

FULLY FURNISHED

or

THE CHRISTIAN WORKER'S EQUIPMENT

by

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CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

THE WORKER'S MOTIVE

“For Jesus’ sake” (II Corinthians 4:5).

ONE of the four things which will be manifested at the judgment seat of Christ will be our motive in Christian work. When we stand in our glorified bodies before our Lord Jesus, as Lord, we shall have reviewed:

1. Our whole life since we believed in Christ, according to I Corinthians 4:5;
2. Our conduct towards our fellow believers, as shown in Romans 14:1-10;
3. Our work, of what sort it is; and our reward will correspond to the amount that stands the fire, as we read in I Corinthians 3:12-15;
4. Our motive in our life and service, as implied in II Corinthians 5:9-16.

Before we refer to three signs as evidences that we are working for Christ’s sake alone, we shall ask a few practical questions, which will revolve round this main question, “Why are we workers?”

Do we work because we hope to effect our salvation by it?

This describes a class unhappily only too numerous among those known as Christian workers.

A lady who was inviting a believer to a mission, was asked by him if she knew her sins forgiven, and if she had peace with God, and to his surprise the lady replied “No,” but that she hoped it would be all right, meaning that her zeal in Christian work would entitle her to salvation. This lady was ignorant of the knowledge that salvation is the gift of God, “**Not of works, lest any man should boast**” (Ephesians 2:9).

God justifies without works the ungodly, who believe in Jesus (Romans 3:20, 24; 4:4,5). Yea, man’s works are dead ones (Hebrews 9:14). And, besides, those that are in the flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:6-8). And everyone is in the flesh, and of the flesh, until he is born again (John 3:5, 6).

We do not, and cannot, work to be saved, but we are saved to work.

Do we work because others are engaged in it?

If so, we are following others, and not Christ, and, like Peter's companions, we go a fishing because the suggestion, "**I go a fishing,**" is given to us.

One takes up a work, and others follow, because of the one who leads. They have not been to the Lord inquiring, "**What wilt Thou have me to do?**"

They are influenced only by what others do. They work with others, as Lot with Abraham, instead of working with the Lord, as Abraham walked with Him.

Do we work because we like it?

Then Christian work with us may be but a pastime, a hobby, just as a man takes pleasure in keeping pigeons, or having his garden in trim.

A young lady, unconverted, once said to the writer, that she "would like to visit some elderly Christian women." It was simply a whim, to be relinquished for the next fancy. Our work should not be chosen, merely because we like it. In this, as in all circumstances, the Lord should be judge in such matters. If we love Him, we shall love to do as He bids us, for His sake alone. To know that we are in the will of God gives lasting peace. It was this that enabled Madame Guyon to sing in her solitude in the Bastille, though had she chosen for herself, she would probably have been surrounded by friends of kindred spirit. But knowing that the Lord willed her there, she could sing,

"A little bird I am,
Shut from the fields of air,
And in my, cage I sit and sing
To Him who placed me there;
Well pleased a prisoner to be,
Because, my God, it pleaseth Thee.

"Naught have I else to do;
I sing the whole day long:
And He whom most I love to please
Doth listen to my song;
He caught and bound my wandering wing,
But still He bends to hear me sing.

"Thou hast an ear to hear;
A heart to love and bless;
And though my notes were e'er so rude,
Thou would'st not hear the less;
Because Thou knowest, as they fall,
That love, sweet love, inspires them all."

Do we work because people - religious people - think well of us?

It may be pleasing to hear the complimentary “How earnest he is!” “How well he speaks!” “What devotion she manifests!” but is there not a bit of Simon Magusism, when we are pleased, simply because we are well spoken of? Simon Magus gave himself out to be some great one: he was inflated with pride, and swelled like the frog in the fable with conceit. Bunyan watched against this spirit, and put the cap on the right person, when, in answer to a friend’s remark, how well he had preached, said, “The devil told me that, before you did.”

