

## CHRISTIANS AND THE SECRET PLACE

By W. Graham Scroggie

Every Christian must have a quiet time. No one can say for another what time is best, because our circumstances and duties are so infinitely varied.

The time should be fixed. We organize our study, our meals, our recreation, our sleep, and so on, but we leave the needs of our soul to take care of themselves as and when they can.

The next thing is that there should be a quiet place. At home there may be a big family, or one may be sharing a bedroom, or for some other reason it may be difficult for some to get away alone at a given hour each day, but at least the effort should be made.

The next requirement is a right attitude of soul. Time and place will be of little avail if the spirit is wrong. There should be stillness within. If our soul is like a storm-tossed sea, if we are beaten about like a bird in a hurricane, if we rush into the Divine Presence as a horse into the battle, what hope is there of accomplishing anything in the short time at our disposal?

Stillness, yes, and expectancy, that is another necessity. He who expects nothing will get nothing. It is the eager soul that will be made glad.

In the time chosen for our meditation, be it longer or shorter, we must be unhurried. Be quiet, concentrate, expect, do not hurry. Fifteen minutes of that will be much better than an hour of restless reading of the Word.

The next thing that matters is that you have an object. Purpose should be behind all action; in all we do we should have an end in view. The object, therefore, of the quiet time should be self-examination and self-renewing. This personal element is very prominent in the Psalms.

Now, having considered the matters of time, place, attitude and object, the next thing, and it is of supreme importance, is a simple, practical, and effective method.

So many fail for want of this. To begin with, then, plan your field of meditation. You may elect to meditate, perhaps for a month, on some of the great texts of the Bible; or you may choose a psalm, or a number of great passages, such as John 17; I Corinthians 13; Hebrews 11, and work carefully through them; or you may prefer to take a book, say John's Gospel, or Mark's or Ephesians, or I Peter, and read these over and over again until like rain they saturate your thirsty soul.

Make your reading and study practical. Your object is not so much to gather information as inspiration, and so you should discover what is the application of what you read to your circumstances and need. Turn the truth into terms of life, and use the Word to light and feed the fire of devotion.

Remember, you cannot lead anyone higher than you yourself have gone. You cannot enrich any beyond your own actual experience of God; hence the absolute necessity of the Bible in the quiet time and in the secret place.

If we are to feed others we must be fed; and even public and united exercises of praise and prayer can never supply that food which is dealt out only to the believer in the closet—the shut-in place with its closed doors and windows where we meet with God alone.—A. T. Pierson.

## DOING THE IMPOSSIBLE

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thing Christ commands? Did you ever notice that God does not ask you to do something easy and agreeable to the flesh? Christ was continually bringing men face to face with the impossible. He laid upon men commands which were utterly contrary to the flesh and to human understanding.

God calls you to deal with souls and hand out tracts. Perhaps He commands you to "Stretch forth the hand" on the street corner while declaring the unsearchable riches of Christ. And He calls you to stretch forth your hand to your purse and promote the cause of missions. But there your hand hangs and hugs your side—and your purse. Your trouble, of course, is not in your hand. God is reaching for your heart—through your withered hand. You excuse yourself: If only Christ had asked me to do something else! But that something else would not have reached your heart. Christ wants you to know His power and grace. He therefore asks you to do something that will require His sufficiency and help. You could do something else without faith and without grace; perhaps without even being right with God. So, in asking you to do the one impossible thing, Christ crosses your will through your withered limb. F. B. Meyer said, "We never test the resources of God until we attempt the impossible."

God specializes in impossibilities. Perhaps that is the reason God has chosen you to do something for Him. You are naturally impossible. Your close friends will agree. Perhaps you feel that God has made a mistake when He asked you to do the utterly impossible and unreasonable. Do your circumstances seem contrary? Your possibilities very unlikely? Your capabilities utterly inadequate? You must remember that God in His infinite wisdom brings His grace to perfect display through your human weakness and inability.

Is your foot too limp and lame to walk in the path of obedience? You say you cannot go where He asks you to go. You complain, "Anywhere but there, Lord." You suggest, "I'll go to anybody but so and so; I could never go to that person." Yet God holds you to it. His word of command to you is: "This do and thou shalt live." The particular "this do" that Christ asks of you might be better rendered, "this death and thou shalt live." The particular thing Christ asks you to do spells death to your own ability and will and wisdom. The divine command comes to you just where you are so limp and so lame and so helpless that you must come into contact with Christ. Your poor withered foot will soon walk and leap and run in the way of His commands when God enlarges your heart.

Christ is at the end of God's command to you. What is it God asks you to do? You will find Christ just at the end of that command. Any other command would not bring you into touch with Christ. Any other self-chosen duty would be only self-righteous works. But God gives you a doing that is your undoing. He brings you into the dust of death, the death of self. Just there at the end of yourself and at the end of the divine command you find Christ. There He meets you with all the authority and power and ability to enable you to do the impossible.

## "WE WALK BY FAITH, NOT BY SIGHT"

I hear men praying everywhere for more faith, but when I listen to them carefully and get at the real heart of their prayers, very often it is not more faith at all that they are wanting, but a change from faith to sight.

"What shall I do with this sorrow that God has sent me?"

"Take it up and bear it, and get a strength and blessing out of it."

"Ah, if I only knew what blessings there were in it, if I saw how it would help me, then I could wear it like a plume!"

"What shall I do with this hard, fateful duty which Christ has laid right in my way?"

"Do it, and grow by doing it."

"Ah, yes; if I could only see that it would make me grow."

In both these cases do you not see that what you are begging for is not more faith, although you think it is, but sight? You want to see for yourself the blessing in the sorrow, the strength in the hard and hateful task. Faith says not, "I see that it is good for me, and so God must have sent it," but "God sent it, and so it must be good for me." Faith walking in the dark with God only prays Him to clasp its hand more closely; does not even ask Him for the lifting of the darkness so that the man may find the way himself.

Mary is all faith when she says: "Do what He tells you, and all must come right, simply because He is He."

Blessed the heart that has learned such a faith, and can stand among men in all their doubts and darkness, and just point to Jesus Christ and say: "Do His will and everything must come right with you. I do not know how, but I know Him. God forbid that I should try to lead you, but I can put your hand in His hand, and bid you to go where He shall carry you."—Phillips Brooks.

A missionary stood up in our meeting in Africa a year ago and with deep convulsions cried, "There has not been a single day but what the Lord has convicted me of not warning these people about their lost condition. I have not been willing that it be just Christ living in me; I feared what it would cost me." A nurse confessed, "I wanted to be filled with the Holy Spirit before the conference began so that I would have nothing to confess—would not get into this mess. But I was glad when the Mission recently assigned me work in the hospital so that I could do something without needing to be filled with the Holy Spirit." The first missionary had deliberately disobeyed the command to witness to the heathen and warn them of their condition. The nurse deliberately disobeyed the command: "Be filled with the Spirit." Both found Christ just at the end of the divine command. And you will too.

Do you measure your disobedience and tell God just how far He should go? How much He should demand? How much you can give to Missions? Will God have to let you blunder on until you break the neck of your stubbornness and ignorance over some obstacle? As God faces you with some impossible task, do you complain, "I'd rather die than do it?" Do both. Die in doing it—die and come to life.

Dr. J. H. Jowett said: "I very much like an epitaph which is found upon a woman's grave in New England: 'She hath done what she couldn't.'—Evangelical Christian.