not only must I delight in the law of God after the inward man and will what God wills, but I need a divine power to work it in me. That is what the apostle Paul teaches: *It is God who works in you both to will and to do* (Philippians 2:13).

Note the contrast. In Romans 7, the regenerate person says, "I want to do good, but I am not able to." But in Philippians 2, you have a person who has been led on further, one who understands that when God has worked the renewed will, God will give the power to accomplish what that will desires. Let

us receive this as the first great lesson in the spiritual life. Let us pray, “It is impossible for me, my God; let there be an end of the flesh and all its powers, an end of self, and let it be my glory to be helpless.” Praise God for the divine teaching that makes us helpless!

As we used those words *absolute surrender* – and I cannot let the words go yet – *absolute surrender to God* – weren’t some of you brought to an end of yourselves – to think that you cannot see how you can actually live as a person absolutely surrendered to God every moment of the day? Do you wonder how you can remain absolutely surrendered to God at home, at work, with family and friends and neighbors and strangers, in the midst of trials and temptations, surrounded by sin and evil?

I pray that you will learn the lesson now. If you felt that you couldn’t do it, you are on the right road. Let yourselves be led further down the road. Accept that position that you cannot do it and maintain it before God. Pray now, “My heart’s desire and delight, O God, is absolute surrender, but I cannot do it; it is impossible for me to live that life; it is beyond me.” Fall down and learn that when you are utterly helpless, God will come to work in you not only to will but also to do. It is often when people are at the end of their rope, when they hit rock bottom, when they come to the end of themselves, that they call out to Jesus for salvation. It is the same here. It is when we realize that we cannot be holy and cannot absolutely surrender no matter how much we try, that we then cry out to God, “Help me. I cannot do it! My only hope is You! You alone can work in me that which I need.”

Possible with God

Now comes the second lesson. *With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible* (Matthew 19:26). I wrote earlier that many people have learned half the lesson: it is impossible with men, so they give up in helpless despair and live wretched Christian lives without joy or strength or victory. Why? Because they do not humble themselves to learn that other lesson: with God all things are possible.

Every day, your Christian life is to be proof that God works impossibilities; your Christian life is to be a series of impossibilities made possible and actual by

God’s almighty power. That is what the Christian needs. He has an almighty God whom he worships, and he must learn to reverently realize and understand that we do not want only a little of God’s power, but we need, desire, and expect the entirety of God’s omnipotence to keep us right and to help us live like Christians.[1]

God’s Omnipotence

The whole of Christianity is a work of God’s omnipotence. Look at the birth of Jesus. That was a miracle of divine power, and the angel said to Mary, *With God nothing is impossible* (Luke 1:37). It was the omnipotence of God. Look at Christ’s resurrection. We are taught that it was according to the *exceeding greatness of his power* that God raised Christ from the dead (Ephesians 1:19-20).

Every tree must grow on the root from which it springs. An oak tree three hundred years old grows all the time on the one root from which it had its beginning. Christianity had its beginning in the omnipotence of God, and in every soul it must continue in that omnipotence. All the possibilities of the higher Christian life have their origin in a new appreciation and understanding of Christ’s power to work all of God’s will in us.

I want to call upon you today to come and worship an almighty God. Have you learned to do it? Have you learned to deal so closely with an almighty God that you know His omnipotence is working in you? In outward appearance there is often little evidence of it. The apostle Paul said, *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 human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power* (1 Corinthians 2:3-4). From the human side, there was weakness; from the divine side, there was omnipotence. That is true of every godly life. If we would only learn that lesson better and give a wholehearted, undivided surrender to it, we would learn what blessedness there is in dwelling every morning and every moment with our almighty God.

Have you ever studied in the Bible the attribute of God’s omnipotence? You know that it was God’s omnipotence that created the world and created light out of darkness and created man. But have you studied God’s omnipotence in the works of redemption?

Look at Abraham. When God called him to be the father of that people out of which Christ was to be born, God said to him, *I am the Almighty God; walk before me and be thou perfect* (Genesis 17:1). God trained Abraham to trust Him as the Omnipotent One. Whether it was his going out to a land he did not know or his faith as a pilgrim amid the thousands of Canaanites in a land God promised would be his, Abraham believed God. Whether it was his faith in waiting twenty-five years, against all hope, for a son in his old age or whether it was the raising up of Isaac from the dead on Mount Moriah when he was going to sacrifice him, Abraham believed God. He was strong in faith, giving glory to God, because he believed God was able to do what He had promised.

The cause of the weakness of your Christian life is that you want to partly work it out yourself, and you want to partly let God help you. That cannot be. You must come to be utterly helpless and let God work, and God will work gloriously. We need this if we are indeed to be workers for God. I could go through Scripture and prove to you how Moses, when he led Israel out of Egypt; how Joshua, when he brought the children of Israel into the land of Canaan; how all God's servants in the Old Testament believed in and depended upon the omnipotence of God doing impossibilities. This God lives today, and this God is the God of every child of His.t

Yet some of us want God to give us a little help while we do our best, instead of coming to understand what God wants and say, "I can do nothing; God must and will do all." Have you said, "In worship, in work, in sanctification, in obedience to God, I can do nothing of myself, so my place is to worship the omnipotent God and believe that He will work in me every moment"?[2] Oh, may God teach us this!

I wrote earlier about absolute surrender to God. You wish that you could surrender absolutely to God, but you cannot. May God show you by His grace what a God you have and to what a God you have entrusted yourself. He is an omnipotent God, willing with His whole omnipotence to place Himself at the disposal of every child of His. Won't we take the lesson of the Lord Jesus and say, "Amen; the things which are impossible with men are possible with God"?

Self or Surrender?

Remember what we said before about Peter, his self-confidence, self-power, self-will, and how he came to deny his Lord. Many of you felt, “Ah! there is the self-life; there is the flesh-life that rules in me!” And now, have you believed that there is deliverance from that? Have you believed that the almighty God is able to reveal Christ in your heart? Are you willing to surrender to God and let the Holy Spirit rule in you, so the self-life will not have power or dominion over you? Have you coupled the two together, and with tears of repentance and with deep humiliation and weakness, cried out to God for help? Pray, “O God, it is impossible for me; I cannot do it, but glory to Your name, it is possible with You!” Have you claimed deliverance? Come and do it now. I want you to put yourselves afresh in absolute surrender into the hands of a God of infinite love, and as infinite as His love is, His power is able to do it.

We said that absolute surrender was the need in the church of Christ, and the lack of absolute surrender is why the Holy Spirit cannot fill us. The lack of absolute surrender is why we cannot live as people entirely separated unto the Holy Spirit. That is why the flesh and the self-life cannot be conquered. We do not understand what it is to be absolutely surrendered to God as Jesus was. I know that many Christians might earnestly and honestly say, “Amen. I accept the message of absolute surrender to God,” and yet continue on in the flesh, thinking, “Will that ever be mine? Can I count upon God to make me one of whom it will be said in heaven and on earth and in hell that he lives in absolute surrender to God?”

Brother or sister, *The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.* Believe that when He takes charge of you in Christ, God is able to make you a person of absolute surrender. God is able to maintain that. He is able to let you rise from bed every morning of the week with the blessed thought directly or indirectly that you are in God’s care and God is working out your life for you.

Some of you are weary of thinking about sanctification. You pray; you have longed and cried for it, and yet it appeared so far off! You realize how far away the holiness and humility of Jesus seem to be. Beloved friends, one doctrine of sanctification is scriptural and real and effectual: *The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.* God can sanctify us, and by His almighty and sanctifying power every moment, God can keep us. Oh, that we

might get a step nearer to our God! Oh, that the light of God might shine, and that we might know our God better today!

I could repeat what I have previously said about the life of Christ in us: living like Christ, taking Christ as our Savior from sin, and having Him as our life and strength. It is God in heaven who can reveal that in you. The apostle Paul prayed that God *would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man* (Ephesians 3:16). It is certain to be something very wonderful if it is according to the riches of His glory. Do you not see that it is an omnipotent God working by His omnipotence in the heart of His believing children, so that Christ can become an indwelling Savior? You have tried to grasp it and to seize it, and you have tried to believe it, and it would not come. That was because you had not been brought to believe that *the things which are impossible with men are possible with God.*

I hope that what was said about love has brought many to understand that you must have an inflowing of love in quite a new way; your heart must be filled with life from above, from the fountain of everlasting love, if it is going to overflow all day. Then it will be just as natural for you to love your fellow men, as it is natural for the lamb to be gentle and the wolf to be cruel. Until you are brought to such a state that the more someone hates and speaks evil of you, the more unlikeable and unlovable someone is, and you love him all the more; until you are brought to such a state that the more the obstacles and hatred and ingratitude abound, the more the power of love can triumph in you; until you are brought to see that, you are not saying, “It is impossible with men.” If, though, you have been led to say, “This message has spoken to me about a love utterly beyond my power; it is absolutely impossible,” then you can come to God and say, “It is possible with God.”

Pray for Others Too

Why is it I speak this way in regard to your spiritual life? For this one reason: a man or a woman who is to work with power for others must know the power of God in his or her own soul. Let every Christian earnestly pray, “Lord, let Your Spirit rest upon every one of us and not part from us.” Let every Christian in faith pray, “Lord, prove Your mighty power in my soul day by day in such a way

that I can show to others that You are almighty to save and to keep."

Some cry out to God for a great revival. That is an unceasing prayer of my heart too. Oh, if God would only revive His believing people! I pray, too, for all the unconverted religious people in our churches, for the infidels and skeptics, and for all the wretched and perishing people around me; but my heart first prays, "My God, revive Your church and people." I say again, as I have so often said, I beg you by the mercies of God, pray for God's people.

However feeble some believers may be, pray for them; if they are children of God, they are your brothers and sisters. Pray for them; help them out of darkness and out of prison. Pray for God's church, and believe that God is going to give the blessing. It is not for nothing that thousands of hearts yearn after holiness and consecration; it is a forerunner of God's power. God works *to will,* and then He works *to do.* Any company of believers is a witness and a proof that God has worked *to will.* Their hearts' delight is in listening to God's message, and they are longing for God's blessing. Oh, let us in faith believe that the omnipotent God will work *to do* among His people more than we can ask. *Unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think . . . unto him be glory* (Ephesians 3:20-21). Let our hearts say that. Glory to God, the Omnipotent One, who can do above what we dare to ask or think!

I waited for God. Let it be as it was in Israel: *It shall be said in that day, Behold, this is our God, whom we have waited for, and he has saved us: this is the LORD, whom we have waited for, we will be glad and rejoice in his saving health* [salvation] (Isaiah 25:9).

The things which are impossible with men are possible with God. All around you there is a world of sin and sorrow, and the devil is there; but remember, Christ is on the throne. Christ is stronger, Christ has conquered, and Christ will conquer. Workers, go to your work more humble, empty, broken, and more helpless than ever before. Let us praise God that He can work that in every one of us. Wait on Him. Our text first casts us down: *The things which are impossible with men*; but it ultimately lifts us up high: *are possible with God.*

Join with God today. Adore and trust God as the Omnipotent One, not only for your own life, but for all the souls that are entrusted to you. Never pray without adoring His omnipotence. Say, "Mighty God, I claim Your almightiness

to work in me." The answer to the prayer will come, and like Abraham, you will become strong in faith and give glory to God, because you trust in Him, that He who has promised is able to do what He has said.

When we speak of the quickening or the deepening or the strengthening of the spiritual life, we are thinking of something that is feeble and wrong and sinful. It is a great thing to take our place before God with the confession, "O God, our spiritual life is not what it should be!" May God work that life in every heart.

Why are We Weak?

As we look around at the church, we see so many indications of feebleness, failure, sin, and shortcoming that we are compelled to ask, "Why is it this way among Christians?" Is there any necessity for the church of Christ to be living in such a low state? Is it actually possible that God's people can live always in the joy and strength of their God? Every believing heart must answer, "Yes, it is possible."

Then comes the great question, "Why is it; what is the reason that God's church as a whole is so weak, and that the great majority of Christians are not living up to their privileges?" There must be a reason for it. Has God not given Jesus, His almighty Son, to be the keeper of every believer, to make Christ an ever-present reality, and to impart and communicate to us all what we have in Christ? God has given His Son, and God has given His Spirit. How is it that believers do not live up to their privileges?

We find in more than one of Paul's letters a very solemn answer to that question. In some letters, such as First Thessalonians, Paul wrote to the Christians, "I want you to grow, to abound, to increase more and more." They were young, and there were things lacking in their faith, but their state was satisfactory so far, and that gave him great joy. He wrote time after time that he prayed they would abound and increase more and more in Christ Jesus.

In other letters, though, he took a very different tone, especially in the letters to the Corinthians and the Galatians, and he told them in many different ways why he wasn't pleased with them. They were not living as Christians ought to live. Many were under the power of the flesh. Paul reminded them that by the

preaching of faith they had received the Holy Spirit. He had preached Christ to them; they had accepted that Christ and had received the Holy Spirit in power. But what happened? Having begun in the Spirit, they tried to perfect the work by their own effort – in the flesh. *Did ye receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by the obedient ear of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun by the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?* (Galatians 3:2-3). We find the same teaching in the letters to the Corinthians.

We have here a solemn discovery of what the great need is in the church of Christ. God has called the church of Christ to live in the power of the Holy Spirit, but the church is living for the most part in the power of human flesh and of will and energy and effort apart from the Spirit of God.

I doubt not that this is the case with many individual believers, and if God will use me to give you a message from Him, my one message will be this: If the church will once again acknowledge that the Holy Spirit is her strength and her help, and if the church will once again give up everything and wait upon God to be filled with the Spirit, her days of beauty and gladness will return, and we will see the glory of God revealed among us. This is my message to every individual believer: Nothing will help you unless you understand that you must live every day under the power of the Holy Spirit. God wants you to be a living vessel in whom the power of the Spirit is manifested every hour and every moment of your life, and God will enable you to be that.

[1] Omnipotence refers here to God having all authority and being all-powerful.

[2] Worship here refers to more than a church service or singing songs in church, but our entire daily attitude of love, honor, and devotion to God.

Chapter 11

Continue in the Spirit

Did ye receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by the obedient ear of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun by the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? (Galatians 3:2-3)

This message to the Galatians teaches us some very simple thoughts. It shows us how the Christian life begins when we receive the Holy Spirit. It shows us the great danger of forgetting we are to live by the Spirit and not live after the flesh. It shows us the fruit and the proof of seeking perfection in the flesh. It also suggests to us the way of deliverance from this condition.

Having Begun by the Spirit

First of all, Paul said, *Having begun by the Spirit.* Remember, Paul not only preached justification by faith, but he preached something more. He preached that justified people cannot live except by the Holy Spirit, and therefore, God gives the Holy Spirit to every justified person to seal him. Paul said more than once, “How did you receive the Holy Spirit? Was it by the preaching of the law or by the preaching of faith?” He could point back to that time when a mighty revival took place under his teaching. The power of God had been manifested, and the Galatians were compelled to confess, “Yes, we have the Holy Spirit; we trusted in Christ by faith, and we received the Holy Spirit by faith.”

Now, it is a fearful thing that many Christians hardly know that when they believed, they received the Holy Spirit. A great many Christians can say that they received pardon and peace, but if you were to ask them if they have received the Holy Spirit, they would hesitate. Many, if they were to say yes,

would say it with hesitation. They would tell you that they do not really know what it means to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let us try to grasp this great truth. The beginning of the true Christian life is to receive the Holy Spirit. The work of every Christian minister is the same as it was for the apostle Paul: to remind his people that as Christians, they received the Holy Spirit, and they must live according to His guidance and must live in His power. If those Galatians who received the Holy Spirit in power were tempted to go astray by that terrible danger of perfecting in the flesh what had begun in the Spirit, how much more danger do those Christians run who do not really know that they have received the Holy Spirit. Or what about those Christians who know it as a matter of belief, but hardly ever think of it and hardly ever praise God for it?

If we are now sincerely asking what is to be done to have Christ's church restored, let us at once accept the truth that the Holy Spirit must be far more honored. In every believer must be a deep, abiding conviction that what they got from God was not only pardon in heaven but the Holy Spirit within their hearts to live there and to be their strength.

The Danger of Continuing in the Flesh

Look now at the great danger. Do you know what shunting is on a railway?[1] A locomotive with its train may run in a certain direction, and the points at some place may not be properly opened or closed, and unintentionally the train is shunted off to the right or to the left. If that takes place, for instance, on a dark night, the train goes in the wrong direction, and the people might never know it until they have gone some distance.

Likewise, God gives Christians the Holy Spirit with this intention: every day should be lived in the power of the Spirit. A man cannot live a godly life one hour unless by the power of the Holy Spirit. He may live a proper, consistent life, as people call it, an irreproachable life, a life of virtue and diligent service; but to live a life acceptable to God in the enjoyment of God's salvation and God's love and to live and walk in the power of the new life cannot be done unless you are guided by the Holy Spirit every day and every hour.

Listen now to the danger. The Galatians received the Holy Spirit, but what

was begun by the Spirit they tried to perfect in the flesh. How? They fell back again under Judaizing teachers who told them they must be circumcised. They sought their religion in external observances. That is why Paul used that expression about those teachers who had them circumcised – that they *desire to please in the flesh* (Galatians 6:12).

