
19

AT EVENING-TIME LIGHT

The Secret of Effectual Service to God

A NEW YEAR'S ADDRESS

WE have through the Lord's goodness been permitted to enter upon another year, and the minds of many amongst us will no doubt be occupied with plans for the future, and the various spheres of service in which, if our lives be spared, we shall be engaged. The welfare of our families, the prosperity of our business, our work and service for the Lord, may be considered the most important matters to be attended to; but, according to my judgment, the most important point to be attended to is this: Above all things, see to it that your souls are happy in the Lord. Other things may press upon you; the Lord's work even may have urgent claims upon your attention; but I deliberately repeat, it is of supreme and paramount importance that you should seek, above all other things, to have your souls truly happy in God Himself. Day by day seek to make this the most important business of your life. This has been my firm and settled conviction for the last five-and-thirty years. For the first four years after my conversion I knew not its vast importance; but now, after much experience, I specially commend this point to the notice of my younger brethren and sisters in Christ. The secret of all true effectual service is,—joy in God, and having experimental acquaintance and fellowship with God Himself.

But in what way shall we attain to this settled happiness of soul? How shall we learn to enjoy God? how obtain such an all-sufficient soul-satisfying portion in Him as shall enable us to let go the things of this world as vain and worthless in comparison? I answer, This happiness is to be obtained through the study of the Holy Scriptures. God has therein revealed Himself unto us in the face of Jesus Christ.

In the Scriptures, by the power of the Holy Ghost, He makes Himself known unto our souls. Remember, it is not a god of our own thoughts or our own imaginations that we need to be acquainted with; but the God of the Bible, our Father, who has given the blessed Jesus to die for us. Him should we seek intimately to know, according to the revelation. He has made of Himself in his own most precious Word.

The way in which we study this Word is a matter of the deepest moment. The very earliest

portion of the day we can command should be devoted to meditation on the Scriptures. Our souls should feed upon the Word. We should read it—not for others, but for ourselves; all the promises, the encouragements, the warnings, the exhortations, the rebukes, should be taken home to our own bosoms. Especially let us remember not to neglect any portion of the Bible: it should be read regularly through. To read favourite portions of the Scriptures, to the exclusion of other parts, is a habit to be avoided. The whole Divine volume is inspired, and by degrees should be read regularly through. But to read the Bible thus is not enough; we must seek to become intimately and experimentally acquainted with Him whom the Scriptures reveal, with the blessed Jesus who has given Himself to die in our room and stead.

Oh, what an abiding, soul-satisfying portion do we possess in Him!

But another point here needs especially to be noticed: it is that we seek habitually to carry out what we know, to act up to the light that we have received; then more will assuredly be given. But if we fail to do this, our light will be turned into darkness. It is of the deepest moment that we walk with a sincere, honest, upright heart before the Lord. If evil be practised, or harboured and connived at, the channel of communication between our souls and God (for the time being) will be cut off. It is all important to remember this. Infirmities and weaknesses will cleave to us as long as we remain in the body; but this is a different thing from willingly allowing evil. I must be able, with a true, honest, upright heart, to look my heavenly Father in the face, and say, “Here I am, blessed Lord; do with me as Thou wilt.”

Then let us remember that we are His stewards. Our time, our health, our strength, our talents, our all, are His, and His alone. Let us seek to remember this, and carry it out this year, and then what happy Christians shall we all be! It is a Divine principle, “To him that hath shall more be given;” and as assuredly as we seek to make good use of that which is confided to us, more will be imparted. We shall be used of the Lord, and shall become increasingly happy in His own most blessed service. Brethren! we have only one life—one brief life; let us seek with renewed purpose of heart to consecrate that one life wholly to the Lord—day by day to live for God, and to serve Him with our body, soul, and spirit, which are
His.

Let it be our unceasing prayer, that as we grow older, we may not grow colder in the ways of God. As we advance in years, let us not decline in spiritual power; but let us see to it that an increase of spiritual vigour and energy be found in us, that our last days may be our best days.

Our holy faith does not consist in talking. “Reality, reality, reality,” is what we want. Let us have heart-work; let us be genuine. Brethren! we should live so as to be missed—missed both in the Church and in the world, when we are removed. Oh how rapidly is time hastening on! We should live in such a manner as that, if we were called hence, our dear brethren and

sisters might feel our loss, and from their inmost souls exclaim, "Oh that such a one were in our midst again!" We ought to be missed even by the world. Worldly persons should be constrained to say of us, "If ever there was a Christian upon earth, that man was one."

