

THE SECRET OF EFFECTUAL SERVICE
TO GOD.

George Mueller.

The most important point to be attended to is this—Above all things, see 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 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 brothers 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 obey 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 to 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 bosoms. Especially let us remember, not to neglect any portion of the Bible; it should be read regularly through. To read favorite portions of the Scriptures, to the exclusion of other parts, is a habit to be avoided. 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 prac-

ticed, or harbored 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, to say, "Here I am, blessed Lord; do with me as Thou wilt."

Then let us remember that we are His stewards. Our time, our wealth, 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 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. Beloved, 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.

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. Yet us have heart-work; let us be genuine. Beloved, 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 brothers 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, there 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 loving being God is! And this good, gracious, loving heavenly Father is ours, our portion for time and for eternity; and our 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 loving, 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 the 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 never done, God will most assuredly 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.

FREEDOM.

If you will let Him walk with you in your streets, sit with you in your offices, and be with you in your homes, and teach you in your churches, and abide with you as the living presence in your hearts, you shall know what freedom is, and while you do your duties, be above your duties; and while you own yourselves the sons of men, know you are the sons of God.—Phillips Brooks.

PLEAD WITH MEN'S HEARTS.

My brethren, the preaching of the gospel minister should always have soul-winning for its object. Never should we seek that the audience should admire our excellency of speech. I have in my soul a thousand times cursed oratory, and wished the arts of elocution had never been devised, or at least, had never profaned the sanctuary of God; for often as I have listened with wonder to speech right well conceived, and sentences aptly arranged, I have felt as though I could weep tears of blood that the time of the congregation should be wasted listening to wordy rhetoric, when what was wanted was plain, urgent pleading with men's hearts and consciences. It is never worth a minister's while to go up the pulpit stairs to show his auditors that he is an adept in elocution. High-sounding words and flowery periods are a mockery of man's spiritual needs. If a man desireth to display his oratory, let him study for the bar, or enter parliament; but let him not degrade the cross of Christ into a peg to hang his tawdry rags of speech upon.—C. H. Spurgeon.

"Be ye followers of Christ." Christ, whose blood has procured our peace, whose presence is the consolation of our loneliness, whose example is the illumination of our life, whose fellowship is the dignity of our labor, whose image is the end of our faith, and whose welcome is the hope of our reward! What a dignity to follow such a Christ! How much we complain of our weakness! Well, it is better to complain of it than to be content with it. Yet the humblest saint may say, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me."

"We cannot be consecrated in watertight compartments; we cannot say, 'Lord, be Master of my mind, but let me do as I wish with my body and my money.'"