

KEPT FOR THE MASTER'S USE

by

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CHAPTER TWO

OUR MOMENTS KEPT FOR JESUS

“Keep my moments and my days;
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.”

IT may be a little help to writer and reader if we consider some of the practical details of the life which we desire to have “kept for Jesus.” In the order of the little hymn at the beginning of this book, with the one word “take” changed to “keep,” so we will take a couplet for each chapter.

The first point that naturally comes up is that which is almost synonymous with life—our time. And this brings us at once face to face with one of our past difficulties, and its probable cause.

When we take a wide sweep, we are so apt to be vague. When we are aiming at generalities, we do not hit the practicalities. We forget that faithfulness to principle is only proved by faithfulness in detail. Has not this vagueness had something to do with the constant ineffectiveness of our feeble desire that our time should be devoted to God?

In things spiritual, the greater does not always include the less, but, paradoxically, the less more often includes the greater. So in this case, time is entrusted to us to be traded with for our Lord. But we cannot grasp it as a whole. We instinctively break it up ere we can deal with it for any purpose.

So when a New Year comes round, we commit it with special earnestness to the Lord. But as we do so, are we not conscious of a feeling that even a year is too much for us to deal with? And does not this feeling, that we are dealing with a larger thing than we can grasp, take away from the sense of reality? Thus we are brought to a more manageable measure; and as the Sunday mornings or the Monday mornings come round, we thankfully commit the opening week to Him, and the sense of help and rest is renewed and strengthened. But not even the six or seven days are close enough to our hand; even to-morrow exceeds our tiny grasp, and even to-morrow's grace is therefore not given to us. So we find the need of considering our lives as a matter of day by day, and that any more general committal and consecration of our time does not meet the case so truly. Here we have found much comfort and help, and if results have not been entirely satisfactory, they have, at least, been more so than before we reached this point of subdivision.

But if we have found help and blessing by going a certain distance in one direction, is it not probable we shall find more if we go farther in the same? And so, if we may commit the days to our Lord, why not the hours, and why not the moments? And may we not expect a fresh and special blessing in so doing?

We do not realize the importance of moments. Only let us consider those two sayings of God about them, "**In a moment shall they die,**" and, "**We shall all be changed in a moment,**" and we shall think less lightly of them. Eternal issues may hang upon any one of them, but it has come and gone before we can even think about it. Nothing seems less within the possibility of our own keeping, yet nothing is more inclusive of all other keeping. Therefore let us ask Him to keep them for us.

Are they not the tiny joints in the harness through which the darts of temptation pierce us? Only give us time, we think, and we should not be overcome. Only give us time, and we could pray and resist, and the devil would flee from us. But he comes all in a moment; and in a moment—an unguarded, unkept one—we utter the hasty or exaggerated word, or think the unchristlike thought, or feel the unchristlike impatience or resentment

But even if we have gone so far as to say, "Take my moments," have we gone the step farther, and really let Him take them—really entrusted them to Him? It is no good saying "take" when we do not let go. How can another keep that which we are keeping hold of? So let us, with full trust in His power, first commit these slippery moments to Him,—put them right into His hand,—and then we may trustfully and happily say:

"Lord, keep them for me! Keep every one of the quick series as it arises. I cannot keep them for Thee; do Thou keep them for Thyself!"

But the sanctified and Christ-loving heart cannot be satisfied with only negative keeping. We do not want only to be kept from displeasing Him, but to be kept always pleasing Him. Every "*kept from*" should have its corresponding and still more blessed "*kept for.*" We do not want our moments to be simply kept from Satan's use, but kept for His use; we want them to be not only kept from sin, but kept for His praise.

Do you ask, "But what use can He make of mere moments?"

I will not stay to prove or illustrate the obvious truth that, as are the moments, so will be the hours and the days which they build. You understand that well enough. I will answer your question as it stands.

Look back through the history of the Church in all ages, and mark how often a great work and mighty influence grew out of a mere moment in the life of one of God's servants: a mere moment, but overshadowed and filled with the fruitful power of the Spirit of God. The moment may have been spent in uttering five words, but they have fed five thousand, or even five hundred thousand. Or it may have been lit by the flash of a thought that has shone into hearts and homes throughout the land, and kindled torches that have been borne into earth's darkest corners.