But to revert to the Scriptures. In them, through the teaching of the Holy Ghost, we become acquainted with the character of God. Our eyes are divinely opened to see what a lovely Being God is! and this good, gracious, loving, heavenly Father is ours, our portion for time and for eternity; and our adorable Lord Jesus, who gave Himself for us, is that blessed One, to whose image and likeness we shall be conformed; and to serve Him should be our greatest joy and privilege as long as we remain on earth.

But then, when trial and affliction come; when God deals with us as though He were not the lovely, kind, and gracious Being presented to us in His Word, shall we murmur and despond? Ah! no. Beloved in Christ! let us trust our heavenly Father; let us, like little children, hang entirely on Him, reposing in the sweet assurance of His unchangeable, eternal love. Let us remember how He acted towards His saints of old, what His dealings were with them; let us remember what is recorded concerning their history; for now, as He has ever done, God will most surely act according to His word.

This intimate experimental acquaintance with Him will make us truly happy. Nothing else will. If we are not happy Christians (I speak deliberately, I speak advisedly), there is something wrong. If we did not close the past year in a happy frame of spirit, the fault is ours, and ours alone.

In God our Father, and the blessed Jesus, our souls have a rich, divine, imperishable, eternal treasure. Let us enter into practical possession of these true riches; yea, let the remaining days of our earthly pilgrimage be spent in an ever-increasing, devoted, earnest consecration of our souls to God.

Müller, George. Jehovah Magnified: Addresses. Bristol, England: The Bible and Tract Depot of the Scriptural Knowledge Institution, 1876. Print.

At the beginning of chapter 19, Pierson transitions to the content of the chapter with a sentence that is quite remarkable, but easily overlooked. He states, "From May, 1892, when the last mission tour closed, he devoted himself mainly to the work of the Scriptural Knowledge Institution, and to preaching at Bethesda and elsewhere as God seemed to appoint."

Why is the statement so remarkable?

Müller enjoyed peculiarly good health in the later years of his ministry. To what three things does he attribute such health?

Is there any Scriptural warrant for connecting these three things to his good health? If so, what?

If George Müller had so faithfully followed the Lord for so many decades, and the Lord had been pleased to bless him with health that was times greater in his old age than in his younger days, why did he die?

What would the natural question be that many would ask at Müller's passing?

How did Mr. Wright, Müller’s successor, answer that question?

How did Mr. Wright respond to requests for the erection of a monument in Müller’s honor?

Pierson records Mr. Wright summarizing George Müller’s life thusly, *“He fed on the Word and therefore was strong. He found the centre of that Word in the living Person it enshrines, and his one ground of confidence was His atoning work. Always in his own eyes weak, wretched, and vile, unworthy of the smallest blessing, he rested solely on the merit and mediation of His great High Priest.”*

To which Spiritual Discipline does the first statement above most closely correspond?

To which Mark of a Healthy Church-member does the second statement most closely correspond?

To which lesson from our study on Mortification does the last statement most closely correspond?

What does the fact that George Müller practiced the same disciplines and principles of Christian living that we have been learning tell us about God? About the Gospel? About discipleship?

Why is it important that we see that?

NEXT LESSON

THE SUMMARY OF THE LIFE-WORK

Dear Mr. Müller, who is a man living near to God, whose every word is like a pearl, said the other day, "Sometimes when I go into my closet to pray, I find I cannot pray as I would. What do I then? Why, since I cannot speak to the Lord, I beg the Lord to speak to me, and therefore I open the Scriptures and read my portion; and then I find the Lord gives me matter for prayer." Is not this a suggestion of much weight? Does it not commend itself to your spiritual judgment? Have you not observed that when somebody calls to see you, you may not be in a fit condition to start a profitable conversation; but if your friend will lead, your mind takes fire, and you have no difficulty in following him. Frequently it will be best to ask the Lord to lead the sacred converse, or wait awhile till he does so. It is a blessed thing to wait at the posts of his doors, expecting a word of love from his throne. It is generally best in communion with God to begin with hearing his voice, because it is due to his sacred majesty that we should first hear what he has to say to us; and it will especially be best for us to do so when we feel out of order for communion. If the flesh in its weakness hampers the spirit, then let the Bible reading come before the praying, that the soul may be awakened thereby. Still, there are times when it will be better to speak to our heavenly Father at once. For instance, if a child has done wrong, it is very wise of him to run straight away to his father, before his father has said anything to him, and say, "Father I have sinned." The prodigal had the first word, and so should our penitence seek for speedy audience, and pour itself out like water before the Lord. Sometimes too, when our heart is very full of thankfulness, we should allow praise to burst forth at once.=

Spurgeon, C. H. The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons. Vol. 21. London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1875. Print.