Do we work because it may introduce us into good society?

Then we are like those young ladies who were said to have changed their sphere of work (or engaged in Christian work for the first time), hoping by such means to throw themselves in the way of young men, and “pick up a husband:” or are we like the shrewd worldling who associates himself with Christian work so as to enlarge his business?

Do we work because it is fashionable?

There is a so-called “Christian” work that is fashionable - entertainments for the people; bazaars got up to raise funds to carry on God’s (?) work; “sacred” concerts, at which unconverted people sing to amuse, and in which Christians help. It is something akin to Jehoshaphat’s policy, when he allied himself to ungodly Ahab, and brought on himself the censure of the prophet of the Lord:-

“Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord” (II Chronicles 19:2).

Let us guard against the wrong motive in Christian work. The apostle had to warn Titus of some who were working “**for filthy lucre’s sake**” (Titus 1:11).

Let us be careful lest we work for self’s sake, pride’s sake, praise’s sake, friends’ sake, record’s sake, people’s sake, ministers’ sake, or any others’ sake. Perchance we may have mixed motives, like the Jews who came “**not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might see Lazarus**” (John 12:9).

If we are living and working for the sake of Him to whom we owe everything, for whose sake we have been forgiven and blessed, even as David for Jonathan’s sake honoured Mephibosheth (II Samuel 9:1, 7), there will be seen in us, denial of self, devotion in service, and delight in suffering.

I - Denial of self

The Lord says, “**And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it**” (Luke 9:23-24).

And also in John 12:24-26, “**Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will the Father honour.**”

What the Lord insists upon, if we would follow Him in service, is not self-denial, but the denial of self. Note the difference.

Self-denial is denying self something, as in the case of David, when he denied himself the draught taken at so great a risk from the well of Bethlehem (I Chronicles 11:17, 18); but the denial of self is denying self itself, and using Peter’s words to self, not to Christ, “**I know not the Man**” (Matthew 26:74).

- Self-denial is often Pharisaical, and prides itself upon its almsgiving and fasting; while the denial of self is letting Christ have all, and letting Him hold all.
- Self-denial is self at work, while the denial of self is seeing and reckoning self to be dead with Christ.

Paul knew this when he said, “**I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.**”

“I once lived, but now I’m dead,
And Christ - He lives in me instead.”

Oh, horrid self! in how many ways it seeks to show itself!

- There is humble self, who is very proud of his humility;
- There is hypocritical self, who gives utterance to what he knows nothing of in his experience;
- Covetous self, who cares not who sinks so long as he swims;
- Ambitious self, who seeks to be big, and will not be anything if he cannot be at the top of the tree;
- Conceited self, who fancies himself like King Saul, head and shoulders above everyone else;
- Earnest self, who is so carried away by enthusiasm, as to lose sight of the glory of God.

Then there is religious self, who thinks himself holier than others: this Dagon is very tenacious of life, and dies but slowly, as is illustrated in the following:-

“In the parish where Mr. Hervey preached, when he inclined to loose sentiments, there resided a ploughman whose seasonable advice made Mr. Hervey a debtor. Being advised by his physician, for the benefit of his health, to follow the plough, in order to smell the fresh earth, Mr. Hervey frequently followed the plough man in his rural employment, and understanding that the ploughman was a serious person, the question was put to him one morning, ‘What do you think is the hardest thing in religion?’

“To which he replied, ‘I am a poor, illiterate man, and you, sir, are a minister. I beg leave to return the question.’

“‘Then,’ said Hervey, ‘I think the hardest thing is to deny sinful self;’ and he applauded at some length his own example of self-denial.

“The ploughman replied: ‘Mr. Hervey, you have forgotten the greatest act of self-denial, which is, to deny ourselves of a proud confidence in our own obedience.’

“Mr. Hervey looked at the man in amazement, thinking him a fool; but in after years, when relating the story, he would add, ‘I have clearly seen who was the fool - not the wise old Christian, but the proud James Hervey.’”

