

HIS INDWELLING PRESENCE

Intimate Studies in the Things of the Spirit

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THE APPEAL

THE PRACTICE OF HIS PRESENCE

“That I may know Him” (Philippians 3:10).

Eternity will be occupied with an unfolding experience of “Him,” conditioned upon an initial knowledge of Him, here and now. This being so, the utmost of human wisdom for the present time consists in availing ourselves of the opportunity to know Him.

In the Epistle to the Philippians, Paul makes evident that for him, becoming a Christian had wrought nothing short of a revolution. The revolution consisted chiefly in this: that from the day he met the Son of God upon the Damascus road he found his life centering no longer in things but in a Person. Religious ceremonies and activities surrendered the supreme command to this Person: **“For to me to live is Christ.”**

Common standards of morality gave room to a controlling ambition to please this Person: “Wherefore we make it our ambition . . . to be well-pleasing to Him.” This change of center is the essential characteristic of genuine Christian experience.

Every godly person, living his life in the light of revealed truth, learns to stand in awe of

A Great Discovery

The Psalmist records such a discovery in Psalm 139. He envisions his life as incapable of escape from the Omniscience, Omnipresence, and Omnipotence of God. In its contemplation he is filled with awe and reverence.

But the Christian has made a still greater discovery. He is not only in the presence of a wonderful, wonder-working God, but that God is a Presence in him. Taking Him at His word, proving His word true in experience, his life has actually become the In-coming, Indwelling, Inworking, Infilling of His blessed, personal Presence.

No discovery could possibly hold greater potentialities for lifting life to a higher level, for altering its course and changing its very nature. This is so evidently true that we make bold to assert that the chief duty of the Christian, once he has made the discovery and knows it to be a fact, is to capitalize this Presence for character, conduct and service.

This is precisely what Paul did. It is just what every godly follower of Christ has done. Such a life is for every reader of *His Indwelling Presence*—this is the focal-point of its appeal.

A Consuming Desire

Paul found this change of center, this Christocentric life, quickly maturing into a consuming, passionate desire: “**That I may know Him.**”

And, as he goes on to say, he wants to know Him transformingly, that he may get all the values there are for him in this privileged intimacy; he cannot suffer any of the possibilities of His indwelling Presence to go unappropriated.

We can imagine a noted guest coming late at night to lodge at our home. We show him to the guest-chamber, carefully made ready for his comfort. He retires to rest. But with what eagerness we anticipate the morning hours, bringing their privileged opportunity to “**know him.**” Could there be a more tragic tragedy than for us to be entertaining the greatest of all guests—the Lord of Life and Glory—and restrain our hearts from fulfilling the desire to know Him, the most blessed person of the universe, in as utter familiarity as He is pleased to accord us? Any other attitude would be unthinkable, did not a disappointing experience with the human heart teach us otherwise.

As we write from a summer sojourn in Wisconsin, a young girl of twenty, resident of a neighboring town, and blind from birth, by a series of delicate operations has been given her sight. She was away from home, in Milwaukee. Her first glimpses of a hitherto unseen world were entrancing. Yet this is what she said: “I have seen a sunset with its myriad colors, a rose whose beauty could never be imagined by the sense of feeling, but I want most of all to see my mother.”

What of Him “**whom not having seen, we love**”? Does not our love beget a longing that runs on before in desire to see His face?

One day a godly woman, a parishioner of ours, came to us with beaming face to say that she had seen the Lord in a dream, and that His face and form were surpassingly beautiful to her. Things that we greatly desire, that take hold of our imagination before we have seen them, of these we have often dreamed. Have we dreamed of Him? If not, is it because He is still so unreal to us? So undesired?

A Daily Life-Adjustment

The Holy Spirit has adjusted His mode of living to actually inhabit, indwell our lives. We must, in turn, adjust our living, in its every thought, aspiration and action, to the fact that He is there, in us, a part of us. Since our physical senses cannot apprehend Him, we must exercise our spiritual faculties in the art of knowing Him. We must practice His presence. Nay, we must make it the business of our lives to live in the momentary consciousness of His abiding presence.