You sometimes hear the expression *religious flesh* used. What is meant by that? My human nature and my human will and my human effort can be very active in religion, and even after being converted and receiving the Holy Spirit, I may begin in my own strength to try to serve God. I may be very diligent and doing a great deal, and yet all the time it is more the work of human flesh than of God's Spirit. What a solemn thought that we can, without noticing it, be shunted off from the line of the Holy Spirit to the line of the flesh, and we can be very diligent and make great sacrifices, and yet it is all in the power of the human will!

The great question for us to ask God as we examine ourselves is whether our Christian life is lived more in the power of the flesh than in the power of the Holy Spirit. A man may be a preacher and may work diligently in his ministry; he may be a Christian worker and may make great sacrifices, and yet something is lacking. He tries and works hard, yet he is not a spiritual man; his life has no spirituality. How many Christians there are of whom no one would ever think of saying, "The life of Jesus Christ is in him. He is holy!" They may see many of you as religious or sincere, yet you go on, perhaps without realizing you are sincerely working and praying and teaching and preaching in the flesh. That is the weakness of the church of Christ. It is all in that one word – *flesh.*

The flesh may make itself known in many ways. It may be manifested in fleshly wisdom. My mind may be most active about religion and Christianity. I may preach or write or think or meditate and delight in being occupied with things in God's Book and in God's kingdom, and yet the power of the Holy Spirit may be sadly absent. Take the preaching throughout the church of Christ in England and Scotland and Holland and Europe and the United States and ask, "Why is there so little converting power in the preaching of the Word? Why is it that there is so much work and often so little result for eternity? Why is it that the Word has so little power to build up believers in holiness and in

consecration?" I fear that the answer is the absence of the power of the Holy Spirit.

Why is this? There can be no other reason but that the flesh and human energy have taken the place that the Holy Spirit ought to have. That was true of the Galatians, it was true of the Corinthians, and it is true today. You know Paul said to them that he could not speak to them as spiritual men. Paul told them that they should have been spiritual by then, but they were still carnal. *I, brothers, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ* (1 Corinthians 3:1). Paul had to reprove and condemn them for strife and for divisions.

Evidence of Working in the Flesh

What are the proofs or indications that a church like the Galatians, or a Christian who is serving God in the power of the flesh, is perfecting in the flesh what was begun in the Spirit? The answer is very easy. Religious self-effort always ends in sinful flesh. What was the state of those Galatians? Striving to be justified by the works of the law, they were quarrelling and in danger of devouring one another. Count up the expressions that the apostle used to indicate their lack of love, and you will find more than twelve: envy, jealousy, bitterness, strife, and all sorts of expressions. Read in the fourth and fifth chapters of Galatians what he said about that. You see how they tried to serve God in their own strength, and they failed utterly. All this religious effort resulted in failure; the power of sin and the sinful flesh got the better of them, and their whole condition was one of the saddest that could be imagined.

This comes to us with unspeakable seriousness. There is a complaint everywhere of the lack of a high standard of integrity and godliness among Christians, even among the professing members of Christian churches. I remember a sermon, which I heard preached by Dr. Dykes, about how people sometimes used a different version of morality and ethics in their business practices than in their personal lives, and he spoke of what was to be found in London. And oh, if we speak not only of this "business morality," or rather immorality, that is to be found in London, but if we go into the homes of Christians, we might see how different many are in their personal and private

and family lives than they appear to be in public. If we think of the life to which God has called His children and enables them to live by the Holy Spirit, and if we think of how much unlovingness and temper and sharpness and bitterness we see, and if we think of how much strife exists among the members of churches with envy and jealousy and sensitiveness and pride, then we are compelled to ask, “Where is the evidence of the presence of the Spirit of the Lamb of God?” Lacking. Sadly lacking!

Many people speak of these things as though this strife and division and pride were the natural result of our feebleness and cannot be helped. Many people speak of these things as sins yet have given up the hope of conquering them. Many people speak of these things in the church around them and do not see the least possibility of ever having these things changed.

There is no possibility until a radical change occurs, until the church of God begins to see that every sin in the believer comes from the flesh, from a fleshly life in the midst of our religious activities, from a striving in self-effort to serve God. Until we learn to acknowledge and confess these sins, and until we see that we must somehow or other get God’s Spirit in power in His church, we will fail. How did the church begin in Pentecost? They began in the Spirit. But, alas, how the church of the next century went off into the flesh! They tried to perfect the church in the flesh. So it is with us. We had true revivals and movements of the Spirit of God in the last century, yet now we try to grow in the flesh and do not even realize it.

Don’t think that because the blessed Reformation restored the great doctrine of justification by faith that the power of the Holy Spirit was then fully restored. [2] If we believe that God is going to have mercy on His church in these last ages, it will be because the doctrine and the truth about the Holy Spirit will not only be studied but will be sought after with a whole heart, because ministers and congregations will be found bowing before God in deep humility with one cry: “We have grieved God’s Spirit; we have tried to be Christian churches with as little as possible of God’s Spirit; we have not sought to be churches filled with the Holy Spirit.”

Did you hear that serious indictment that God’s servant preached earlier against the church of Christ, when he said that all the feebleness in the church is

due to the refusal of the church to obey its God? Isn't that an awful thing to say? The church redeemed by the blood of Christ, the church baptized by the Holy Spirit, refusing to obey God! And yet it is so.

And why is it so? I know your answer. You say, "We are too weak and too helpless, and we try to obey, and we promise that we will obey, but somehow we fail." Yes; you fail because you do not accept the strength of God. God alone can work out His will in you. You cannot work out God's will, but His Holy Spirit can; until the church, the believers, grasp this and cease trying by human effort to do God's will and wait upon the Holy Spirit to come with all His omnipotent and enabling power, the church will never be what God wants her to be – what God is willing to make of her. Sadly, many churches are content as they are, without God's power, working in the flesh and defending their work and boasting of it, never realizing that they are working in the flesh.

Back to the Spirit

I come now to the question, "What is the way to restoration?" How can we get back to the fullness of the love, truth, and power of God and His Spirit? Beloved friends, the answer is simple and easy. If that train has been shunted off, it can do nothing but come back to the point where it was led away. The Galatians had no other way to return but to come back to where they had gone wrong, back from all religious effort in their own strength and from seeking anything by their own work to yield themselves humbly to the Holy Spirit.

There is no other way for us as individuals. Is there any brother or sister reading this whose heart is aware of the lack of power? Can you say, "Alas! My life knows but little of the power of the Holy Spirit"? I come to you with God's message; you can have no comprehension of what your life would be in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is too high and too blessed and too wonderful. But just as truly as the everlasting Son of God came to this world and accomplished His wonderful works, just as truly as He died on Calvary and effected your redemption by His precious blood, so just as truly can the Holy Spirit come into your heart and sanctify you and enable you to do God's blessed will. He will fill your heart with joy and with strength by His divine power. But we have forgotten; we have grieved; we have dishonored the Holy Spirit, and He has not

been able to do His work.

Still, I bring you the message that the Father in heaven loves to fill His children with His Holy Spirit. God longs to give each one, individually and separately, the power of the Holy Spirit for your daily life. The command comes to us individually, yet unitedly. God wants us as His children to arise and place our sins before Him and call upon Him for mercy. *Are ye so foolish? having begun by the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?* (Galatians 3:3). Let us bow in shame and confess before God how our fleshly religion, our self-effort, and our self-confidence have been the cause of every failure.

I have often been asked by young Christians, “Why is it that I so often fail? I sincerely promised with my whole heart and did truly desire to serve God; why have I failed?”

To these sincere people I always give this one answer: “My dear friend, you are trying to do in your own strength what Christ alone can do in you.”

If they tell me, “I am sure that I knew Christ alone could do it; I was not trusting in myself.” My answer always is, “You were trusting in yourself or you could not have failed. If you had trusted Christ, He could not fail.” This perfecting in the flesh what was begun in the Spirit runs far deeper through us than we know. Let us ask God to clearly show us that it is only when we are brought to utter shame and emptiness that we will be prepared to receive the blessing that comes from on high.

Are You Living in His Power?

Now I come to you with these two questions: “Are you living, beloved brother, minister of the gospel, under the power of the Holy Spirit? Are you living as an anointed, Spirit-filled man in your ministry and in your life before God?” Our place is one of solemn responsibility. We have to show people what God will do for us, not in our words and teaching but in our lives. God help us to do it! Confess now your working in the flesh, even your preaching in your own power. Confess how you have tried and failed and tried and failed in the flesh.

I ask it of every member of Christ’s church and of every believer. Are you living a life under the power of the Holy Spirit day by day, or are you attempting to live without that? Remember, you cannot. Are you consecrated, given up to

the Spirit to work in you and to live in you? Come and confess every failure of temper, every failure of tongue, however small, every failure due to the absence of the Holy Spirit and the presence of the power of self. Confess the love of the world that remains in your heart. Are you consecrated, are you given up to the Holy Spirit?