A good way to lose sight of self is to do with it what we do, when we do not want to see our shadow; that is, keep our face to the light, and then our shadow will be behind. We cannot be proud of ourselves if we are walking in the light, for we shall see that all advancement in Christian life and labour is not our working at all, but the result of the Lord working through us.

“Come after Me,” says Christ, who leads while He invites us to follow. He lost His life on the Cross for us, and He has found it in a sense in which He never would have found it, had He not denied Himself. And now He bids us follow Him in losing the self-life, and knowing the Christ-life. The following little incident may help to illustrate this.

A boy at a certain school was noted for his aptitude in a game of marbles. The other boys did not like this, and they consequently shunned his company. The boy, meeting his pastor one day, unburdened his mind, and, after listening attentively, the pastor said, “Well, Ernest, you do win a good many marbles, don’t you?”

“Why, yes, sir; of course I do.”

“I wonder, now, if you ever ask the Lord Jesus about this marble playing?”

“Yes, sir; I do.”

“And what do you ask Him?”

“I ask Him to let me hit.”

“Ernest, do you ever ask Him to let another boy hit?”

“No, sir; of course I don’t.”

“Why not?”

“Why, I want to get all the marbles I can.”

“It seems as if the other boys might like to win sometimes,” said the pastor thoughtfully. “Ernest, are you trying to show God to the boys?”

“Yes, sir, I am.”

“Do you ever talk to them about God?”

“Yes, sir, I do; I’d like to have the boys know Him.”

“Well, do they seem to want to love Him much?”

“No. I think the boys don’t care much about God.”

“Well, Ernest, I don’t know that I wonder much at it. The God they see is your God. He lets you have all that you want, but does not tell you to ask Him to give them anything. You are not showing them the God who laid down His life.”

“What do you mean, sir?”

“Giving up the thing that we want is the very heart of religion. Christ laid down His life for us, and we are to lay down our lives for others. If we lose our life - that is, our will, our way, our pleasure, our advantage - for Christ’s sake, we shall find the real life which He only can give, Try it, Ernest; lose your life among the boys, and see if they won’t think better of your God.”

Too many of us are very much like the boy. As long as we succeed, it is well; but let us fail, and it is ill. If we are living and laboring for Christ’s sake, we must remember that the very first principle is the denial of self.

II - Devotion in service.

There is no one who so fully illustrates this as the Apostle Paul. How frequently he uses the word “sake” in reference to the Lord Jesus and His Gospel, as the reason why he and others should be devoted in service!

In asking an interest in their prayers, Paul says, “**I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me**” (Romans 15:30).

- In speaking of his persecutions, and how he was counted a man out of his mind, he says, “**We are fools for Christ’s sake**” (I Corinthians 4:10).

- In mentioning the subject matter of his preaching, he assures the Corinthian Christians: “**We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake**” (II Corinthians 4:5).

- In mentioning his willingness to identify himself with any persons, and to take up any position, that he might thereby gain the souls of men for Christ, he says, “**This I do for the Gospel’s sake**” (I Corinthians 9:23).

And when Paul, a prisoner in Rome, writes to Philemon about his runaway slave Onesimus, he entreats the master to receive the slave back **“for love’s sake”** (Philemon 9).

Out of love to David, did his three mighty men risk their lives among the Philistines; Shammah kept the field of lentils against the Philistines; and Dodo fought against the same people till his hand clave to his sword (II Samuel 23:9-17).

Let us remember that there can be no true service, except as it is the outcome of love to Christ, and for the sake of Christ alone. Abundant gifts there may be, and ability to minister, but love there must be. The Holy Spirit would have us remember this. Look at I Corinthians:12, 13 and 14; I Corinthians 12: speaks of gift; I Corinthians 14: speaks of ministry; while I Corinthians 13: tells of the moving power of gift, and the motive power of ministry, which is LOVE, LOVE, LOVE!

