

Communion with God

With which is incorporated

Change Your Attitude

And other Articles

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Chapter 1

COMMUNION WITH GOD

How to maintain unbroken communion with God is the great question in many hearts, for the new spiritual life given to us when we receive the Lord Jesus (John 1:12), can only be sustained by constant fellowship with God Who is its source, just as in the physical realm we need to breathe again, and again, and yet again, to continue to live.

There is much that the babe has to learn as it grows; but one thing above all others it must do—it must breathe! So with the Lord's little ones, they have much to learn, and He has much to do in training them, but—above all things, they, too, must breathe: breathe in new life day by day in communion with Him. They must, therefore, learn how to abide in this living union and communication with Him, and He will lead them on in other matters gently as they are able to endure.

The word "Communion"

The dictionary gives the meaning of the word communion as "converse, interchange of thought", and describes "communion" as the act of "consulting, conversing, or talking with another". This is what communion with God truly means—a ceaseless "consulting" with Him; a blessed converse over all the problems and difficulties that must come to us in our pilgrimage through this present evil world.

The prophet Amos writes: "Shall two walk together except they have agreed?" (margin—made an appointment)—Amos 3:3.

God makes an appointment to meet the sinner at the Cross of Calvary, and converse must begin there. By nature we are at enmity with God, but God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and peace was made by the blood of the Cross of Jesus (Colossians 1:20). Thus all is clear on God's side, and He issues an appeal to His enemies, and makes an appointment to meet them at Calvary—the place of reconciliation.

The Place called "Calvary"

It is there—in full sight of that wondrous sacrifice of the Son of God—(Hebrews 9:26)—that He brings us into agreement with Himself. At first we are shown our sins nailed to the tree with His Son (1 Peter 2:24), but salvation includes much more than this. We should be spared years of struggle and failure if we learned at once—as the converts did in the days of Paul the Apostle—that we ourselves were put to death in the death of Christ. The past blotted out, the pardoned sinner accounted crucified with the crucified Lord, henceforth joined to Him, and sharing His life. This is salvation indeed! "Saved by sharing in His life" (Romans 5:10, Conybeare).

The Surrendered Will

For this glorious salvation to be realized in all its depth of meaning, it is necessary that we yield wholly unto God (Romans 6: 13). How can we be set free from the bondage of self and sin, if we hold back anything for self? How can the Lord Jesus dwell in us, and manifest His own life through us, if we will not entirely give Him the throne?

Our will is all that we really have to give our Beloved Lord. He does all the work, if we will but let Him have absolute right of way. We can neither save nor deliver ourselves from our sins, nor from self in any form. He has redeemed us upon the Cross of Calvary, and He will do the work in us, if we give Him entire control. He simply asks us decisively to take sides with Him against all in us and in our lives, from which He must set us free (see 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

In short, we must give ourselves irrevocably into His hands, for Him to make of us what He pleases; by His grace resolved to say, "Yes, Lord," to every indication of His will.

The Indwelling Spirit of Christ

As we yield to Him our whole being, the Holy Spirit takes possession, cleanses the heart from its old desires (Acts 15:9), and reveals the living Christ as the Indweller of the surrendered one, dwelling in the Spirit of the redeemed child of God by His Spirit, so that He can henceforth count upon "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus" (Philippians 1:19) for all he needs.

The walk in happy converse has begun. The Father Himself loveth us, because we have loved His Son (John 16:27), and He communes with His child, whispering: "I will dwell in them and walk in them" (2 Corinthians 6:16).

The most important point in this blessed walk with Jesus is that there should be no "gaps in the communion".

After the first "agreement" with God there is much to learn, and we must not be discouraged or faint-hearted if we do not understand all at once how to walk with Him faithfully.

Conditions of Communion

Let us see some of the conditions of maintained communion.

I. *We must take care to give the Lord the very first moments of the day for consultation over our lives.*

The Lord needs time to breathe His life into us, and to talk with us of His purposes for us as revealed in His Word. Let the first half-hour of the day, or hour if this can be obtained, be one of real heart fellowship.

Let us enter into His presence, and sit at our Father's footstool as little children, drawing nigh to Him with true hearts in full assurance of faith; for we may count upon immediate access through the precious blood of Jesus (see Hebrews 10:19-20), having "boldness to enter into the holiest" through Him.

Having entered the Father's presence by faith, open the Written Word, and ask your Father to speak to you through it. Turn to your portion for the day and read it, not so much to study it, as to listen to what God the Lord shall speak to you through it.

Talk to your Father about it, ask Him to unveil what its meaning is, what warning it has for you. What rebuke? What command? What comfort? As you read His letter, respond to Him by telling Him you will obey as far as you know how; you will trust Him to watch over you; to guard you in the day that is beginning. Then pour out your heart's longing before Him, your deep desire to know Him better, and to be His obedient child.

II. *We must feed upon the heavenly food provided for us in the Word of God (Matthew 4:4).*

There is a vast difference between spiritually feeding upon the Word of God (Jeremiah 15:16), and studying it with our intellect. Many spend all their time in seeking to understand all the "things hard to be understood" (2 Peter 3:16), or in feeding their curious minds with all the problems they can find, so that their souls are actually starved in the midst of plenty. In the morning hour we must learn to take our spiritual breakfast (Job 23:12).

Remember the Holy Spirit is the Author of the Book, so before you read, recognize the Presence of the Author, speak to Him, and ask Him to open your eyes to see wondrous things in His law.

We may think of the Bible as a storehouse of food laid up for the child of God during the whole of his pilgrimage on earth, and we may know the portion that God has provided for our morning meal by the passages that are clear and simple to us; for the Holy Spirit distributes to each one according to his need and capacity. Let us be as little children, and take the "food convenient for us". As we come to the "hard sayings", let them alone, for they may belong to the "solid food" (Hebrews 5: 14) provided for our needs years hence, when we are "full grown" children of God.

Let us look for God in His Word, rather than for knowledge about Him, and He will reveal Himself to us more and more. He will teach us how to study His Word, so as to gain accurate knowledge of it, but, in the main, what is really ours is only what we are able to assimilate, and live upon in daily life.

III. *We must learn to live moment by moment.*

As we have already seen, communion with God is very much like breathing, it can only be maintained just one moment at a time. We must refuse to look back, or to look forward, however much the enemy may tempt us to do so. Vain regrets over the past, and vague fears for the future will harass our minds enough to break our fellowship with God.

The mind cannot be occupied with two matters at one time, so that we need to trust our Lord to keep us abiding, even unconsciously, whilst we give our attention fully to our duty in "doing the next thing" (Colossians 3:23).

But supposing we know we have made mistakes, ought we not to put them right?

"Communing" means consulting with the Lord. Do this at once! Take all the actual, and even apparent "mistakes" at once to Him. As you spread your cause before Him, ask Him to show you anything He wishes you to do, any step He would have you retrace.

If He shows you something concerning another where you have done wrong, His Word is clear, "Confess your faults one to the other" (James 5:16, A.V. See also Matthew 5:23; Matthew 18:15).

This is necessary always for unbroken communion! A conscience void of offence toward man as well as God (Acts 24:16). If no special light is given, leave the whole matter with your Lord; He promises that "His glory (Presence) shall be your reward" (Isaiah 58:8). He can gather up and straighten all that lies behind you as well as the crooked things before you. Past and future are under His control.

IV. *We must be intent on having no gaps in communion.*

If we are in earnest in walking with God, we shall find the blessed Spirit making us increasingly sensitive to any break in that Holy Friendship. When we are conscious of actual failure, we should instantly fly to the Throne of Grace, and cast ourselves by faith into the Presence of our Father-God (see Hebrews 10:19-20), being assured of access on

account of the precious blood of Jesus. Oh, to understand more and more that we have come to Jesus the Mediator, and to the blood of sprinkling speaking evermore for us in heaven (Hebrews 12: 22-24); His blood alone gives us entry into the Father's Presence, not our experience, not our obedience, nothing, nothing but the precious blood.

V. *We must deal quickly with "failure".*

It is not easy to go at once to God when conscious of failure. In fact, the battle turns most upon this point; once we go we are saved in the very going! The devil, our conscience, our shame, and our regret, all combine to keep us away. We have a sort of feeling that we ought to be "miserable" for a few hours first! It looks so presumptuous, a "making light of sin", to dare to run to God at once and yet—if we delay, we know one fall is but the precursor of many. The sin will be the same hideous thing—and worse—three hours hence.