The rapid speaker or the lonely thinker little guessed what use his Lord was making of that single moment. There was no room in it for even a thought of that. If that moment had not been, though perhaps unconsciously, “kept for Jesus,” but had been otherwise occupied, what a harvest to His praise would have been missed!

The same thing is going on every day. It is generally a moment—either an opening or a culminating one—that really does the work. It is not so often a whole sermon as a single short sentence in it that wings God’s arrow to a heart. It is seldom a whole conversation that is the means of bringing about the desired result, but some sudden turn of thought or word, which comes with the electric touch of God’s power.

Sometimes it is less than that; only a look (and what is more momentary?) has been used by Him for the pulling down of strongholds. Again, in our own quiet waiting upon God, as moment after moment glides past in the silence at His feet, the eye resting upon a page of His Word, or only looking up to Him through the darkness, have we not found that He can so irradiate one passing moment with His light that its rays never die away, but shine on and on through days and years? Are not such moments proved to have been kept for Him? And if some, why not all!

This view of moments seems to make it clearer that it is impossible to serve two masters, for it is evident that the service of a moment cannot be divided. If it is occupied in the service of self or any other master, it is not at the Lord’s disposal; He cannot make use of what is already occupied.

Oh, how much we have missed by not placing them at His disposal! What might He not have done with the moments freighted with self or loaded with emptiness, which we have carelessly let drift by! Oh, what might have been if they had all been kept for Jesus! How He might have filled them with His light and life, enriching our own lives that have been impoverished by the waste, and using them in far-spreading blessing and power!

While we have been undervaluing these fractions of eternity, what has our gracious God been doing in them? How strangely touching are the words, “What is man, that Thou shouldest set Thine heart upon him, and that Thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?” Terribly solemn and awful would be the thought that He has been trying us every moment, were it not for the yearning gentleness and love of the Father revealed in that wonderful expression of wonder, “What is man, that Thou shouldest set Thine heart upon him.

Think of that ceaseless setting of His heart upon us, careless and forgetful children as we have been! And then think of those other words, nonetheless literally true because given under a figure: “**I, the Lord, do keep it; I will water it every moment.**”

We see something of God’s infinite greatness and wisdom when we try to fix our dazzled gaze on infinite space. But when we turn to the marvels of the microscope, we gain a clearer view and more definite grasp of these attributes by gazing on the perfection of His infinitesimal handiworks.

Just so, while we cannot realize the infinite love which fills eternity, and the infinite vistas of the great future are dark with excess of light even to the strongest telescopes of faith, we see that love magnified in the microscope of the moments, brought very close to us, and revealing its unspeakable perfection of detail to our wondering sight.

But we do not see this as long as the moments are kept in our own hands. We are like little children closing our fingers over diamonds. How can they receive and reflect the rays of light, analyzing them into all the splendor of their prismatic beauty, while they are kept shut up tight in the dirty little hands? Give them up! Let our Father hold them for us, and throw His own great light upon them. Then we shall see them full of fair colors of His manifold lovingkindnesses. Let Him always keep them for us, and then we shall always see His light and His love rejected in them.

And then surely they shall be filled with praise. Not that we are to be always singing hymns, and using the expressions of other people's praise. But praise will be the tone, the color, the atmosphere in which they flow; none of them away from it or out of it.

Is it a little too much for them all to flow in ceaseless praise? Well, where will you stop? What proportion of your moments do you think enough for Jesus? How many for the spirit of praise, and how many for the spirit of heaviness? Be explicit about it, and come to an understanding, if He is not to have all, then how much? Calculate balance, and apportion. You will not be able to do this in heaven—you know it will be all praise there; but you are free to have your service of praise here, or to make the proportion what you will.

- Yet,—He made you for His glory.
- Yet,—He chose you that you should be to the praise of His glory.
- Yet,—He loves you every moment, waters you every moment, watches you unslumberingly, cares for you unceasingly.
- Yet,—He died for you!

Dear friends, one can hardly write it without tears. Shall you or I remember all this love, and hesitate to give all our moments up to Him? Let us entrust Him with them, and ask Him to keep them all, every single one, *for* His own beloved self, and fill them *all* with His praise, and let them *all* be to His praise!

~ end of chapter 2 ~

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