Without love the gift is mere sound without reality: and the ministry is dry, instead of refreshing and fruitful.

III - *Delight in suffering.*

Paul was no stranger to suffering. **“For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake”** (Acts 9:16), were the words with which the Lord introduced His chosen vessel to the regard of Ananias.

The future life of Paul fully bore out this.

He was **“delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake”** (II Corinthians 4:11). And in writing of the thorn in the flesh, and the power of Christ resting over him, as a tabernacle, he tells us that he takes **“pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake”** (II Corinthians 12:10). He reminds the Church at Colosse that Christ was suffering through him, as he, for the Church’s sake, was enduring hardship:- **“Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body’s sake, which is the Church”** (Colossians 1:24). He reminds the Philippians that it is given unto them **“in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake”** (Philippians 1:29) .

We do not wonder that the early Christians:

- Took joyfully the spoiling of their goods;
- Went calmly to the arena to be devoured by lions;
- Sang praises to God while their backs were lacerated, and their feet fast in the stocks;
- Rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ, for Christ was all to them.

The person of Christ was the one joy of their lives.

Like Mephibosheth, it was little to them, what they had of this world's goods, or what they lost. The world could take, and have all, so long as their Lord the King was theirs (II Samuel 19:30).

And if we glory in the Person of Christ, and know His living power and presence, we shall long to **“know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death”** (Philippians 3:10).

It seems to us that there are three classes of Christian workers.

Some are like canal boats, and have to be dragged along by a power outside of them. These workers engage in Christian work, because they have been influenced by some around them. Let the leader fail, and the work ceases.

Then there are other workers who may be compared to sailing vessels, dependent on wind and tide. These workers labour well, so long as the wind of approval is favorable, and the tide of public opinion is high. Let contrary winds assail them, and forthwith there is the tacking of self, and the running before what others say.

Lastly, there are workers who may be likened to Atlantic liners. These go on, no matter what the wind or tide may be. Why? Because they are not dependent upon their surroundings: for the power is within them. Under which heading do we come? Let us be like the last.

The love of Christ, in the power of the Holy Ghost, constraining us, our surroundings will not deter us, but only bring us into the happy knowledge, that He who is in us, is the moving and motive Power of all.

*“Living for the Saviour’s sake,
Not for self or friend;
Living as the sun, to shine
With an influence Divine:
Living hardened hearts to break,
Winter’s frost to end.*

*“Doing for the Saviour’s sake,
Not to please or praise:
Doing all because He asks.
Just because He sets the tasks,
Just because our work we take
From His hand always.*

*“Giving for the Saviour’s sake,
Seeing, in the poor,
Him a needy beggar stand,
Holding forth His nail-pierced hand,
Asking for our barley cake,
Waiting at our door.*

*“Bearing for the Saviour’s sake,
As He bore for us:
Bearing patiently His will,
Suffering His hand, until
Suffering shall perfect make:
Made like Jesus thus.*

*“Loving for the Saviour’s sake,
Not for love’s return;
Not because the One we love
Worthy of our heart shall prove,
But because His love shall make
Love’s true impulse burn.”*

To sum up, the lines upon which the Christian worker should keep, in his service for the Lord, are:

- The love of God should be our motive power in service (II Corinthians 5:14; I John 3:16).
- Likeness to God should be our moral strength in service (I Peter 1:15; I John 2:6).
- To please God should be the highest delight in service (II Corinthians 5:9; I Thessalonians 2:4).
- The truth of God should be our mighty lever in service (Acts 4:29; 8:35; I Corinthians 2:13).
- Consulting God should always be the prelude to all service (Acts 9:6; Philippians 4:6; Acts 13:2).
- The Spirit of God should be our power in service (Colossians 1:29; Acts 1:8; 4:29).
- The glory of God should be our aim in all service (I Corinthians 1:31; 10:31; John 17:4).

~ end of chapter 27 ~

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