The way of victory in the hour of defeat is to arise at once and go to the Father, saying: "Father, I have sinned," knowing that it is written: "I said after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto Me . . . only . . . acknowledge . . ." (Jeremiah 3:7, 13, A.V.).

It is the immediate frank confession to God that the devil seeks to keep us from, and as we do not know our Father well in the early days, too often he succeeds, and we stay away from God, until in bitter sorrow we are driven back.

See that little child! It has fallen in the mud and its clothes are soiled. Supposing it sat down in the mud, and said: "It is of no use, I shall never walk and keep my garments white!"

Nay, little child of the Father, discouragement and repining only increases your sin; get up and go back to your Father, pleading the precious blood:

"While he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him" (Luke 15:20).

We must, however, at this point emphasize that constant transgression and restoration is not God's purpose for His redeemed ones.

VI. *We must not expect to "fall".*

We must not expect to fall again and again over the same sin, for the living Lord (Hebrews 7:25) is able to guard us from stumbling (Jude 24). A break in communion shows that the soul is out of the "keeping" power of God, and when it has been to the Lord for restoration it should wait before Him to know the cause of its transgression—probably some step out of the will of God—for only in the path of His will does God undertake to keep.

It is written: "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light . . . the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). Apart from definite confession when we are conscious of definite failure, we need the continual application of the precious blood to keep the communion clear with God (see 1 Peter 1:2) and we may count upon this if we walk in the light. This is explained in John 3:21. "He that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest that they are wrought in God" (See also Ephesians 5:13).

The blood of Jesus cleanseth (Gr. lit., "keeps cleansing") if we ceaselessly live under the searchlight of God, earnestly desiring Him to test (1 Thessalonians 2:4) our lives, whether all is wrought by Him, and in Him, for His glory.

But supposing we are conscious of a cloud, and do not know the cause?

Again, our remedy is to "consult" the Lord. Go at once to the Throne of Grace, and ask the Faithful Witness (Revelation 3:14) to tell you the truth, and show if anything is wrong. Trust the Blessed Spirit to apply the blood of sprinkling, and as you wait, if nothing specific is brought to your mind, leave it all with God, and go on in quiet trust and rest under the cleansing blood. Take heed that you do not morbidly get occupied with yourself, for this is introspection, and if you turn upon yourself you will lose the fellowship with the Lord.

Someone may say: "Yes, I do go back at once to God when I am conscious of failure, and I do confess, but there is not the immediate restoration of peace, and the consciousness of communion."

There may be one or two reasons for this—

(a) That we do not know sufficiently the efficacy of the precious blood to bring us the assurance of peace. It is even possible that we may, unconsciously, be relying more upon our confession than upon the operation of God by the Holy Spirit.

It is not the confession, but the application by the Holy Spirit of the cleansing blood that immediately restores the broken fellowship with God. The confession of sin is the human side, the necessary condition for God to fulfil His part of pardon and cleansing.

(b) When we have sinned against the Lord, and we apply to Him for forgiveness, we must humbly leave ourselves in His hand to deal with as He sees fit.

He knows our character, and to some of us it might appear that sin is not so exceeding sinful if He quickly restored the joy of our salvation (see Psalm 51:12). It may even be possible that we confess our failure with sorrow for the loss of the joy, rather than with grief over the pain to Him.

He must teach His children how sinful a thing sin is, and make them understand how grieved He is (Ephesians 4:30), even though the precious blood has cleansed, and we are again in communion with Him (see Micah 7:7-9).

VII. We must walk in obedience right up to light.

If we are to walk in communion with the Lord, it is reasonable that He should expect us to obey all the light He gives us, and we may take from Him the spirit of obedience to enable us to obey (Ezckiel 36:27). "Ye are My friends, if ye do the things I command you," He said to His disciples, and friendship with Jesus must mean that we rejoice to fulfil His every wish.

Walking in obedience up to our knowledge, we may certainly trust the Faithful Lord to check us the moment He sees us about to take a wrong step (Isaiah 30:21). It may be said, as a rule, that the mark of walking in the path of God's will, is deep heart-rest.

It is well never to act when in any restless or hurried condition of mind, therefore we need to cultivate quietness of spirit, and recollectedness of the Presence of the Spirit of our unseen Friend.

VIII. We must remember that temptation is not sin.

The adversary makes it his business to cut communication between the soul and the Lord. He suits his tactics to the one he is attacking, and he harasses sensitive souls by seeking to keep them in constant condemnation (see his reason in 1 John 3:21-22) over supposed "disobedience", or "lack of surrender". If some step of obedience is suggested, and the soul shrinks back, the devil at once says: "not surrendered."

The remedy for this is again the same—consultation with the Lord.

Meet all accusations of "lack of surrender" by definite surrender to the Lord on the particular point in question. Tell Him that He knows you will obey if you can be quite sure of His will, and you may then rest in the faithfulness of your Father-God to make clear to you the path. He does not expect His child to obey without clear knowledge of the Father's mind. Whenever there is a doubt it is always well to commit the matter to God and wait, assured that He undertakes.

Temptation is not sin. Someone has helpfully defined actual transgression as the "yes" of the will to temptation. If the will at once rejects any evil suggestion the tempter has been foiled in his attack, though even then it is safest at once to look to the Holy Spirit for the application of the Blood of Christ—so delicate is the fellowship with God.

It is of the greatest importance that we learn to live in the will, and not in the realm of our "feelings". The "will" is the "ego"—the real person—and it is through the central power of the will that God controls us.

In every attack of temptation, however sudden or sharp, keep calm. Even though crowds of terrible thoughts may be pouring through your mind, turn at once to your Lord, and quietly settle before Him your attitude to all these things. "Do I choose or refuse?" "I refuse"—then, praise God, it is victory; the enemy is put to flight.

Finally, let us not dishonor our Lord by thinking that every unpleasant thing must be His will. If we are truly surrendered to Him, seeking to do His will, and walking with Him in fellowship and obedience as far as we know, has He not said: "It is God which worketh in you to will . . ." (Philippians 2: 13), "I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them" (Hebrews 10:16).

So long as in the will we are steadfastly purposed to obey Him, and we rely upon Him moment by moment to keep us from self-seeking and self-indulgence in every form, we may trust Him to "Incline our hearts to keep His law".

Thus we shall truly prove that His commandments are not grievous, and find that His yoke is easy, and His burden is light.

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all" (2 Corinthians 13: 14).

Chapter 2

CO-PRAYING WITH THE SPIRIT OF GOD

There is a tremendous power in prayer, if we all knew how to use it. Romans 8:26-27 shows us the part the Holy Spirit takes in it. "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmity"—in the Greek this refers to our physical and moral weakness—"for we know not how to pray," *i.e.*, we cannot without His aid arrive at a knowledge of what to pray for, either for ourselves, or for other people. It is not enough that it should come to the mind that others need this and that, "but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered . . . according to the will of God."

We need to consider the conditions leading up to these words in the earlier part of the chapter, for Paul wrote this as a conclusion to something else he was saying, therefore before we can understand how, and why, the "Spirit Himself makes intercession" in us, we must go back to verses 12 to 17, to see the personal conditions of spiritual life in which He can thus work. So many of our prayers are mental prayers; but in this passage there is a deep spirit-life of prayer which is the outcome of the spiritual growth of the believer.

Conditions for Prayer

The personal spiritual condition must be that of verses 12 to 17 before the prayer-life in the Spirit described in verses 26 and 27 can be fully known.

The first condition leading up to the prayer-life of 5:26, is found in 5:13. "If ye live after the flesh, ye must die; but if by the Spirit ye make to die the doings of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God" (R.V.m.).

No advance in the spiritual life can be realized without the foundation of the Cross. Before the Holy Spirit's intercession prayer-life can be truly known, we must be shown by Him how to stand in the position of Christ's death, and by His working let the death of Christ be applied experimentally.

"*They that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh*" (Galatians 5:24). It means, therefore, the standing of Romans 6, while in practice we ask the Spirit of God to apply the power of the death of Christ to all the activities of the flesh, so that the Holy Spirit may lead into all the varied aspects of the life of a true child of God.

The second condition of the prayer-life in the Spirit is found in verse 15, where the Apostle speaks of the spirit of sonship, the "spirit of adoption", whereby the believer knows God as "Father", and the Holy Spirit bears witness with his spirit that he is a child of God (v. 16).