If your answer is no, then I come with a second question: Are you willing to be consecrated? Are you willing to give yourself up to the power of the Holy Spirit? Are you willing to put away childish things, the games and joys of this world? You know very well, I hope, that the human side of consecration will not help you. I may consecrate myself a hundred times with all the intensity of my being, and that will not help me. What will help me is this – that God from heaven accepts and seals the consecration.

Are you now willing to give yourself up to the Holy Spirit? You can do it at once. A great deal may still be dark and dim and beyond what we understand, and you may feel nothing; but come. We want to go into God's presence today and still be there tomorrow and the next day and the next. We want to meet God Himself. Are you willing to go up to the mount and fall on your face and meet God, or will you stay below and sing and dance with the world and continue to work and try in the flesh? God alone can produce the change. God alone, who gave us the Holy Spirit, can restore the Holy Spirit in power into our lives. God alone can strengthen us *with might by his Spirit in the inner man* (Ephesians 3:16).

[1] Shunting is *the act or process of turning aside or moving to an alternate course. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Fifth Edition, 2016 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

[2] The Protestant Reformation was a movement of God in and around the sixteenth century when the people re-discovered the Word of God and the truth of God, especially in Europe, led by men such as Martin Luther, John Knox, John Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli.

Chapter 12

Kept

The words I wish to refer to now are found in 1 Peter 1, especially verse five.

> *Praised be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, the Christ, who according to his great mercy has begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus, the Christ, from the dead, unto the incorruptible inheritance that cannot be defiled and that does not fade away, conserved in the heavens for you, who are kept in the virtue of God by faith, to attain unto the saving health which is made ready to be manifested in the last time.* (1 Peter 1:3-5)

The words of my text are *kept in the virtue of God by faith,* which has also been translated as *kept by the power of God by faith*. This text contains two wonderful, blessed truths about the keeping of a believer unto salvation. One truth is *kept by the power of God,* and the other truth is *kept through faith.* We want to look at both sides. From God's side and His almighty power, He offered to be our keeper every moment of the day. From the human side, we have nothing to do but by faith let God do His keeping work. You are begotten again to an inheritance kept in heaven for you, and you are kept here on earth by the power of God. There is a double keeping: the inheritance kept for me in heaven, and me kept for the inheritance on earth.

God's Part

Now, as to the first part of this keeping, we have no doubt and no question. God keeps the inheritance in heaven wonderfully and perfectly, and it is safely waiting there. The same God keeps me for the inheritance. This is what we need to understand. We know it is foolish of a father to work hard to have an

inheritance for his children and to keep it for them, if he does not keep them for it. What would you think if a man spent all his time and made every sacrifice to accumulate money to leave to his children as an inheritance, but as his fortune grew, he neglected his children, did not educate them, let them run wild on the streets, and let them continue on the path of sin and ignorance?

What would you think of him? You would say, “Poor man! He is keeping an inheritance for his children, but he is not keeping or preparing his children for the inheritance.” Yet many Christians think that God is keeping the inheritance for them in heaven, but they cannot believe that God is keeping them for that inheritance. The same power, the same love, the same God is assuredly doing the double work.

I want to explain a work God does upon us – God is keeping us for the inheritance. We have two very simple truths: the one, the divine side that we are kept by the power of God; the other, the human side that we are kept through faith.

First, we will look at the divine side. We are *kept by the power of God.*

All-inclusive

Think, first of all, that this keeping is all-inclusive. What is kept? *You* are kept. How much of you? All of you. Does God keep one part of you and not another? No. Some people have an idea that this is a sort of vague, general keeping, and God will keep them in such a way that when they die, they will get to heaven. They do not apply that word *kept* to everything in their being and nature, and yet that is what God wants.

Suppose that I had borrowed a watch from a friend, and he had said to me, “When you go to Europe, I will let you take it with you but take care of it and keep it safe and bring it back.” Suppose I damaged the watch, and the hands got broken, and the face scratched, and some of the wheels and springs spoiled, and I took it back in that condition and handed it to my friend. He would say, “I gave you that watch on condition that you would care for it and maintain it.”

I would reply, “Have I not kept it? There is the watch.”

“But I did not want you to keep it in that general way, so that you should bring me back only the shell of the watch or the remains. I expected you to keep

every part of it and take care of it."

God does not want to keep us in this general way, so that at the last, somehow or other, we shall be saved as by fire and just barely get into heaven. The keeping power and the love of God applies to every part of our being.

There are some people who think God will keep them in spiritual things but not in earthly things. The earthly things, they say, lie outside of His line of work. Now, God sends you to work in the world, but He did not say, "I must now leave you to go and earn your own money and get your livelihood for yourself." He knows you are not able to keep yourself. Instead, God says, "My child, there is no work you are to do, no business in which you are to be engaged, and not a penny which you are to spend, but I, your Father, will take that up into My care and keeping." God not only cares for the spiritual but for the earthly things, also. The greater part of the life of many people must be spent, sometimes eight or ten or twelve hours a day, amid the temptations and distractions of business; but God will care for you there. The keeping of God includes all.

Other people think that in times of trial God keeps them, but in times of prosperity they do not need His keeping; in prosperity they forget Him and let Him go. Others think the very opposite. They think that in times of prosperity, when things are smooth and quiet, they are able to cling to God, but when heavy trials come, somehow or other their will rebels, and God does not keep them then.

I bring you the message that in prosperity as well as in adversity, in the sunshine as well as in the darkness, your God is ready to keep you all the time. Then again, others think that God will keep them from doing great wickedness, but they cannot expect God to keep them from small sins. There is the sin of losing your temper, for example. They think they cannot expect God to conquer that. When you hear of some man who has been tempted and gone astray or fallen into drunkenness or murder, you thank God for His keeping power. "I might have done the same as that man," you say, "if God had not kept me." You believe He kept you from drunkenness and murder. Why, then, don't you believe that God can keep you from outbreaks of temper? You thought that this was of less importance; you did not remember that the great commandment of the New Testament is *Love one another, as I have loved you* (John 13:34).

When your temper and hasty judgment and sharp words came out, you sinned against the highest law – the law of God's love. Yet you say that God will not and does not keep you from that. Maybe you believe that He is able to keep you from that, but you think there is something in you that does not allow you to have victory over these sins, which God does not take away.

I want to ask you an important question. Can believers live a holier life than is generally lived? Can believers experience the keeping power of God all day to keep them from sin? Can God keep believers in fellowship with Him? I bring you a message from the Word of God, in these words: *kept by the power of God.* There is no qualifying clause to them. This means that if you will entrust yourself entirely and absolutely to the omnipotence of God, He will delight to keep you. He will not let you go. He will not leave you to yourself.

Some people think they can never get to the point that every word of their mouth should be to the glory of God; but that is what God wants of them. It is what God expects of them. God is willing to set a watch at the door of their mouths (Psalm 141:3). If God will do that, can't He keep their tongues and their lips? He can, and that is what God is going to do for those who trust Him. God's keeping is all-inclusive, and everyone who longs to live a holy life needs to think of all their needs, all their weaknesses, all their shortcomings, and all their sins and ask, "Is there any sin that my God could not keep me from?" Your heart will have to answer, "No; God can keep me from every sin."

All-powerful

Secondly, if you want to understand this keeping, remember that it is not only an all-inclusive keeping, but it is an almighty keeping. I want that truth burned into my soul. I want to worship God until my whole heart is filled with the thought of His omnipotence. God is almighty, and the almighty God offers Himself to work in my heart, to do the work of keeping me. I want to get linked to the omnipotent One, the living God, and have my place in the hollow of His hand.

When you read the Psalms, you think of the wonderful thoughts in many of the expressions that David used. For example, he spoke about God being *our God, our fortress, our refuge, our strong tower, our strength,* and *our salvation.* David had wonderful views of how the everlasting God is Himself the hiding

place of the believing soul and of how He takes the believer and keeps him in the hollow of His hand, in the secret place of His pavilion, under the shadow of His wings, under His very feathers. That is where David lived. But we who are the children of Pentecost and have known Christ and His blood and the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, why is it we know so little of what it is to walk tremblingly step by step with the almighty God as our keeper?

Have you ever thought that in every action of grace in your heart you have the whole omnipotence of God engaged to bless you? When I come to a man and he hands me a gift of money, I take it and go away with it. He has given me something of his; the rest he keeps for himself. But that is not the way it is with the power of God. He cannot part with a portion of His own power. Therefore, I can experience the power and goodness of God only so far as I am in contact and fellowship with Him. When I have this relationship with Him, I come into contact and fellowship with the whole omnipotence of God, and I have the omnipotence of God to help me every day.

A son might have a rich father, and as the son is about to start a business, the father says, “You can have as much money as you need to start your business.” All the father has is at the disposal of the son. That is the way it is with our almighty God. You can hardly believe it. You are as a little worm. Is all of His omnipotence needed to keep a little worm? Yes, His omnipotence is needed to keep every little worm that lives in the dust and also keep the universe. Therefore, His omnipotence is much more needed in keeping your soul and mine from the power of sin.

If we want to grow in grace, we must learn to begin here; in all our beliefs and meditations and thoughts and deeds and questionings and studies and prayers, we must be kept by our almighty God. What is He not going to do for the child that trusts Him? The Bible says, *above all that we ask or think* (Ephesians 3:20). The all-powerful God is what we must know and trust; then we will live as a Christian ought to live. How little we have learned to study God and understand that a godly life is a life full of God – a life that loves God, waits on Him, trusts Him, and allows Him to bless it! We cannot do the will of God except by the power of God. God gives us the first experience of His power to prepare us to desire more and to come and claim all that He can do. May God

help us to trust Him every day.

All the Time

This keeping is not only all-inclusive and all-powerful, but it is also continuous and unbroken. People sometimes say, “For a week or a month God has kept me very wonderfully; I have lived in the light of His countenance, and I have had much joy in fellowship with Him. He has blessed me in my work for others. He has given me souls, and at times I felt as if I were carried heavenward on eagle wings. But it did not continue. It was too good; it could not last.” Some say, “It was necessary that I should fall to keep me humble.” Others say, “I know it was my own fault; but you cannot always live up in the heights.”

Oh beloved, why is this? Can there be any reason why the keeping of God should not be continuous and unbroken? Just think. All life is in unbroken continuity. If my life stopped for half an hour, I would be dead and my life would be gone. Life is a continuous thing. The life of God is the life of His church, and the life of God is His almighty power working in us. God comes to us as the almighty One, and without any condition He offers to be my keeper. His keeping means that day by day, moment by moment, God is going to keep us.

If I were to ask you if you think God is able to keep you one entire day from actual transgression, some of you would answer that not only is He able to do it, but He has done it. There have been days in which He has kept my heart in His holy presence, and though I have always had a sinful nature within me, He has kept me from conscious, actual transgression. Now, if He can do that for an hour or a day, why not for two days? Let’s make God’s omnipotence as revealed in His Word the measure of our expectations.

God has said in His Word, *I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment* (Isaiah 27:3). What can that mean? Does *every moment* mean *every moment*? Did God promise that *every moment* He would water that vineyard of red wine so the heat of the sun and the scorching wind might never dry it up? Yes. In South Africa they sometimes make a graft, and above it they tie a bottle of water. Now and then there shall be a drop to saturate what they have put about it. The moisture is kept there unceasingly until the graft has had time to begin to

set and grow and resist the heat of the sun. Will our God, in His tenderhearted love toward us, not keep us every moment when He has promised to do so? You ought to grasp and understand the thought that your whole religious life is to be God's doing. *It is God who works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure* (Philippians 2:13). When once we get faith to expect that from God, God will do all for us.

The keeping is to be continuous. Every morning, God will meet you as you wake. Do not ask, "If I forget to wake in the morning with the thought of Him, what will happen?" If you trust your waking to God, He will meet you in the morning with His divine sunshine and love as you wake, and He will give you the awareness that this day God will take charge of you continuously with His almighty power. God will meet you the next day, too, and every day. Never mind if you sometimes fail in the practice of fellowship. If you maintain your position and say, "Lord, I am going to expect You to do Your utmost, and I am going to trust You day by day to keep me absolutely," then your faith will grow stronger and stronger, and you will know the keeping power of God in unbrokenness.

Our Part

Now the other side: believing. Kept by the power of God *through faith.* How should we look at this faith?

Let me say, first of all, that this faith means utter weakness and helplessness before God. At the bottom of all faith is a feeling of helplessness. If I am buying a house, someone must do the work of getting the transfer of the property in my name and making all the legal arrangements. I cannot do that work myself, and in trusting that person, I acknowledge that I cannot do it. So faith always means helplessness.

In many cases, it means that I can do it with a great deal of trouble, but someone else can do it better; but in most cases it means utter helplessness. Someone else must do it for me. That is the secret of the spiritual life. A person must learn to say, "I give up everything. I have tried and thought and prayed, but failure has come. God has blessed me and helped me, but still, in the long run, there has been much sin and sadness." What a change comes when a person is then broken down into utter helplessness and self-despair and says, "I can do

nothing!”

Remember the apostle Paul. He was living a blessed life and he had been taken up into the third heaven, but then the thorn in the flesh came – *a messenger of Satan to buffet* him (2 Corinthians 12:7). Then what happened? Paul could not understand it, and he prayed to the Lord three times to take it away, but the Lord said, in effect, “No; it is possible that you might exalt yourself, and therefore I have sent this trial to you to keep you weak and humble.” Paul then learned a lesson that he never forgot, and that was to rejoice in his infirmities. He said that the weaker he was, the better it was for him, for when he was weak, he was strong in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you want to enter what people call “the higher life”? Then go a step lower down. I remember Dr. Boardman saying that he was once invited by a gentleman to go and see some works where they made fine quality shot, and I believe the workmen did so by pouring down molten lead from a great height. This gentleman wanted to take Dr. Boardman up to the top of the tower to see how the work was done. The doctor came to the tower, entered by the door, and started upstairs; but when he had gone a few steps, the gentleman called out, “That is the wrong way. You must come down this way; that stairway is locked up.”

The gentleman took him downstairs a good many steps to a lift ready to take him to the top. He said, “I learned a lesson that going down is often the best way to get up.” *The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low; and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day* (Isaiah 2:17). Yes, God will have to bring us very low; we will need a sense of emptiness and despair and nothingness. When we sink in utter helplessness, the everlasting God will reveal Himself in His power and our hearts will learn to trust God alone.

What is it that keeps us from trusting Him perfectly? Many might say, “I believe what you say, but there is one difficulty. If my trust were perfect and always there, all would be right, for I know God will honor trust. But how am I to get that trust?” My answer is: by the death of self. The great hindrance to trust is self-effort. As long as I have my own wisdom and thoughts and strength, I cannot fully trust God. When God breaks us down and everything grows dim

before our eyes and we see that we understand nothing, then God is coming near. If we will bow down in nothingness and wait upon God, He will become all.

As long as we are something, God cannot be everything, and His omnipotence cannot do its full work. The beginning of faith is utter despair of self, a ceasing from man and everything on earth and finding our hope in God alone.

Next, we must understand that faith is rest. In the beginning of the faith life, faith is struggling; but as long as faith is struggling, it has not attained its strength. When faith in its struggling gets to the end of itself and throws itself upon God and rests on Him, then joy and victory arrive.

Maybe I can make it plainer if I tell the story of how the Keswick Convention began. Canon Battersby was an evangelical clergyman in the Church of England for more than twenty years. He was a man of deep and tender godliness, but he did not have the consciousness of rest or victory over sin. He was often deeply sad at the thought of stumbling and failure and sin. When he heard about the possibility of victory, he desired it but thought he could not attain to it. On one occasion, he heard a sermon on "Rest and Faith" from the story of the nobleman who came from Capernaum to Cana to ask Jesus to heal his child (John 4:46-53). The nobleman believed that Christ could help him in a general way, but he came to Jesus almost as by way of an experiment. He hoped Jesus would help him, but he did not have any assurance of that help.

But what happened? When Christ said to him, *Go; thy son lives*, that man believed the word that Jesus spoke. He rested in that word. He had no proof that his child was well again, and he had to walk back a seven-hour journey to Capernaum. He walked back, and on the way he met his servant and learned that his child was well. His servant told him that at one o'clock in the afternoon of the previous day, at the very time that Jesus spoke to him, the fever left the child. That father rested upon the word of Jesus and His work, and he went down to Capernaum and found his child well. He praised God, and along with his whole house he became a believer and a disciple of Jesus. Friends, that is faith! When God comes to me with the promise of His keeping, and I have nothing on earth to trust in, I say to God, "Your word is enough." I am kept by the power of God. That is faith, and that is rest.

When Canon Battersby heard that sermon, he went home that night and in the darkness of the night found rest. He rested on the word of Jesus. The next morning, in the streets of Oxford, he said to a friend, “I have found it!” Then he went and told others and asked that the Keswick Convention might be started. Those who were at the convention with him could testify what God had done.

It is a great thing when a person learns to rest on God’s almighty power for every moment of his life in the likelihood of temptations to temper and haste and anger and unlovingness and pride and sin. It is a great thing to enter into a covenant with the omnipotent Yahweh, not on account of anything that any man says or of anything that one’s heart feels but on the strength of the Word of God: *kept by the power of God through faith*. Let us say to God that we are going to prove Him to the very uttermost. Let us say, “We ask You for nothing more than You can give, but we want nothing less.” Let us say, “My God, let my life be proof of what You can do.” Let these be the two characteristics of our souls every day – deep helplessness and simple, childlike rest.

Fellowship with God

That brings me to just one more thought regarding faith. Faith implies fellowship with God. Many people want to take the Word and believe it, and they find they cannot believe it. You cannot separate God from His Word. No goodness or power can be received apart from God, and if you want to get into this life of godliness, you must take time for fellowship with God.

People sometimes tell me, “My life is one of such hurry and bustle that I have no time for fellowship with God.” A dear missionary said to me, “People do not know how we missionaries are tempted. I get up at five o’clock in the morning, and there are the natives waiting for their instructions for work. Then I have to go to school and spend many hours there. Then there is other work, and sixteen hours rush along, and I hardly get time to be alone with God.”

Yes. That is the problem. We need to be alone with God. I have not told you to trust the omnipotence of God as a thing, and I have not told you to trust the Word of God as a written book, but I have told you to go to the God of omnipotence and the God of the Word. Deal with God as that nobleman dealt with the living Christ. Why was he able to believe the word that Christ spoke to

him? Because in the very eyes and tone and voice of Jesus, the Son of God, he saw and heard something that made him feel that he could trust Him. That is what Christ can do for you and me.

Do not try to stir and arouse faith from within. I have often tried to do that, and I made a fool of myself! You cannot stir up faith from the depths of your heart. Leave your heart, look into the face of Christ, and listen to what He tells you about how He will keep you. Look up into the face of your loving Father. Take time every day with Him and begin a new life with the deep emptiness and poverty of a man who has nothing but waits to get everything from Him. Wait upon God with the deep restfulness of a man who rests on the living God, the omnipotent Yahweh. Take God at His word and prove Him. See if He will not open the windows of heaven and pour out such a blessing that there will not be room to receive it. *Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, and there shall be food in my house, and prove me now in this, said the LORD of the hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it* (Malachi 3:10).

Who is willing to fully experience the heavenly keeping for the heavenly inheritance? Robert Murray McCheyne often prayed, “Lord, make me as holy as a pardoned sinner can be made!”[1] May every heart earnestly pray that same prayer! Let us enter anew into a covenant with the everlasting and omnipotent God, and in great helplessness but great restfulness, place ourselves in His hands. Then as we enter into our covenant, let us go away with the prayer that we may believe fully that the everlasting God is going to be our companion, holding our hand every moment of the day. He will be our keeper, watching over us without a moment’s interval. He will be our Father, delighting to reveal Himself in our souls always.

God has the power to let the sunshine of His love be with us all day. Do not be afraid that because you have your business you cannot have God always with you. The natural sun shines upon you all day, and you enjoy its light. Wherever you are, you have the sun; God takes care that it shines upon you. God will take care that His own divine light shines upon you, and that you shall abide in that light, if you will only trust Him for it. With a great and entire trust, let us trust God to do that.

Here is the omnipotence of God, and here is faith reaching out to the fullness of that omnipotence. Will you trust God for all that His omnipotence can do? Aren't the two sides of this heavenly life wonderful? God's omnipotence covers me, and my will in its littleness rests and rejoices in that omnipotence! How wonderful to live out the words of Daniel Whittle's hymn:

Moment by moment I'm kept in His love,
Moment by moment I've life from above;
Looking to Jesus till glory doth shine;
Moment by moment, O Lord, I am Thine.

[1] Robert Murray McCheyne (1813-1843) was a Scottish pastor and missionary known for holiness and prayer. He developed a reading plan to read through the Bible in one year.

Chapter 13

The Vine and the Branches

The one thought that is in my heart is that everything depends on us being right in Christ. If I want good apples, I must have a good apple tree; and if I care for the health of the apple tree, it will give me apples. It is the same with our Christian work. If our life with Christ is right, all will be right. There may be need for instruction and suggestion and help and training in the different departments of the work, which all have value. But in the long run, the greatest essential is to have the full life in Christ. In other words, we need to have Christ in us, working through us.

Consider the parable of the vine and the branches. *I AM the vine, ye are the branches* (John 15:5). Focus especially on the words, *ye are the branches.*

What a simple thing it is to be a branch, whether the branch of a tree or the branch of a vine. The branch grows out of the vine or out of the tree and lives and grows and, in due time, bears fruit. It has no responsibility except simply to receive sap and nourishment from the root and stem. If we only by the Holy Spirit understood our relationship to Jesus Christ, our work would be changed into the brightest and most heavenly thing upon earth. Instead of soul-weariness or exhaustion, our work would be like a new experience, linking us to Jesus as nothing else can. When Christian workers feel burned-out and too busy, it may be that they have not yet learned to abide in the vine.

Sadly, is it not often true that our work comes between us and Jesus? What foolishness! The very work that He has to do in me, and I for Him, I do in such a way that it separates me from Christ. Many laborers in God’s vineyard have complained that they have too much work and not enough time for close communion with Jesus. Many Christian leaders complain that their “ministry” work weakens their inclination for prayer, and that too much interaction with

people darkens their spiritual lives. So, like Martha, they choose to minister and work and do not often sit at the feet of Jesus and hear His word (Luke 10:38-42). It is a sad thought that the bearing of fruit should separate the branch from the vine! That must be because we have looked upon our work as something other than the branch bearing fruit. May God deliver us from every false thought about the Christian life.

Now, just a few thoughts about this blessed branch-life.

Absolute Dependence

In the first place, this branch-life is a life of absolute dependence. The branch has nothing; it simply depends upon the vine for everything. Those words *absolute dependence* are some of the most solemn and precious words ever used. A great German theologian[1] wrote two large volumes some years ago to show that all of John Calvin's[2] theology can be summed up in that one principle of absolute dependence upon God, and he was right. Another great writer has said that absolute, unalterable dependence upon God alone is the essence of the religion of angels, and should be that of men also.[3] God is everything to the angels, and He is willing to be everything to the Christian. If I can learn to depend upon God every moment of the day, everything will come out right. We will get the higher life if we depend absolutely upon God.

This is the lesson from the vine and the branches. Let every vine you ever see and every bunch of grapes that comes upon your table remind you that the branch is absolutely dependent on the vine. The vine must do the work, and the branch enjoys the fruit of it.

What must the vine do? It has to do a great work: It must send its roots out into the soil and hunt under the ground. The roots often extend a long way out for nourishment and to drink in the moisture. Put certain elements of manure in certain directions, and the vine sends its roots there too. Then in its roots or stems it turns the moisture and manure into that special sap that is used to produce the fruit. The vine does the work, and the branch simply receives the sap from the vine, which is changed into grapes.

At Hampton Court is a vine that sometimes bears a couple thousand bunches of grapes, and people are astonished at its large growth and rich fruitage. It was

then discovered what the cause of it was. Not so very far away runs the Thames River, and the vine had stretched its roots hundreds of yards under the ground to the riverside. There, in all the rich soil of the riverbed, it had found rich nourishment and obtained moisture, and the roots had drawn the sap all that distance up and up into the vine, resulting in the abundant and rich harvest. The vine had the work to do, and the branches just had to depend upon the vine and receive what it gave.

Is that literally true of my Lord Jesus? Is it true that when I have work to do, when I have to preach a sermon or address a Bible class or visit the poor neglected ones, all the responsibility of the work is on Christ? That is exactly what Christ wants us to understand. In all our work, Jesus wants the very foundation to be the simple, blessed understanding and awareness that Christ must care for everything.

How does He fulfil the trust of that dependence? He does it by sending down the Holy Spirit – not just occasionally as a special gift, because the relation between the vine and the branches is such that hourly, daily, and unceasingly, the living connection is maintained. The sap does not flow for a short time and then stop and then flow again; but from moment to moment, the sap flows from the vine to the branches.

Just so, my Lord Jesus wants me to take that blessed position as a worker, and morning by morning and day by day and hour by hour and step by step, in every work I have to do, simply to abide before Him in the simple utter helplessness of one who knows nothing, and is nothing, and can do nothing. Oh, beloved workers, study that word *nothing.* You sometimes sing that song written by Georgiana Taylor, “Oh to Be Nothing,” but have you really studied that word, and prayed every day, and worshipped God in the light of it? Do you know the blessedness of that word *nothing?*

Oh, to be nothing, nothing,
Only to lie at His feet,
A broken and emptied vessel,
For the Master’s use made meet.
Emptied that He might fill me,

As forth to His service I go;
Broken, that so unhindered
His life through me might flow.

Refrain:
Oh, to be nothing, nothing,
Only to lie at His feet,
A broken and emptied vessel,
For the Master's use made meet.

Oh, to be nothing, nothing,
Only as led by His hand;
A messenger at His gateway,
Only waiting for His command;
Only an instrument ready
His praises to sound at His will,
Willing, should He not require me,
In silence to wait on Him still.

Oh, to be nothing, nothing,
Painful the humbling may be,
Yet low in the dust I'd lay me
That the world might my Savior see.
Rather be nothing, nothing,
To Him let all voices be raised:
He is the Fountain of blessing,
He only is meet to be praised.