How shall we practice His presence? The means of grace are really His appointed provision to this end. As we turn to His Word, given to us by the Spirit, we must trust the Spirit in us to answer to the Spirit in the Word. Thus, as we read, our spirits are quickened into conscious realization of His Spirit indwelling us. As the love letter serves to satisfy the heart by enabling us to feed upon the object of our love, so is His Word to the heart that hungers after Him.

Prayer is essentially the practice of His presence. True prayer is talking to God. It is claiming audience with God. Resolute in the purpose not to neglect prayer, nor yet to use it merely to get something from God, we need to seize upon it with renewed avidity, as the opportunity to commune with Him, to school our spirits in responding to His Spirit, to practice His presence.

Particularly must we practice His presence in our daily round. Life must become the outliving of His in-living. Many are familiar with the story of Brother Lawrence, a monk of the seventeenth century. His life was characterized by the perpetual sense of God's presence. All his thoughts and aspirations were tempered by the fact of God in his life. Assigned to menial kitchen duties, he found Him as consciously real and near as when engaged in his daily devotions.

It is from such daily practice of His presence that the radiant life is realized.

In the diary of Henry Martyn, the sainted missionary of India, is found this entry: "My principal enjoyment is the enjoyment of God's presence." Did the fact disclose itself in any way to others? The natives of Cawnpore used to say of him: "God is shining in that man's face."

In our busy modern life it is possible, yea needful, to seize upon some round of the day—the man setting out for business as he seats himself in his car; the housewife starting breakfast or sweeping the floor—and cause the initiating of the act to serve as a signal for lifting the heart into conscious communion with Him, to claim His presence and partnership in the particular task or at some anticipated point of need. Simple in itself, the practice will return large spiritual dividends.

Not long ago we were conducting a two weeks' meeting in a certain western community. A young man, a few years out of college and but recently married, showed the profoundest interest in truths that to him were utterly new. He and his young wife began the daily practice of family worship. It proved so profitable that he could not refrain from frequently commenting upon it. He was finding new reality in the Christian life.

Then one day he came to our room with the wistful query: "Do I understand you to say that we can have Christ all the time in our lives?" "Certainly," we replied; "that is exactly what the Christian life means. He is all the time present with us and in us."

To aid him in his earnest desire to realize that presence, we suggested: "Suppose, when you awaken in the morning the sun is shining brightly. It reminds you of Jesus who said of Himself, '**I am the light of the world.**' and you say to Him, 'Lord Jesus, just As the sun shines in the heavens will You shine in my heart today, dispelling the darkness from every corner by flooding it with Your light!'

"You proceed to dress. As you do so you recall that He speaks of clothing us with righteousness as a garment, and you say, 'Lord Jesus, as I am clothing my body to make it fit to appear among men, will You cover me with Your righteousness this day, that I may be spiritually fit to mingle among my fellows.'"

"You draw water to wash your face and hands. As you do so you are reminded of Jesus' promise to cleanse us with water, and you say, 'Lord Jesus, just as I am washing my body with, water, do You wash me this day that I may be clean of heart, within as well as without.'

"You sit down to eat your breakfast. As you do so you realize how much your soul needs the Bread of Life, which bread Jesus is, and you say, 'Lord Jesus, just as I renew my physical man with this food do You give me food for the inner man that I may be strong this day to do Thy will.'"

Then I said to him, "What are you doing by all of this? You are bringing Christ consciously into your life for the day, making Him real for its round of duty."

The young man seemed to catch a new vision of life. His eye glistened with the tenderness of the thought that Christ was his ever-present, every-day possession. Looking out of the window, across the street to his place of business (he ran a factory for making apple boxes), he said, with a hush in his voice, "Well, it's going to be a different box factory."

He saw Christ working there with him, and in him, in blessed partnership.

The reader will not be surprised at the sequel. Shortly that young man stood out as the spiritual leader in the community. We know his secret—not he, but Christ in him. It is an open secret, available to every one of us. Reader, will you make it yours?

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