

The Secret of Spiritual Strength

by Dr. W. T. Purkiser

Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman, one of America's great evangelists, tells of being invited to the home of Dwight L. Moody in Northfield for breakfast one morning. Arriving before the appointed time, he met Dr. F. B. Meyer, the noted Bible expositor from Great Britain.

Stopping to visit a moment, Chapman said to Dr. Meyer, "What is the matter with me? So many times I seem half empty, and so many times powerless; what is the matter?"

Meyer put his hand on the other man's shoulder. "Have you ever tried to breathe out three times without breaching in once?" he asked. Taken off guard, Chapman said he thought his friend was referring to some new breathing exercise.

"I do not think I have," he said.

"Well," Meyer replied, "try it!"

So Dr. Chapman breathed out once, and then had to breathe in again.

Dr. Meyer said, "Your breathing in must always be in proportion to your breathing out." With that, the pair separated. But Chapman commented, "I have learned my lesson. I knew that I had been trying to breathe out more than I had breathed in. There must be a constant inhalation of the Spirit of Pentecost!"

So many of us have never sensed the obvious truth in these words. There is no substitute for a crisis experience of the baptism with the Holy Spirit in His sanctifying lordship. But there is a fullness to be maintained as well as a fullness to be obtained. Paul's injunction is not particularly, "Become filled with the Spirit," although that is certainly implied. His command is "Be (continually) filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18).

That this truth applies to ministers no one would question. We cannot speak to men about God until we have talked long with God about men. As Dr. Richard Taylor has put it, "Spiritedness is no substitute for spirituality, and animation is no substitute for anointing."

But there is a direct application to all Christian life we must not overlook. Just as physical and nervous energies must be replenished by rest and recreation, so spiritual strength must be restored by waiting upon the Lord in meditation and prayer, and in lingering over His Word.

Spiritual powers are sapped by the continual tensions and pressures of modern living fully as much as physical strength. These powers must be restored or the vitality and health of the soul will be sadly impaired. The Lord, our Shepherd, makes us to lie down in green pastures; He leads us beside still waters; He restores our souls — and the word the Psalmist used means among other things to refresh and relieve.

Much of this refreshment comes through the experience of worship, both in public and in private. The sad fact is that churches today are filled with people who have never experienced the real joy of worship. They hurry into the presence of the Lord, make their formal bows, but never sit down for the experience of spiritual communion. The result is, they are "other-directed" rather than "inner-directed." They are swayed by every wind of doctrine, and carried away by every fad and folly of society.

At no level can love survive the casual, matter-of-fact attitude of one who has lost the sense of wonder. There is danger for the soul who has lost the amazement expressed in the words, "Oh, who am I, that for my sake, my Friend should bear my load and carry my sorrows and be stabbed with my sins?"

The strength of our convictions and our capacity for spiritual achievement will never be greater than the level of devotion we experience deep within our own

CHURCH HOME BURGLARIZED

A tragedy has happened to one of the homes of our congregation. The sleeping parents awoke abruptly to discover that somehow a robber had entered the home and stolen some of their precious possessions. There is some uncertainty as to the identity of the robber. A careful survey has indicated that the enemy must have entered some neglected or unguarded door. There are traces of his path from room to room.

A list of the things that the burglar stole has been compiled by the parents, who confessed that it must have happened either while they were away from home attending some place of sinful amusement, or while they were asleep. Some of the things on the list of missing items are:

The Holy Bible, with its attendant family altar and Scripture reading.

Systematic tithing envelopes belonging to God's House.

The children's faith in their parents' religion.

Regular and faithful church attendance.

The fellowship of their friends at church who once helped brighten their home.

The secret closet of prayer, once radiant and glorious.

It is believed that the burglar is still at large, and may have some other home in our local congregation marked as victims for the near future. Let every parent be alert to avoid similar tragedy.—The Wesleyan Methodist.

A NOBLE RESOLVE

I will not be swayed by envy when my rival's strength is shown;

I will not deny his merit, but will try to prove my own;

I will cease to preach your duty and be more concerned with mine.

I will cease to have resentment when another gets ahead.

—The Mennonite.

hearts. And devotion must be cultivated. It must have its roots deep in the soil of spiritual reality.

To mount up with wings as eagles, to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint—these achievements come only to those who "wait upon the Lord" and thereby continually renew their strength (Isaiah 40:31). Such can say with Warren Seabury, the American missionary to China, "I do not know what is before me, but I am building my nest in the greatness of God."

The pressures will still be there, and the strain will still come. But then we shall be able to realize that "strain," is a word which not only means "stress," but also means "song." The friends of Job did not always understand the ways of God with men, but Elihu was right when he described God as the One who "giveth songs in the night" (Job 35:10).

Nothing can lift us from "the valley of depression" quite so fast as a trip to the Sermon on the Mount. Here we learn to set aside the anxious care that wears down so many until they betray their faith in God by the fear which contradicts perfect love. As Helmut Thielicke said, "A person who is anxious puts a false estimate on everything. He trembles at a straw because he thinks it is a falling beam, and he is toppled by a beam because he thought it was a straw."

There is a "secret of spiritual strength." It lies in breathing in as much as we breathe out, the clean, pure atmosphere of the Spirit's presence and power cultivated in devotion to God, the Source of life, through worship and the Word.

Herald of Holiness