If I am something, then God is not everything; but when I become nothing, God can become all, and the everlasting God in Christ can reveal himself fully. That is the higher life. We need to become nothing. Someone has well said that the seraphim and cherubim are flames of fire, because they know they are nothing, and they allow God to put His fullness and His glory and brightness into them. They are nothing, and God is all in them and around them. Oh, become nothing in deep reality, and as a worker, study only one thing – to become poorer and

lower and more helpless, that Christ may work all in you.

Workers, here is your most important lesson: learn to be nothing; learn to be helpless. The person who has got something is not absolutely dependent, but the one who has got nothing is absolutely dependent. Absolute dependence upon God is the secret of all power in work. The branch has nothing but what it gets from the vine, and you and I can have nothing but what we get from Jesus.

Deep Restfulness

The life of the branch is not only a life of entire dependence, but it is a life of deep restfulness. Oh, that little branch, if it could think, and if it could feel, and if it could speak – that branch on the Hampton Court vine, or on some of the million vines that we have in South Africa in our sunny land – if we could have a little branch here today to talk to us, and if we could say, "Come, branch of the vine, tell me. I want to learn from you how I can be a true branch of the living Vine," what would it answer?

The little branch would whisper, "Man, I hear that you are wise, and I know that you can do a great many wonderful things. I know you have much strength and wisdom given to you, but I have one lesson for you. With all your hurry and effort in Christ's work, you never prosper. The first thing you need is to come and rest in your Lord Jesus. That is what I do. I have spent years and years growing out of that vine, and all I have done is rest in the vine. When the time of spring came, I had no anxious thought or care. The vine began to pour its sap into me and give the bud and leaf. And when the time of summer came, I had no care, and in the great heat I trusted the vine to bring moisture to keep me fresh. In the time of harvest, when the owner came to pluck the grapes, I had no concern. If there was anything in the grapes not good, the owner never blamed the branch; the blame was always on the vine. If you would be a true branch of Christ, the living Vine, just rest on Him. Let Christ bear the responsibility."

You might ask, "Won't that make me lazy?" I tell you it will not. No one who learns to rest upon the living Christ can become lazy, for the closer your contact with Christ, the more of the Spirit of His zeal and love will be impressed upon you and in you. You cannot rightly work fully for Christ Jesus unless you work in entire dependence upon Him and with deep restfulness in Him. A man

sometimes tries and tries to be dependent upon Christ, but he worries himself about this absolute dependence; he tries and he cannot get it. Let him instead sink into entire restfulness every day.

May we pray the words of Eliza Hamilton in the hymn, “My Savior, Thou Hast Offered Rest.”

My Savior, Thou hast offered rest:
Oh, give it then, to me;
The rest of ceasing from myself,
To find my all in Thee.

Refrain:
Resting, I am resting,
I Thyself would prove;
Resting, I am resting,
Feasting on Thy love.

This cruel self oh, how it strives
And works within my breast,
To come between Thee and my soul,
And keep me back from rest.

Now many subtle forms it takes
Of seeming verity,
As if it were not safe to rest
And venture all on Thee.

O Lord, I seek a holy rest,
A vict’ry over sin!
I seek that Thou alone shouldst reign,
O’er all without, within.

In Thy strong hand I lay me down,
So shall the work be done,
For who can work so wondrously
As the Almighty One?

Work on, then, Lord, till on my soul
  Eternal light shall break,
And, in Thy likeness perfected,
  I “satisfied” shall wake.

Worker, take your place every day at the feet of Jesus in the blessed peace and rest that come from the knowledge that:

I have no care; my cares are His.
I have no fear; He cares for all my fears.

Come, children of God, and understand that it is the Lord Jesus who wants to work through you. You complain of your lack of fervent love. It will come from Jesus. He will put the divine love into your heart with which you can love people. That is the meaning of the assurance, *the love of God is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit* (Romans 5:5); and that *the charity* [love] *of the Christ constrains us* (2 Corinthians 5:14). Christ can give you a fountain of love, so that you cannot help loving the most wretched and the most ungrateful people or those whom you did not love in the past.

Rest in Christ, who can give wisdom and strength; that restfulness will often prove to be the very best part of your message. You plead with people, and you argue, and they get the idea that there is someone arguing and striving with them. But if you will let the deep rest of God come over you, the rest in Christ Jesus, the peace and rest and holiness of heaven, that restfulness will bring a blessing to the heart even more than the words you speak.

Much Fruit

The branch teaches a lesson of much fruitfulness. You know that the Lord Jesus repeated that word *fruit* often in that parable. He spoke first of *fruit,* and then of *more fruit,* and then of *much fruit.* Yes, you are ordained not only to bear fruit, but to bear much fruit. *In this is my Father clarified* [glorified], *in that ye bear much fruit* (John 15:8). In the first place, Christ said, *I AM the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman* (John 15:1). Jesus said, “My Father is the husbandman who has charge of Me and you.” He who will watch over the connection between Christ and the branches is God, and in the power of God

through Christ we are to bear fruit.

Oh, Christians, you know that this country is perishing for the lack of godly workers. Not only do we need more workers for Christ, but the current workers are saying, some more earnestly than others, “Not only do we need more workers, but our workers need a new power and a different life, so that we workers should be able to bring more blessing.”

Children of God, I earnestly appeal to you all. You know what trouble you take, for example, in a case of sickness. If you have a beloved friend apparently in danger of death, and nothing can restore that friend as much as a few grapes, but the grapes are out of season; what trouble you would go through to get the grapes for the nourishment of this dying friend! And oh, there are millions of people around you in the big cities who never go to a church, and many who go to church but do not know Christ. Yet the heavenly grapes, the grapes of Eschol, the grapes of the heavenly vine, are not to be had at any price, except as the children of God bear them out of their inner lives in fellowship with Christ.[4] Except the children of God are filled with the sap of the heavenly vine, except they are filled with the Holy Spirit and the love of Jesus, they cannot bear much of the real heavenly grape. We all confess that there is a great deal of work, a great deal of preaching and teaching and visiting, a great deal of machinery, a great deal of earnest effort of every kind; but there is not much manifestation of the power of God in it.

What is lacking? There is lacking the close connection between the worker and the heavenly vine. Christ, the heavenly vine, has blessings that He could pour on tens of thousands in any city who are perishing. Christ, the heavenly vine, has power to provide the heavenly grapes. But *ye are the branches*, and you cannot bear heavenly fruit unless you are in close connection with Jesus Christ.

Do not confuse work and fruit. There may be a good deal of work for Christ that is not the fruit of the heavenly vine. Do not seek just to work. Study this matter of fruit-bearing. It means the very life and the very power and the very Spirit and the very love within the heart of the Son of God. It means the heavenly vine Himself coming into your heart and mine.

You know there are different types of grapes. In England and in France and in

America and away at the Cape are many kinds, each with a different name. Every vine provides exactly that peculiar aroma and juice, which gives the grape its particular flavor and taste. Just so, in the heart of Christ Jesus is a life, a love, a Spirit, a blessing, and a power for people who are entirely heavenly and divine and will come down into our hearts.

Stand in close connection with the heavenly vine and say, “Lord Jesus, nothing less than the sap that flows through You, nothing less than the Spirit of Your divine life is what we ask. Lord Jesus, I pray that You will let Your Spirit flow through me in all my work for You.” I tell you again that the sap of the heavenly vine is nothing but the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the life of the heavenly vine, and what you must get from Christ is nothing less than a strong inflow of the Holy Spirit. You need it exceedingly, and you need nothing more than that. Remember that.

Do not expect Christ to give a bit of strength here and a bit of blessing there and a bit of help over there. As the vine does its work in giving its own peculiar sap to the branch, so expect Christ to give His own Holy Spirit into your heart, and then you will bear much fruit. If you have only begun to bear fruit and you are listening to the word of Christ in the parable, remember that in order to bear more fruit, you need more of Jesus in your life and heart.

We ministers of the gospel are in danger of getting into a condition of work, work, work! We pray over it, but the freshness and cheerfulness and joy of the heavenly life are not always present. Let us seek today to understand that the life of the branch is a life of much fruit, because it is a life rooted in Christ, the living, heavenly vine.

Close Communion

The life of the branch is also a life of close communion. Let us again ask what the branch has to do. You know that precious inexhaustible word that Christ used: *abide.* Your life is to be an abiding life. How is the abiding to be? It is to be like the branch in the vine, abiding every minute of the day. There are the branches in close unbroken communion with the vine from January to December. Can’t I live every day – an almost terrible thing that we should even have to ask the question – can’t I live every day in abiding communion with the

heavenly vine?

You say, “But I am so busy with other things.” You may have ten hours of hard work daily, during which your brain has to be occupied with temporal things; God orders it so. The abiding work, though, is the work of the heart, not of the brain. That which lasts is the work of the heart clinging to and resting in Jesus, a work in which the Holy Spirit links us to Christ Jesus. Believe that deeper down than the brain, deep down in the inner life, you can abide in Christ, so that every moment you are free in Jesus and can say, “Blessed Jesus, I am still in You.” If you will learn for a time to put aside other work and to get into this abiding contact with the heavenly vine, you will find that fruit will come.

What is the application to our lives with regard to this abiding communion? What does it mean? It means close fellowship with Christ in secret prayer. I am sure there are Christians who really do long for the higher life and who sometimes get a great blessing. They have at times found a great inflow of heavenly joy and a great outflow of heavenly gladness; yet after a time, it has passed away. They have not understood that close, personal, actual communion with Christ is an absolute necessity for daily life. Take time to be alone with Christ. Nothing in heaven or earth can free you from the necessity for that, if you are to be happy and holy Christians.

Oh, how many Christians look upon it as a burden and a tax, a duty and a difficulty, to get alone with God! That is the great hindrance to our Christian lives everywhere. We need more quiet fellowship with God, and I tell you in the name of the heavenly vine that you cannot be healthy branches, branches into which the heavenly sap can flow, unless you take plenty of time for communion with God. If you are not willing to sacrifice time to get alone with Him and to give Him time every day to work in you and to maintain the link of connection between you and Him, He cannot give you that blessing of His unbroken fellowship. Jesus Christ asks you to live in close communion with Him. Let every heart say, “O Christ, it is this I long for; it is this I choose.” He will gladly give it to you.

Absolute Surrender

The life of the branch is a life of absolute surrender. These words, *absolute*

surrender, are great and solemn words, and I believe we do not understand their meaning. Yet the little branch preaches it. “Have you anything to do, little branch, besides bearing grapes?”

“No, nothing.”

“Are you suitable for nothing?” Suitable for nothing! The Bible says that a bit of vine cannot even be used as a pen; it is suitable for nothing but to be burned. *He who does not abide in me shall be cast forth as an unsound branch and shall wither, and they are gathered and cast into the fire and are burned* (John 15:6).

“And now, what do you understand, little branch, about your relation to the vine?”

“My relation is just this: I am utterly given up to the vine, and the vine can give me as much or as little sap as it chooses. Here I am at its disposal, and the vine can do with me what it likes.”

Oh, friends, we lack this entire surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ. The more I speak, the more I feel that one of the most important and necessary points to make clear and explain is this entire surrender. It is often an easy thing for people to come out and offer themselves up to God for entire consecration and to say, “Lord, it is my desire to give myself entirely to You.” That is of great value and often brings rich blessing; but the one question you ought to study quietly is “What is meant by entire surrender?”

It means that just as literally as Christ was given up entirely to God, I am given up entirely to Christ. Is that too strong? Some of you think so. Some think that it can never be that just as entirely and absolutely as Christ gave up His life to do nothing but seek the Father’s pleasure and depend on the Father absolutely and entirely, I am to do nothing but to seek the pleasure of Christ; but that is actually true. Christ Jesus came to breathe His own Spirit into us, to make us find our highest happiness in living entirely for God, just as He did. Beloved brethren, if that is the case, then I ought to say, “Yes, as true as it is of that little branch of the vine, so true, by God’s grace, I would have it be true of me. I would live day by day so that Christ may be able to do with me what He wants.”

Now here comes the terrible mistake that lies at the bottom of much of our own Christianity. A man thinks, “I have my business and family duties and my responsibilities as a citizen, and I cannot change this. And now in addition to all

this, I am to take in religion and the service of God, as something that will keep me from sin. God help me to perform my duties properly!" That is not right. When Christ came, He came and bought the sinner with His blood. We should live as having no will and no interests of our own; our care should be to promote the well-being and honor of our master. I, who have been bought with the blood of Christ, have been bought to live every day with the one thought: How can I please my master?

We find the Christian life difficult, because we seek for God's blessing, while we live in our own will. We would be glad to live the Christian life according to our own liking. We make our own plans and choose our own work, and then we ask the Lord Jesus to come in and take care that sin does not conquer us too much and that we do not go too far wrong. We ask Him to come in and give us His blessing, but our relationship to Jesus ought to be such that we are entirely at His disposal and every day come to Him humbly and straightforwardly and say, "Lord, is there anything in me that is not according to Your will, that has not been ordered by You, or that is not entirely given up to You?"

If we would wait and wait patiently, the result would be a relationship between us and Christ so close and so tender that we would afterwards be amazed at how we ever could have lived with the idea that we had been surrendered to Christ before. We would feel how far distant our relationship with Him had previously been, and that He can and does indeed come and take actual possession of us and give us unbroken fellowship all the day. The branch calls us to entire surrender.

I do not speak so much about the giving up of sins. It may be that there are people who need that, people who have violent tempers, bad habits, and actual sins, which they from time to time commit and have never given up into the bosom of the Lamb of God. I pray if you are branches of the living Vine, do not keep one sin back. I know there are a great many difficulties about this question of holiness. I know that all do not think exactly the same with regard to it. That would be to me a matter of comparative indifference, if I could see that all are honestly longing to be free from every sin, but I am afraid that unconsciously many hearts compromise with the idea that they cannot be without sin, that they must sin a little every day, and that they cannot help it. Oh, that people would

actually cry out to God, “Lord, keep me from sin!” Give yourself utterly to Jesus, and ask Him to do His utmost for you in keeping you from sin.

There is a great deal in our work, in our church, and in our surroundings that we found in the world when we were born into it. It has grown all around us, and we think that it is all right and cannot be changed, but we do not come to the Lord Jesus and ask Him about it. I advise you, Christians, bring everything into relationship with Jesus and say, “Lord, everything in my life has to be in complete harmony with my position as a branch of Your blessed vine.” Let your surrender to Christ be entire.

I do not understand that word *surrender* fully; it gets new meanings every now and then; it enlarges immensely from time to time. But I advise you to speak it out: “Absolute surrender to You, O Christ, is what I have chosen.” Jesus will show you what is not according to His mind, and He will lead you on to deeper and higher blessedness.

In conclusion, let me gather it all up at once. Christ Jesus said, *I AM the vine, ye are the branches* (John 15:5). In other words, “I, the living one who has so completely given Myself to you, am the vine. You cannot trust Me too much. I am the almighty worker, full of divine life and power.” Christians, you are the branches of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you realize that you are not a strong, healthy, fruit-bearing branch, that you are not closely linked with Jesus, that you are not living in Him as you should be, then listen to Him saying, “I am the vine. I will receive you. I will draw you to Myself. I will bless you. I will strengthen you. I will fill you with My Spirit. I, the vine, have taken you to be My branches. I have given Myself utterly to you; children, give yourselves utterly to Me. I have surrendered Myself as God absolutely to you. I became man and died for you that I might be entirely yours. Come and surrender yourselves entirely to be Mine.”

What will your answer be? Oh, let it be a prayer from the depths of your heart that the living Christ may take you and link you close to Himself. Let your prayer be that He, the living vine, shall so link you to Himself that you will go away with your heart singing, “He is my vine, and I am His branch. I want nothing more; now I have the everlasting vine.”

Then, when you get alone with Him, worship and adore Him, praise and trust

Him, love Him and wait for His love. “You are my vine, and I am Your branch. It is enough; my soul is satisfied.” Glory to His blessed name!

[1] The theologian and his two-volume work likely refer to Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and his two-volume *The Christian Faith*.

[2] John Calvin (1509-1564) was a French theologian and pastor and was one of the leading men of the Protestant Reformation. He spent much of the second half of his life ministering in Geneva, Switzerland.

[3] The great writer referred to may be William Law (1686-1761), who, in the year that he died, wrote *An Humble, Earnest, and Affectionate Address to the Clergy*, in which he wrote, “Now the one relation, which is the ground of all true religion and is one and the same between God and all intelligent creatures, is this, it is a total unalterable dependence upon God, an immediate continual receiving of every kind, and degree of goodness, blessing and happiness, that ever was, or can be found in them, from God alone. The highest angel has nothing of its own that it can offer unto God, no more light, love, purity, perfection, and glorious hallelujahs, that spring from itself, or its own powers, than the poorest creature upon earth.”

[4] Eshcol was the name of the brook and the valley where the twelve spies cut the grapes to take back to Moses as in Numbers 13:23-24.

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About the Author



Andrew Murray (1828-1917) was a well-known South African writer, teacher, and pastor. More than two million copies of his books have been sold, and his name is mentioned among other great leaders of the past, such as Charles Spurgeon, T. Austin-Sparks, George Muller, D. L. Moody, and more.

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We taste Thee, O Thou Living Bread,
And long to feast upon Thee still:
We drink of Thee, the Fountainhead
And thirst our souls from Thee to fill.

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