Let us ask ourselves faithfully as we read Romans 8:12, 17, are these conditions fulfilled in our lives? Is our standing in Christ on the ground of Calvary, and reckoning ourselves "crucified with Christ", a real fact to us? Do we permit the Holy Spirit to apply the power of the death of Christ, or do we shirk the Cross? The clear leading of the Spirit through the human spirit cannot be known if in any degree the lower life is allowed to have dominion. What is uppermost in us as children of God—spirit, soul or body? They that are "led by the Spirit", *i.e.*, they who have the Holy Spirit indwelling, leading, teaching, witnessing, giving the spirit of adoption—they are the ones who will know the life of the Spirit in that intercession of v. 26; but abiding in the Spirit, and walking in the Spirit, and being led by the Spirit, and knowing the Spirit, depends upon our standing upon the ground of the Cross, every moment, so that whenever there is any manifestation of the "doings" of the "flesh" we instantly count on the Holy Spirit to apply the death of the Cross to them, and in the will say "No" to the lower life in all its varied workings.

A Hidden Leakage Hindering Prayer

Many Christians have a hidden hindrance which causes leakage of strength in the spiritual life. The Holy Spirit is leading, moving, teaching, working in them, but there is something from below pulling them downward, draining and dragging them every now and then to a lower sphere. They cannot know the intercession of the Spirit in the life of the Spirit, or His inspiration of prayer, unless they know the power of the Spirit in daily life.

Moment by moment light from the Holy Spirit is needed upon any leakage in the spiritual life. If the life is faithfully brought under the continual power of the Cross of Christ up to the light given, under the knife of the Cross—the Holy Spirit will then lead in the spirit without the intrusion of the things that come from below, things that intervene, bringing personal conflict, and hindering the ministry for others. Then having the spirit of adoption—the spirit of sonship—the Holy Spirit will give the witness in the spirit of the child's place, the child's right, and the child's heart towards God. These are the souls to whom the latter part of this chapter is written, and for such is the place of victory over sin pictured, a place of victory in the power of Christ's death.

There are three "groanings" referred to in Romans 8. "The whole creation groaneth" (v. 22). That is the outside world. "We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption—the redemption of our body" (v. 23). Here is the saint groaning and waiting for the redemption of the body. "The Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings" (v. 26). Here is the Spirit of God in the Church groaning. A groaning creation, a groaning saint, and the groaning of the Spirit in the Church, with "groanings which cannot be uttered".

Having cleared the ground as to preliminary condition, we may now look at the prayer-life as given in v. 26. First of all, we are powerless in prayer for lack of knowledge. "We know not" how to pray as we ought! Next, "the Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." The groaning-prayer of the Spirit is wordless! In contrast with "we know not"—which is mental—is the "which cannot be uttered" of the groaning Spirit, which is wordless. Many words can be poured out in prayer—wonderful prayer sometimes—but without any of the genuine, wordless prayer of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit's prayer in your spirit is oft-times a 'groaning' without words, when it cannot reach the mental consciousness for expression. But that wordless cry in your spirit is more powerful than the most wonderful outpouring of words in beautiful expression. Let us recognize, not only occasionally, but as a maintained condition, that we never do, and never can, know how to "pray as we ought" without the co-working of the Holy Spirit. We need the Holy Spirit to put into our spirits the spirit-cry to God.

THE GROANING CRY OF THE SPIRIT

In our prayer-life, can we tell the difference? Is the prayer a stream that comes from the innermost depth of our being—a groan, a cry of the Spirit in the spirit? Sometimes it may reach the mind, but not always. Is it prayer in the 'mind' first, or is there the cry in the spirit, saying, "Lord, teach me what to ask"? According to this Scripture, the Holy Spirit knows what to ask, and the Father understands the Spirit's wordless prayer. "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit." We may ask for many things, and none of them may be in the will of God; but if we follow the cry in the spirit, then "He maketh intercession for us According to the Will of God!" We want equipment for service? Do we recognize the need of equipment for prayer? We want the Holy Spirit to give us words for utterance to give the message to others? Then why not in like manner recognize the need of the Holy Spirit to give us words to cry to God in prayer ?

The first need is to discover that we cannot pray as we ought, and the next is to learn how to depend upon the Holy Spirit for prayers to pray in the spirit, as much as depend upon Him for power in service. David said, "I cried unto the Lord, and He heard"; and we shall find when there comes the wordless cry of the Spirit within, that we shall have what we ask, and know it.

We have perhaps gone to the Lord with a special cry in the spirit for some time, when suddenly it becomes, so to speak, 'dead'. We can get no light, and at first may be distressed that the power to pray on this point has gone; when suddenly there is in the spirit a liberation, a lifting of the pressure or burden, and we say, "I have the answer!" We do not know how God is working, but we do know that the assurance was given in that moment that God had taken hold of our petition, and the thing that we sought at His hands was being done. "The Spirit maketh intercession."

We must trust the Lord definitely to teach us what to ask, and how to pray. The Spirit ungrieved in your spirit, is always crying these wordless prayers, until there comes power in some measure to express them.

THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST

After the "groaning intercession" of the Spirit in v. 26, we read of the intercession of Christ, in v. 34, "It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, Who is at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us." In Hebrews 4:15, we read, "We have not a High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities (Gr. moral and physical weaknesses) but One that hath been in all points tempted like as we are." Here we have the previous training of the Heavenly Intercessor. He is not there interceding as One who does not understand. He is 'touched' because He was "in all points tempted as we are". He received His training as an Intercessor while on earth, and in heaven He is using the results of His training. "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying . . . was heard" (Hebrews 5:7, A.V.).

He went through all, and lived through all, with "strong crying and tears!" He knows what it means to be on earth, and this is why He is so quickly "touched" as our heavenly Intercessor, "ever living to make intercession for us" (Hebrews 7:25). "Ye are come to Jesus, the Mediator, and to the blood of sprinkling" (Hebrews 12:24). The Holy Spirit within inspires the cry in our spirit; the Heavenly Intercessor seated on the Throne, makes intercession in heaven.

When the cry of the Spirit is in the heart, then we know that the Master hears that cry, for "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit". He is searching for the mind of the Spirit in our spirits, and He is keeping the way open that these prayers reach the Throne. Now we understand why Christ is praying for the Church. If He were not praying for it, the Church would be swallowed up by the powers of hell.

If the Church of Christ could be brought to know that cry inspired by the Holy Spirit, how rapidly the Body of Christ would be delivered from the world, the flesh, and the devil. The Intercessor in heaven calls into fellowship with Himself all God's children on earth, to share with Him His work of prayer. He keeps the way open for us, as we join Him in His prayers we keep the way open for others. He is praying there, then by His Spirit the prayer comes into us, and again through us to reach others. Such is the wonderful life of prayer.

Chapter 3

CO-WORKING WITH GOD

The greatest danger that the individual believer, and the Church, has to dread is "the inordinate activity of the soul, with its powers of mind and will". This statement of Dr. Andrew Murray touches one of the deep underlying reasons for much "failure" in Christian life and service. When God created man "a living soul", that soul, as the seat of his personality and consciousness, "was linked, on the one side, through the body, with the outer world; on the other side, through the spirit, with the unseen and Divine. The soul had to decide whether it would yield itself to the spirit, by it to be linked with God and His Will, or to the body and the solicitations of the visible. In the Fall, the soul refused the rule of the spirit and became the slave of the body with its appetites. Man became flesh (Genesis 6:3, R.V., m.), the spirit

lost its destined place of rule . . . and the spirit now stands in opposition to 'the flesh', the name for the life of soul and body together in their subjection to sin."¹

Now when the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in man, He seeks to reverse the condition of the Fall by raising man's spirit again to the place of dominance. He wants to have right of way through our entire being, from center to circumference. We are so anxious to get the outward life changed—you must do this, and you must not do that—but God's way is to renew us from within, outward. Incidentally, this is where life for the body comes in. It is God in your spirit, moving out through your soul-life, penetrating even the physical frame, strengthening and enabling it for His service. It is the purpose of God that your very disposition shall be changed and quickened by His Spirit; and that His life shall penetrate and energize all your faculties.

What stands in the way of this complete renewal of the whole man, after he has been "born of the Spirit"? It is the activity of the "natural life" that has not yet wholly come under the rule of the Spirit of God. The old Quakers used to call it "creaturely activity". The soul is the connecting link, so to speak, between spirit and body, and all the natural powers of the soul are preventing the life of God in your spirit from flooding and renewing your whole being.

