

GEORGE MÜLLER

Convictions & Teachings



GEORGE MÜLLER (1805-1898)

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These lessons from the pen of George Müller have been used of the Lord to shape our lives and ministries. See too George Müller: My Journal, also available from Chapel Library.

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Publisher's Preface

“**P**RACTICAL atheist” is an accurate (albeit not gratifying) appellation used in days gone by to describe a familiar phenomenon: folk claiming to believe in God but living as if He did not exist. How might one earn this ignoble title? To be sure, it may be done in catastrophic fashion: denying Christ (at home, at work, in the public square) under threat of some significant loss (rejection, divorce, destitution, incarceration). But, on the other end of the spectrum, it may be done regularly without noise or tumult—and that by those claiming evangelical and reformed credentials—simply by a habitual neglect of the duty and privilege of prayer. It all amounts to the same thing: denying by our *actions* that God exists or that is He able or willing to come to our aid.

Such considerations position us to appreciate the genius of Hebrews 11 where faith is described in this fashion:

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb 11:6).

Notice, faith embraces the grand reality of God's existence *in context* of His coming to my aid (“...believe that he is, *and* that he is a rewarder...”). Verses that follow deploy instance after instance of believers putting themselves in jeopardy because they believed God's promise and trusted He would keep it for *them*. They were not disappointed.

Enter George Müller: the enemy of practical atheism, a proponent of biblical faith. A dissolute youth, he was transformed by the grace of God into a Christ-loving believer. One of his great projects was the establishment and maintenance of an orphanage in 19th century England. This institution did not exist merely to relieve homeless children. On the contrary, it self-consciously set before the eyes of a watching world an object lesson: that the God of Israel lives and is ready to come to the aid of those that call on Him in faith in accordance with His promises.

And this purpose was fulfilled. The orphanage was built and decently maintained for years—in answer to prayer—and this despite “obstacles” that Mr. Müller *deliberately* implemented as part of his procedure. He did not campaign for funds; he renounced debt and a stated salary. In our day of MBA-style financial management, Müller is an alien. Yet the money came in; over 10,000 orphans were cared for—and it was clear to every honest heart acquainted with the facts that God did it.

But must we consent to all-things-Müller? If the Almighty declares “the laborer is worthy of his hire,” can we say he was bound to remove his name from the payroll? We

may fear he depended too much upon inward impressions. Might his affinity for A. H. Franke,¹ the Pietist,² make us a little nervous. