

The School of Obedience

by Andrew Murray

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9. NOTES ON THE MORNING WATCH

'By, the observance of the morning watch is commonly meant the spending of at least the first half-hour of every day alone with God, in personal devotional Bible study and prayer'

'There are Christians who say that they do not have time to devote a full half-hour to such a spiritual exercise. It is a striking fact that the busiest Christians constitute the class who plead this excuse the least, and most generally observe the morning watch.'

'Any Christian who will honestly and persistently follow this plan for a month or two will become convinced that it is the best possible use of his time, that it does not interfere with his regular work, and that it promotes the wisest economy of time.'

'In India, in China, in Japan, hundreds of students have agreed to keep the morning watch....'

The practical question for each of us is, Why should not I keep the morning watch? Next to receiving CHRIST as Saviour, and claiming the baptism of the HOLY GHOST, we know of no act attended with larger good to ourselves and to others than the formation of an undiscourageable resolution to keep the morning watch.

These quotations are from an address by John R. Mott. At first sight the closing statement appears too strong. But think a moment, what such a revelation implies.

It means the deep conviction that the only way to maintain and carry out the surrender to CHRIST and the HOLY SPIRIT, is by meeting GOD very definitely at the commencement of each day, and receiving from Himself the grace needed for a walk in holy obedience.

It means an insight into the folly of attempting to live a heavenly life without rising up into close communion with GOD in Heaven, and receiving from Himself the fresh bestowal of spiritual blessings.

It means the confession that it is alone in personal fellowship with GOD, and in delight in His nearness, that proof can be given that our love responds to His, and that we count His nearness our chief joy.

It means the faith that if time enough be given for GOD to lay His hands on us, and renew the inflowings of His Spirit, our soul may be so closely united to Him that no trials or duties can

separate us from Him.

It means a purpose to live wholly and only for GOD, and by the sacrifice of time and ease to prove that we are willing to pay any price to secure the first of all blessings the presence of GOD for all the day.

Let us now look again at that sentence-, *'Next to receiving CHRIST as our Saviour, and claiming the baptism of the HOLY SPIRIT, we know of no act attended with larger good to ourselves or to others than the formation of an undiscourageable resolution to keep the morning watch.'* If our acceptance of CHRIST as Lord and Master was whole-hearted, if our prayer for and claiming of the HOLY SPIRIT to guide and control was sincere, surely there can be no thought of not giving GOD each day sufficient time, our very best time, for receiving and increasing in us what is indispensable to a life for CHRIST's glory and in His service.

You tell me there are many Christians who are content with ten minutes or a quarter of an hour. There are, but you will certainly not as a rule find them strong Christians.

And the Students' Movement is pleading with GOD, above everything, that He would meet to train a race of devoted, whole-hearted young men and women. CHRIST asked great sacrifices of His disciples; He has perhaps asked little of you as yet. But now He allows, He invites, He longs for you to make some. Sacrifices make strong men. Sacrifices help wonderfully to wrench us away from earth and self-pleasing, and lift us heavenward. Do not try to pare down the time limit of the morning watch to less than the half-hour. There can be no question about the possibility of finding the time. Ten minutes from sleep, ten from company or amusement, ten from lessons. How easy where the heart is right, hungering to know GOD and His will perfectly!

If you feel that you do not feel the need of so much time, and know not how to wait, we are content you should speak of your quiet time, or your hour of prayer. GOD may graciously, later on, draw you out to the morning watch.

But do not undertake it unless you feel your heart stirred with the determination to make a sacrifice, and have full time for intimate intercourse with GOD. But if you are ready to do this, we urge you to join. The very fact of setting apart such a period helps to awaken the feeling: I have a great work to do, and I need time for it. It strengthens in your heart the conviction: If I am to be kept all this day without sin I must have time to get near to GOD. It will give your Bible study new point, as you find time, between the reading, to be still and bow in humility for the HOLY SPIRIT's hidden working, and wait till you get some real apprehension of GOD's will for you, through the Word. And, by the grace of GOD, it may help you to begin that habit of specific and definite intercession of which the Church so surely stands in need.

Students! you know not whether in your future life your time may be more limited, your circumstances more unfavorable, your Christian earnestness feebler. Now is the accepted time. Today, as the HOLY GHOST saith. Listen to the invitation of your brethren in all lands, and fear not to form an undiscourageable resolution to spend at least half an hour each morning with GOD alone.

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