The activity of the natural mind prevents the life of God quickening your mind. The activity of your own capabilities prevents the Holy Spirit energizing and using your faculties. You may be crying to God to quicken you, and endue you with power for His service, and all the time your own natural life is hindering the answer to your prayers.

I want, therefore, to take you to the Word of God, and show you, as He shall enable me, the difference between the natural man, and the spiritual man, and why it is that the "natural man" (literally, man of soul) is the greatest hindrance to the work of the Holy Spirit in and through the Church of God.

THE "NATURAL MAN"

The believer is either carnal or spiritual according to the element which is dominant in his life. If the carnal, or flesh life, which includes the powers of the soul (*i.e.*, intellect, affections, emotions, etc.), is dominant, then, though he may have been born again, and the Holy Spirit may dwell in his spirit, the Word of God calls him "yet carnal" (1 Corinthians 3:3, R.V.). "The natural man," says Paul, cannot understand the things of the Spirit of God, and the word used in 1 Corinthians 2:14 is *psuchikos*, from the Greek work *Psuche*, which the Lexicon defines as "animal life", man considered as endowed with the anima (living principle), as distinguished from the spiritual principle. This word is translated in the New Testament forty times as "life" or "lives", and forty-eight times as "soul". The man whose life is governed by this soulish realm of his being, says Paul, "cannot receive" the things of the Holy Spirit, or understand them. In 1 Corinthians 15:45 we read: "The first man Adam was made a living soul (*psuche*); the last Adam—Christ—was made a quickening Spirit (*pneuma*)." Therefore the natural man is man as descended from the first Adam, in whom "all die", because through him the human race was involved in the Fall.

When a man is born again, and ceases to walk "after the flesh", it does not necessarily mean that he ceases to be "soulish", *i.e.*, to walk after the life of nature, his natural intellect, wisdom, emotions, etc. He ought to "walk after the Spirit", for he is a "new creation" in Christ; his spirit is regenerated and made anew; but he still awaits the "redemption of the body", and while he is in his human frame, there is always the possibility of his "walking after" the old life of nature, or the soul powers not yet fully animated by the Life-giving Spirit. He may know what it means, by the power of the indwelling Spirit at the center, to "make to die the doings of the body" (Romans 8:13), while his intellect, or his affections, are still governed by the *psuche*, or soul-life. Even his worship, or Christian experience, may be in the realm of his "feelings" rather than "in spirit and in truth".

The soul-life of the carnal Christian, or the believer who has not learned to distinguish between what is psychic (*i.e.*, of the soul) and what is spiritual, is peculiarly open to the working of the powers of darkness: Satan producing in the soul realm counterfeits of the things of God, by drawing out of man's natural life, dormant powers he has not known he possessed. This is one of the greatest dangers of the "time of the end". James' description of the wisdom of the "natural" man applies with equal force to every part of the "fallen Adam" life:

"If in your hearts you have bitter feelings of envy and rivalry, do not speak boastingly and falsely in defiance of the truth. That is not the wisdom which comes down from above; it belongs to earth, to the unspiritual nature (Greek, psychical) and to evil spirits" (James 3:14-15, Weymouth).

The "SPIRITUAL MAN"

I turn from this picture to a far more congenial subject, the spiritual man. What makes a man a "spiritual man"? Every man has a spirit, that is, a capacity for God, but in the unregenerate it is darkened. Thus man needs a new birth: he needs (1) to be "born of the Spirit", and (2) to receive the Holy Spirit. You remember the double promise in Ezekiel 36:26, "A new spirit will I put within you and I will put My Spirit within you." First, man's own spirit renewed and quickened by the work of God's Spirit upon him, and then the Spirit of God coming to dwell in the prepared sanctuary.

¹ *The Spirit of Christ* by Andrew Murray.

It is only then that Romans 8:16 is fulfilled, "the Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." As the Holy Spirit dwells deep in his spirit, the believer is "strengthened with all might" by the Holy Spirit "in his inner man" (*i.e.*, the regenerate human spirit, *Bishop Moule*), and it is written of him, "he who joins himself to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him" (1 Corinthians 6:17, C.H.).

If your spirit and Christ's Spirit become one, how closely united are you? "One Spirit"—it is a marvellous conception! You never read that you may become "one soul". How many waste words would be cut away if we were every moment in communication with the Lord to Whom we are "joined"; talking to Him, saying "Lord, give me words"; "Lord, is this the thing to do?" Restrain me, energize me, hold me! However much knowledge you have of the things of God, nothing will ever make up for that personal, intimate, moment-by-moment recollectedness of perpetual fellowship with the Living Christ. This is the key to a life "in the Spirit". It is Christ becoming your Wisdom, your Strength, your holiness—Christ and you, joined in one spirit!

Now the great aim of the enemy, when he finds a man has escaped from the domination of the "flesh", is to keep the natural soul-powers in full activity, for he knows that he can hinder the work of God as effectively through the man's own energy and powers as by leading him into the sins of the flesh.

What is to be done with this soul-life? First, recognize that your own life, the old Adamic life of nature, is tainted with the Fall, and that therefore we need to be brought to an end of our own wisdom, our own strength, our own power to work for God. It is only as the "own" life is laid down, that God can fulfil His purpose of bringing every faculty with which He has endowed the soul under the control of His Spirit, and into full use as the channel through which the Indwelling Spirit works.

How does He do this? (1) Through the two-edged sword of the Word, "Piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit" (Hebrews 4:12)— searching, penetrating, striking at the very roots of the natural life. It is because this work is hindered by an unwillingness to part with the "psuche" life, with its often apparently good and beautiful gifts and powers, that the Holy Spirit is "quenched" in many who have truly received Him. (2) By believing and reckoning upon the fact—God's fact— that "our old man was crucified" with Christ. "With Him therefore we were buried by the baptism wherein we shared His death, that even as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we likewise might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4, Conybeare).

Do not think of Christ crucified as something separate from you, but think of Him there, and say "and I died with Him. The Holy Ghost has baptized me into His death." The negative is necessary in order to get the positive; and the fuller and deeper the death of Christ is applied to us by the Holy Spirit, the fuller and deeper and mightier will be the inflow of His life. Do not be afraid of the "death" side. It does not mean deadness, but an application of the death of Christ to the activities of this old natural life of ours, so that His Divine life can be imparted. It is not knowledge received into the mind, but the quickening touch of God, that can make you a life transmitter— the life of God so working in you that there is an overflow of life to others, as Paul said, "so death worketh in us, and life in you."

THE "NATURAL MAN" SEEKING TO SERVE GOD

Much of the suffering God's people have to pass through is on account of these natural powers, for if we are honestly desirous of a pure stream of the life of God to quicken and empower us for service, these powers have to be dealt with at the Cross. In the early days of our Christian experience, the problem was "victory over sin" and the "flesh". We all agree that we have to hate sin, but as you go on with God, and yearn to be an instrument for His use, that His life shall pour through you to others, you will find that every bit of the activity of the natural man is hateful, because it belongs to the fallen Adam. Then you will learn to discern when there is a pure stream of the Holy Spirit, and when the stream of your own soul-life is mingling with it, or has taken its place.

Like touches like. When the Holy Spirit is working through you, He meets the spirit of the hearers— something in the depths of them is moved, they are brought into contact with God. But when your own soul powers are at work, you only arouse the soul-life or emotional life in others. So we need to pray earnestly that this stream from the life of nature shall be cut off by the Cross. "In Him—circumcised" (Colossians 2:9, 11). Abiding in Him, the cutting-off-power of His death will be all the while exercised upon all that hinders the outflow of the life of God.

I shall never forget, on one occasion, being present in a prayer meeting where the Presence of God was as clear as crystal. Suddenly, someone began to pray, and he prayed with such a tide of the soul— such an emotional flood—it was exactly as if a filthy stream poured into the meeting, and we were enveloped in a thick and heavy atmosphere.

How can these "soul powers" be taken into death, so that the life of God shall be liberated to quicken us—spirit, soul and body—not only for personal deliverance, but for testimony? The Lord Jesus Himself has given us the key to this. "He that loveth his life (Gr. *psuche*, soul) shall lose it; and he that hateth his soul-life shall keep it unto life (*Zoe*) eternal" (John 7:25). "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." The hardest thing God has to deal with in us is this love of our own life, but he that will hate his own life shall keep it unto life eternal—it shall be exchanged for life eternal, the life of God. "If any man will serve Me, let him follow Me," the Lord continued, "and where I am, there shall also My servant be," and "him will My Father honor." It is spoken to those who are in the Lord's service—the grain of wheat that longs to multiply into a harvest for Him. If any man who is in the Lord's service will lay down his own natural life and its powers at the Cross, then the Father will use him, and honor him, and make him

fruitful. It is said of the Son of Man that He "poured out His soul (His sinless soul) unto death": and following in His steps we have to go to Calvary, and have our fallen soul-life poured out unto death, so that we may rise in spirit into the Divine life.

The Lord grant that we learn something of this handing over of the soul-life unto death, fearing to make use of it ourselves, recognizing it as of no avail for God's service. Then we can expect, as we walk with God, that there shall come forth into this world, a pure stream of the Divine life from Him, through our renewed and quickened spirit, as it is written, "Out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living waters," "this spake He of the Spirit".

Chapter 4

CHANGE YOUR ATTITUDE!

"Now concerning this thing I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me: and He said unto me, My grace is sufficient . . . most gladly therefore will I glory in my ..." (Cf. 2 Corinthians 12:1-10, R.V.).

It has much to do with attitude! The attitude you take to the "thing" that troubles you. We might like it to depart, but God may elect that it should stay. In the bit of autobiography given by Paul in 2 Corinthians 12, we can see the part Satan has in the sanctification of a saint, and how even an Apostle needed to change his attitude to a "thing" which originated with Satan, and which he was keenly desirous should depart from him. The occasion which drew forth this very personal bit of private history from the apostle, is to be found in the preceding two chapters of the epistle, in which we read that Paul was being compelled to defend his own ministry—a course none but a spiritual man could enter upon safely—and this, not for his own glory, but for the sake of the Message entrusted to him by God. Other "workers", fashioning themselves as "ministers of righteousness", were belittling the apostle, so as to deprive the truth he proclaimed, of authority in the eyes of his hearers. Paul knew that in this case the messenger and his message could not but be identified, so he brings forth the credentials of his apostleship with burning words pointing to his sacrificial service for the Church's sake, and revelations given to him of God, in which he was not only caught up into heaven itself, hearing words impossible to utter, but actually received of the Lord Jesus (1 Corinthians 11:23, Galatians 1:12), the very Gospel he had proclaimed to the Corinthians.

But as the apostle proceeded in his defence, he may have become conscious of his "weakness", as possibly so manifest to his hearers as to give occasion to the opposing workers to discredit his message. This thought leads him to lift the veil, and tell the story of his own inner conflict and suffering under the "bufferings" of the messenger of Satan, and how by the direct word of the Lord he had been led to change his attitude, and see that what he had thought a "weakness" from which he should be freed, was purposed of God for his own growth in grace, his own safety in unique ministry for God, and the very condition necessary for obtaining the Divine strength and the power he needed for that ministry.

We need to notice the distinction the apostle makes between himself as the "man in Christ"—really the "inner man" of his renewed and Spirit-indwelt human spirit—and himself in his humanity and mortality. Paul knew such a full indwelling of the Holy Spirit in his spirit, that he could distinguish between its activities, as distinct from his soul—or human personality. The Word of God which dwelt in him richly, had deeply separated between his soul and spirit, so that the "man in Christ", his "inner man" (2 Corinthians 4:16; Ephesians 3:16), the new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17) could be taken up to the third heaven, the very place of the Throne of God, and there receive from the Glorified Lord Himself the gospel of the Cross, and the unfolding of the "mystery" of God's purpose to call out from among redeemed sinners of every tongue and nation a "Body" of believers as organically united to their Lord as the human body to its head. A Body sharing with Him in one life, one spiritual substance called His "Flesh" (Ephesians 5:30, A.V.), fashioned into conformity to Him for one destiny unto the ages of the ages.

"Of such a one—the man in Christ, the new creation in Christ—will I glory," declares the apostle, but "on mine own behalf I will not glory". "But Paul, was not the 'man in Christ' *you*?" Yes, but *it was me as I am in my spirit*, and as I will be when the outward bodily frame of my mortality is taken down; of that "man"—the spirit-man—I will glory, for all that he is and has, is of grace, and by the supply of the Spirit of Jesus—but on "mine own behalf", as I am in my humanity, I have nothing to speak of but my "weakness".

And then Paul lifts the veil, and tells the inner history of his "thorn". The "man in Christ", the new creation, joined to the Lord in one spirit, may be caught up to heaven, but such dealings of God with the spiritual man required special dealings of God with the mortal vessel of clay. Although vindicating his apostleship to the Corinthians, he frankly says that, apostle as he is—"by reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations . . . that I should not be exalted overmuch, there was given to me a stake in the flesh (the mortal man), a 'messenger of Satan' to buffet me. . . ."

What was it? Paul calls it a "thing" (verse 8), but he also says he wanted it to "depart", for it was a "thorn" and a "messenger of Satan". Its origin is specifically said to be of Satan. It was also *given by God* on account of the

"revelations", therefore all "messengers of Satan" are under His permissive control. And Paul describes its effect upon him as "buffeting", or beating him!

Here we have in contrast the spiritual man and the mortal man; the inner spirit-life, and the outward life after the body; the triumph and glory of the spirit-man, able to enter where angels stand before the throne of God (Hebrews 10:19); and the outer weakness and humiliation of the mortal man, subject to the "beating" of "messengers of Satan", and to the cries and groans wrung out by *unanswered prayer* (verse 8)! The "man in Christ" in spiritual communion with God, in life and light and glory: the man in himself beaten, suffering, and crying to God for a relief which apparently never comes.

"Concerning this thing" Paul says, "I besought, pleaded, begged, the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me". "From me"—this something which pierced his "flesh", this "thorn", this "stake", this "messenger of Satan"!

At last Paul's prayer is answered, not by the removal of the "thing", but by light from God on the attitude to take to it. Yes, the "thing" is "a messenger of Satan", but it is given by God. The fact of the satanic source of the trouble is recognized, but God is Sovereign over all "demons" and "messengers of Satan". Satan may send his messengers—as he does, to attend upon every saint—but they can only come when "given of God". And the apostle is shown how to change his attitude to the thing, and cease praying for its removal. "My grace" said the Lord, "is sufficient for thee." Better take grace to manifest some of the glory of the inner man in the outward life, than to be set free from the occasion requiring it. CHANGE YOUR ATTITUDE, Paul. Give up troubling about its departure. Let it stay, if through it you will prove the abounding grace of God.

And then Paul saw it! He quickly changed his attitude by the act of his will. He decided to *choose* to "glory in his weaknesses", as well as in his "revelations". "Most gladly I will glory in my weaknesses," he cried. I choose to "take pleasure" in the things from which the mortal part of me desires to be free.

See how the Lord appealed to Paul's reason. Possibly he could not understand why, he who had been caught up in spirit to the very heaven of heavens, could not get his prayer answered for freedom from the thorn which he knew was a messenger from Satan. But God showed His servant the reasonableness (verse 7) of His dealings—and his understanding was brought into action so that he might intelligently put his will with the will of God, even though it was against himself in the realm of his mortality.

Yes, *it has much to do with attitude!* Paul probably felt the thorn in his flesh just as much as before, but his change of attitude toward it, brought into action the supply of grace he needed for triumph over his thorn, for it is not possible for God to manifest His power until the condition for doing so is fulfilled—even in the life of an apostle. If Paul said "I want this thing to depart", and God said "I want that thing to stay", how could the power of God be manifested in relation to the "thing"? But directly Paul had light upon the "thing" and he saw God's will, his changed attitude toward it brought the supply of grace he needed.

It has much to do with attitude today, as the children of God in the midst of countless trials await translation. They are possibly crying out to God for the things around them to be changed, whereas they themselves need to be changed in their attitude toward them.

These attitudes must, however, always have the basis of the will of God in relation to specific things, and be in line with truth as made known in the Scriptures. If they understand the simplicity of taking attitudes based upon the known will, or truth of God, what revolutions will come into the lives of God's children. How simple the path will become.

Victory over sin results from an attitude based upon the truth of God's Word, in the declaration of Romans 6 that "our old man was crucified with Christ". Your attitude to sin based on this truth is simply, "I have died with Him, and so far as my choice is concerned, I have finished with sin. It shall not have dominion over me." The attitude is that you have done with it, and it is for the Holy Spirit to work your experience up to your attitude.

So it is in relation to the heavenly life. The Word of God declares that all who are in Christ are "hid" with Him "in God". Based on this statement—and many others like it—you take the attitude accordingly, and the Holy Spirit works in you, up to the realization in experience of that which is a fact in God's sight, but unrealized.

So it is in all other aspects of the redemption of Christ made known in the Scriptures, in relation to victory over Satan, over the world, over death and the grave, and all that Christ accomplished for us on the Cross of Calvary. You pray for victory, but change your attitude, child of God, change your attitude into a declaration that on the basis of Christ's victory for you, you have victory—and you will have it!

Perhaps some who read this should now change their attitude to spiritual conflict. You have "fought a good fight", and gained victory at every point in your personal life and environment, so change your attitude to the foe. If you keep going over and over the old ground, your spirit will not find its right place in the plane of accomplished victory. But, you say, I am compelled to "fight" by the atmospheric influences, as well as in specific attacks upon me. *It has much to do with attitude.* If you take the attitude now belonging to your position "far above all principality and power", "having overcome all," to "stand" (Ephesians 6:13, m.), you will find again that the Holy Spirit will work your experience up to your attitude, and thus you will find yourself in the plane of readiness for the Lord's coming, and your being caught up to meet Him.

Perhaps, like Paul, you have some "thorn" or stake, which you know is a "messenger of Satan", because it clearly has its origin from him, but you have been trying to get rid of this "messenger" by the old weapons of resistance, not discerning that there was no "unction" on your weapons. *It will not depart if God has given it to prepare you for*

ascension glory, even though you have besought the Lord for its removal. *Change your attitude* to it, child of God, and see if you will not quickly get ease in your spirit, and grace to triumph and endure.

Or in your home, or work for God, you have "things" which are well-nigh intolerable. You can see the "messengers of Satan" at work in those you love; or there are financial troubles, and troubles abounding from the evil natures of unsaved friends or relatives in your path; troubles to the right of you, and troubles to the left of you—how they thunder! Why does not God remove them, and answer prayer?

Because, child of God, He is preparing *to remove you*. This "messenger of Satan" is not to depart; the "thorns" are not to be removed; the "things" that hurt are to remain—therefore cease asking for things on earth to be changed for your relief, but change your attitude toward them. It is *you* who are to depart, away from the thorns, in God's good time. Change your attitude now in view of this, to the world and to its cares.

Take your place in heaven as a citizen of heaven; take grace from the abounding supply of God to manifest the spirit of heaven now in the little while before the Lord comes. Leave behind you the fragrance of the glory which is already in your spirit. Know what "manner of spirit" ye are of.

Change your attitude to the "thing" you have writhed under. Take the attitude of "glorying" in it; take the heavenly attitude of "taking pleasure" in "injuries" when others smite you; in "necessities" when you cannot have what you need; in "persecution" when you suffer for the name of Christ; in "distress" when the most distressful suffering of the present time of trial is thrust as a cloud upon your spirit—take pleasure, *not in the things themselves*, but in the occasion for the manifestation by grace of the glory of God.

Change your attitude to the future. The Lord Himself said "Be not anxious for the morrow. ..." How much more should you, expecting translation, live now and now only. Take the attitude of not wanting or expecting any "future" on earth, because you expect to go up when the Lord comes. Do all that you can do, now. Live as if you knew this hour, this moment, was your last on earth. Give what you ought to give, now; say what you have to say, now. And holding this attitude, arrange what you must arrange for the "future" with a joyous reservation in your heart. "I may not be there!" (Cf. James 4:13-16.)

Change your attitude to the Master's work, and let it no longer take the place of the Lord you work for. Think more of the Lord Who is coming than your own service for Him. He will do so much more for the work and the Church than you can do. Take heed lest you who have preached to others be "yourself not approved" (1 Corinthians 9:27). Give up your own schemes and plans, and care more to make sure of doing His will, and of being well-pleasing unto Him.

Change your attitude in regard to unsaved friends. Give up fretting about their state, and thus poisoning your own. Commit them to God, and believe He loves them more than you do. Change your attitude toward them in your contact with them, and pour out upon them all the love and kindness your heart of compassion can show, for they need all the love you can give them, as they are without Christ in a storm-tossed world.

And finally, *change your attitude* to the terrible worldwide unrest in every nation, and refuse to look at it from the view-point of earth. Remember *God must deal with nations* as well as with men. Take the attitude of standing with God in His attitude to sin. Do not dwell on the human side of death and suffering. God is not "callous" to the world of men, as Calvary shows. Pray against the unrest because it is part of the old dispensation which is passing away; stand against it in spirit, because demons are behind it, and God is against the demons even while He allows them to destroy their own works. Refuse to be "troubled" by the trouble around you; refuse to put your trust in any but God for His protecting care; and as you trust Him for yourself, trust Him to adjust the nations of the world, that the day be hastened for the reign of the Prince of Peace. *It has much to do with attitude.*

Men may misjudge thy aim,
Think they have cause for blame:
Say thou art wrong!
Hold on thy quiet way;
Christ is the judge—not they;
Fear not! Be strong!

Chapter 5

OUR ATTITUDE TO PRAYER or The Rod of Victory

"Then came Amalek and fought with Israel in Rephidim" (Exodus 17:8). The multitude of slaves set free by God, and whom Moses was leading out of Egypt, had reached Rephidim. They had crossed the Red Sea, and seen "the great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians", to save them from their hands; they had streamed across the desert for three rainless days, and reached water at last, only to find it bitter; but it was changed into a supply for their

needs by the miracle-power of God, manifested through the symbol of a tree. Again, they needed food, and once more it was miraculously supplied by the hand of God; and now they reached Rephidim, where again they saw the guiding and providing care of God in the supply of water given to them from a smitten rock; and here for the first time in their march forth to the promised land they found their passage contested by a foe. A band of Amalekites appeared to fight with them. What was to be done? Untrained for war, almost too helpless even to care for their own needs, how could these erstwhile slaves meet such a foe as the warlike Amalekites ?

But once more the leadership of the Lord Jehovah was shown through His chosen instrument. Moses said unto Joshua, "Choose out men, and go out, fight with Amalek; tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand" (Exodus 17:9). And on the morrow, while Joshua went out into the valley with the little company of picked men, to meet the foe, the man of God went to the hill with two others, there to watch the battle, and lift up the "rod of God"—the symbol of His power—which had brought about so many judgments in Egypt, and divided the waters of the Red Sea for Israel to pass over.

"And it came to pass," runs the story, "when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed." Was it not enough to lift his hand *once*? Nay! The hands had to be *kept up until the battle was through*.

But what about the "strain" of it, and the needed food and rest? All this must not be taken into consideration. Israel was in a crisis—attacked by foes. God had put into the hand of the leader a "rod" which, if it was kept lifted, would symbolize His power manifested on the behalf of Israel. If it was laid down, even for a brief period, the foe would prevail, and during that interval might gain such advantage as to seriously threaten the safety of the whole people, if not to obtain rule over them altogether. Be that so or not, the "way of victory" shown to Moses by the Lord was not only that Joshua and his little company should go forth to meet the foe, in close conflict, but that on the hill-top the trained prayer-warrior, Moses, must stand, and with calm, steadfast faith in the "rod" which he had seen accomplish so many mighty deeds, lift it up, and hold it up with unwearied persistency, until the battle was won, and the foe utterly discomfited.

But Moses was but human, and after a time his hands grew heavy. The battle was more stubborn, possibly, than he had thought. The foe did not give way quickly before the uplifted "rod", and the valor of the picked men with Joshua. Shall Moses retire from the hill, and say that someone else must hold up the "rod" whilst he went to rest, for he had been faithful to his trust as long as he was able, but now he could do no more?

Nay, Moses knew that he must not leave the hill until the battle was won. He had seen that *whilst he lifted his hands* Israel was gaining, even though the enemy was not yet completely routed; he must stay at his post until the conflict was through. So "they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, and one on the one side, and the other on the other side, and his hands were steady until . . ." (Exodus 17:12). Moses had *stood* as long as he could, and now he sat.

He "sat down" to watch and wait, and simply hold up the rod while Aaron and Hur held up his hands. No "feeling" but *heaviness*! No *sense* of victory! No power to *do* anything but just sit and hold the rod! Was the day a long one to him? Did his faith in that victorious rod ever quail? we may ask. It mattered not. He had seen certain tokens of Israel prevailing in the valley-fight while his hands were lifted, and so he must go on and "pray through" —or rather, "*hold through*." He dared not fail Joshua and the little company who were depending upon the uplifted rod on the hill-top; he dared not fail God who had shown him the plan of campaign.

But why was it not sufficient for Moses to lift the rod on the hill-top, without Joshua and his warrior-group going to meet the foe in hand-to-hand conflict? And, vice versa, why was it not enough for Joshua to lead forth the picked men of Israel to meet the Amalekites without Moses with the rod on the hill? Why should Joshua fight at all, if the rod of God could accomplish such things as the dividing of the Red Sea, when Israel did no fighting and saw their enemies slain before their eyes? And why should Moses endure such a strain that long day in the broiling sun, if Joshua and his men could fight in the valley? Why, again, was it not enough for Moses just to *ask* God for victory? Why have to lift his hands and persist even when they lost power to stay up on his own volition?

"These things happened unto them by way of figure, and they were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come" (1 Corinthians 10:11, R.V.m.), wrote the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians concerning the story of Israel; and this incident most truly is an example to us now. Moses on the hill-top, lifting his hands to God for the battling men in the valley, is one of God's "examples" to us of the prayer-warfare at the close of the dispensation, and of the division of the people of God in those who are called to the mount to watch and pray, and those who are sent forth by the Captain of the resurrection-host into the battle-fray.

The prayer-warrior on the hill lifting his hands to God, and the armed men in the heat and confusion of the battle of the plains, have both their commission from the Lord of Hosts, and—from the spiritual standpoint—picture the two aspects of the spiritual warfare, where the holding up of the hands, and the grasping of the "rod" of the victorious Word of God, needs the co-working of the actual aggressive warfare with the enemy in the valley by the soldiers of the Lord.

God *could* have given victory to Israel at Rephidim by the lifting of the rod, as at the Red Sea, but Israel must now learn to co-operate with God. So Joshua is sent out to fight, as though there was no uplifted "rod" on the hill-top; and Moses must lift up the rod at the cost of suffering and strain, as though there were no armed men fighting the foe in

battle, because the time had come when Israel must learn the lesson of co-partnership with God, and the people of God learn from the object-lesson how to work with God in prayer.

We learn from this story how "faithful in all his house" Moses was, and how faithful to his trust on the hill-top that day. Because his hands were *steady* until the "going down of the sun", "Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword," and the Lord bade him write "a memorial" of the battle and the victory in the strong declaration of the Lord of Hosts, who had watched the scene from His holy habitation.

"Write," said the Lord, "that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." Amalek that day was only "discomfited", but God declared that the hour should come when he should be "utterly blotted out". He had seen what they did in attacking His people, "smiting the hindmost," and "all that were feeble", when the whole host was "faint and weary" (Deuteronomy 25:18); therefore He had determined *that Amalek* should be blotted out of remembrance. Years afterwards the Lord told Saul: "I have marked that which Amalek did to Israel, how he set himself against him in the way when he came up out of Egypt; "and He bade Saul" go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have. . . ." (1 Samuel 15:1-3).

What the "rod of God" meant we see in the action of Moses, for after the victory he built an "altar", and called it "Jehovah-nissi"—"the Lord is my banner." Israel had fought under the banner of Jehovah, and at the "altar", typifying the Cross of Calvary, he said, "Amen" to God, saying: "The Lord hath sworn: the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

For the New Testament pattern of the prayer-warrior on the hill, and for the understanding of the full significance of the example to us, we must turn to the last chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, and see how wonderfully the Apostle depicts the conflict and the victory of prayer through the uplifted hands of the armor-clad prayer-warrior.

"Ours is not a conflict," he writes, "with mere flesh and blood, but with the despoticisms, the empires, the forces that control and govern this dark world—the spiritual hosts of evil arrayed against us in the heavenly warfare" (Ephesians 6:12, Weymouth). The battle of Joshua and his picked men with the Amalekites was a very small thing compared with this great conflict which is being waged in the *unseen sphere* with the forces which govern this dark world—"the spiritual hosts of evil"—a battle which is *world-wide*, and not confined to one spot of earth, like Israel's fight with Amalek. *Moses*—one man—and the two with him—Aaron and Hur—were enough on the hill-top for victory for Israel, but not so in this great world-wide war.

"I will *stand* on the top of the hill with the rod of God," said Moses. There he could watch the battle, and *know how long* to hold up the rod until that particular phase of conflict over Israel's advance was over. On the hill-top—figuratively—of the "heavenly-places" the prayer-warrior is called to *stand*, and—clad in heavenly armor—to "take" in his hand the "sword of the Spirit", which is "the Word of God". In the New Testament it is called a sword, but it is also a "rod" in the aspect of conveying the messages of the reigning power of the Ascended Lord. The "rod of God" typifies the power of the Reigning Lord, who stretches forth the "rod of His strength out of Zion" (Psalm 110:2), and rules "with a rod of iron"—unbending truth—on His throne.

There are many stages of the prayer-fight which Ephesians 6 opens out, if we read it carefully. In verse 13 Paul speaks of "having overcome all" and standing unshaken (A.V.m.). The prayer-warrior has learnt in much suffering something of the fight in a lower plane with the spiritual hosts of wickedness, and of the "wrestling" in hand-to-hand warfare; but "having overthrown them all" (Conybeare) in their personal attacks, he now "stands unshaken" on the hill-top with the "rod of God" in his hand. For a time he "stands", having carefully seen to the various parts of the armor, until he hears the word of the Lord, "*Sit down with Me*," just when he was beginning to feel "heavy" with the prolonged "standing". He does not yet realize how long the conflict will last; and thinks it may be quickly through, as all the "wrestling" conflicts have been sharp and short in the battle stage he has known. Possibly he thinks, too, that he best can stand alone, and needs no "Aaron" and "Hur" at his side, until at last the vision grows clearer, and he sees that since it is a *world-wide battle*, it will last until "the going down of the sun"—*i.e.*, until the whole Body of Christ is lifted out of the earth, and darkness settles down on the whole world. And then he turns to look for the Aaron and Hur able to stand with him, to hold up his hands when they grow heavy. He hears the Master's voice: "*Sit down with Me*"—"From henceforth expecting"—and he settles down to *wait*, and *watch*, and hold the weapon of victory with steady faith, irrespective of feeling, and even sense of ability to "hold on" until the end (Revelation 2:26).

Paul depicts this stage of "having overcome", and the settling down of the prayer-warrior to persistent, watching prayer, in his words, "All prayer"; "praying at all seasons in the Spirit," and "watching thereunto" in "all perseverance", for "all the saints". Here is clearly the *focused* prayer of the prayer-warrior standing on the hill of the heavenly position. "In Christ Jesus" standing, or, better still, "sitting down" with the Lord in His reigning prayer-life, he watches the battle—in India—in Africa—in England—and *holds the "rod"*—the Word of victory through the Christ of the Cross—over the place where the conflict rages, and settles down *in spirit* to a quiet, dogged, steadfast, holding up (sometimes figuratively, sometimes *literally!*) "holy hands" unto God, until that phase of the conflict is over, and the battle "through".

Moses and Aaron and Hur were enough on that hill-top to hold the victory for Joshua and his men in the valley, but now in this great world-wide conflict with the satanic hosts, many groups of "three" are needed, who have learnt in personal conflict to "overcome", and "having overcome", right up to the fullest extent of their present stage of knowledge, are called by the Lord to "sit down" with Him to hold in persistent focused prayer, His finished victory over the various battle-centers throughout the world.

"Mobilize the prayer-forces" is now the need, for the Joshua-companies have been left long enough in the battle of the plains without the prayer groups on the hill. And still, as in the time of Moses, the Lord Himself is watching! The counsel of God standeth sure, that in due time Satan and all his hosts shall be cast into the pit, and their "remembrance" blotted out from under heaven. At the "altar" of Calvary let us say Amen to God, and joyfully remember that the battle is the Lord's for the Lord had war with Satan at Calvary, and there brought about the first stage of his casting down, which in due season will be completed by his casting into the Abyss (Revelation 20:1-3), through the prayers of the saints (Revelation 8:3-5), by the grace and power of God. Amen.

Chapter 6

OUR ATTITUDE TO SERVICE

or the pot of oil
2 Kings 4:1, 7

This story is familiar to us all. The widow in her sore distress coming to Elisha for help, a debtor and unable to pay the debt.

We must note first the ground of her appeal to the man of God, "Thy servant did fear the Lord." Her husband had been one of the "sons of the prophets"—men set apart for the service of God, and how the family happened to be in actual debt we cannot tell, for those who fear the Lord and seek to walk in His will, have a claim upon Him to supply all their need. Debt is not in God's plan for any of His children, much less those who are definitely set apart for His service and depend upon Him.

"When I sent you without purse . . . lacked ye anything? and they said, nothing" (Luke 22:35).

Whatever may have been the cause of the debt of this family that appealed to Elisha in their trouble, we at least learn that God will work a miracle to set His children free from such a burden. He will work miracles today to set His work free from financial difficulties, if we do but obey Him.

God does not change, and His word through Paul the apostle, "Owe no man anything," stands as the revelation of His mind in this matter.

If we desire God to manifest His Presence in our midst we must obey Him in the least of His commands. If He has said "Owe no man anything", can we expect Him to work among us, and set His seal upon us if we do? Will He smile upon anything contrary to His will?

We have longed for the rivers of living water to flow through our various branches of work; may it not be that God is waiting for us to prepare the way of the Lord by removing the stones, the things that are contrary to His revealed will?

The widow goes to Elisha, and cries, "The creditor is come", and then the prophet leads her first to face her resources, and confess frankly her position.

We are far too careless about this. "We shall meet it somehow when the time comes," is our thought, and so we drift on until the "creditor" appears, and we are not at all ashamed of a "deficit" or a "balance on the wrong side!"

"Elisha said unto her ... tell me; what has thou in the house?"

We must be definite in dealing with God, and in facing our position.

Are we prepared for sacrifice on our own part, rather than let the work of God entrusted to our particular care, be hindered by debt? "What have you to meet this?" is God's question to us, before we can expect Him to supply the need.

God may have a claim upon us, and He will not respond to our cry for help until we are prepared to let Him have "all that is in the house" to use as He wills.

This widow had only a pot of oil! she was really in the position of having "nothing to pay". If we can honestly look up to God and tell Him that there is nothing that we can do, no sacrifice further that we can make, He will work for us, but not until then.

The reality of our prayers can be tested as to how much we are prepared to sacrifice toward getting them answered. This may be the reason why so much prayer for the work of God appears fruitless.

God made use of the pot of oil possessed by the widow to answer her prayer.

It may be you are expecting God to send the help in some miraculous way, when He is waiting to use some little "pot of oil" that you have already, and have not thought worthwhile speaking about—it was so small!

What is the Spiritual Lesson for us in this story? Briefly, we are "debtors" to a perishing world to give them the gospel, and to be channels for the love of God to be poured through us to needy souls (see St. Paul's words in Romans 1:14-15, and how deeply he felt this).

"The creditor is come to take unto him my two children to be bondmen," cries the widow. It is really true! We must overcome the world by paying our debt to it, or else the world will overcome us, and rob us of our dear ones, or the souls that ought to be ours for Christ.

There is no neutral position for any child of God. Our families share in our loss or our gain. The children will become entangled in the world if we are apathetic, or anything but faithful to God in the stewardship of the gospel.

Our eyes may be open to see this, and we are in sore distress. We recognize our responsibility to the souls around us; "The creditor has come"; we see our dear ones in danger of being enslaved by this present evil world, and yet—we are powerless. We cannot meet our debt. What shall we do?

Let us appeal to God. "What hast thou?" said Elisha to the widow. Will our answer be the same, "*Not anything . . . save a pot of oil*"?

Have we really been brought to the end of our resources, "not . . . sufficient of ourselves, to account anything as from ourselves" (2 Corinthians 3:5, R.V.)? "Not anything in the house"—the "earthly house of this tabernacle" (2 Corinthians 5:1). No resources of our own. This is where we must be brought before God will show us the secret of the oil, and how it may be increased into rivers of oil, enough to pay our debt to the world, and to meet our own heart's need.

Oil is a well-known type of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus was anointed with the "oil of gladness" above His fellows. Child of God, you have "the pot of oil". "Know ye not that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Ghost which is in you?" (1 Corinthians 6:19, R.V., marg.).

Have you recognized His gracious presence, and given Him the throne of your heart? Have you honored Him as a Person, and not ignored Him by speaking, and thinking, of Him as "*it*", an influence rather than the third Person of the Blessed Trinity?

You received Jesus as your personal Savior entirely by the working of the Eternal Spirit, who delights in veiling Himself and flashing the light upon the Son of God; have you recognized the Holy Ghost as the One given to be your indwelling Teacher, and Guide into all the resources of God that are yours in Christ?

In the "pot of oil", lies all the possibility of your being able to pay your debt to the souls around you, and "God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye . . . may abound" (2 Corinthians 9:8).

"Yes, I know I have the oil," you reply, "but how can it be increased into rivers of oil?"

Let us turn again to our picture lesson, and note the directions given by Elisha to the widow.

"Go, borrow the vessels . . . empty vessels . . . go in, and shut the door . . . and pour out" (verses 3-4, R.V.).

Only borrowed vessels, so that you can never say "my" about the souls you are "used" to! Go, look for the needy ones, even among your neighbors, it matters not where, not waiting for "introductions", or you will miss some empty vessels, but ready for any opportunity that God may give you! When you find a vessel, a needy soul, take it in to the inner chamber, and "having shut the door, pray to thy Father, which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly" (Matthew 6:6).

How few of God's children know the secret of the "inner chamber", the Holiest of all, where we enter by the "new and living way", and under the sprinkled blood, abide in the glory of the Shekinah Light of God.

It is in the "secret place of the Most High" that we learn to "pour out", and find that the heavenly oil can flow perpetually in its healing, melting, softening power.

Let us sum up the points of God's message to us in this story.

1. Our responsibility to the souls around us who look to us to meet their need.
2. Our position of utter insufficiency to meet our responsibilities. God waits long to bring us to the place where we confess, and deeply feel it, that we have "nothing in the house".
3. Our resource lies in the "pot of oil"—the Presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, He who has been silently working to bring us to know our nothingness, and to see that in God alone is our only hope—the God who revealed Himself to Abraham as El Shaddai, the "Pourer-forth".

We must remember too—

1. That the oil will flow only as we *dwell* in the inner chamber of the King, the Holiest of All. It is not enough to have the "pot of oil", the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, but we must *abide* in unbroken fellowship with God, and "walk in the light as He is in the light", if His power is to be manifested for ourselves, and others.

2. That only as we work in God's way, and under God's directions, shall we find Him manifest His power.

Elisha said the widow was to take the vessels, and go in and shut her door. There would have been no flow of the oil had she questioned and said, "Why cannot I pour out elsewhere, why need I go in and shut the door?"

Absolute obedience to God's revealed will is the condition for the manifestation of His power. Ye "sought Him not after the due order" (1 Chronicles 15:13), may explain the withholding of His blessing in much of our service.

3. That we shall see the oil increased *only as we "pour out"*. There was no visible quantity before the widow began to pour, she obeyed the directions, and in faith upon the word of God through Elisha, she poured out her little all, then the oil flowed, and did not cease until there was not a vessel more.

4. That the oil will only flow to meet *real emptiness*, "thou shalt set aside that which is full" (verse 4). We need discernment not to keep pouring when the oil is stayed, because God sees that the vessel we are dealing with is full. If we do we shall be pouring out of ourselves—*dead works*, not the precious oil.

We need to remember too, that the oil flows without effort, and that nothing that is a "strain", or "forced" comes from God.

Blessed be God, empty vessels attract (so to speak), the heavenly oil! Desire is the vacuum that God delights to fill. Full souls do not need Him. "The full soul trampleth upon a honeycomb: But to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet" (Proverbs 27:7, R.V., marg.). This is why He *keeps us empty* that through us the oil may flow to meet the need of others, for the "empty vessels" who "desire intensely" (Matthew 5:6, lit.) to be filled, when filled, are again willing to be emptied that others may be blessed.

The story closes, "live thou and thy sons of the rest." The children were saved from bondage, and shared in the bountiful supply. Oh for the "oil" to flow so that "all that are in the house" may be blest. Why should we think God can use us anywhere, but at home?

If the "oil" cannot melt our loved ones, why expect it to melt others? How many are frustrating the deep purposes of God in their inner lives by running away from the discipline of their homes? It is easier to be trained as a Missionary than to accept God's training there.

But in our picture lesson, the *sons* shared in the power of the oil poured out.

Child of God, ponder your Father's message to you in this, and let Him adjust your life, and bring you into harmony with His will in every detail, so that you may dwell in the inner chamber, in the secret of His Presence, then as you carry before Him who sees in secret—pour out of His love and life until there is not a vessel more to be filled.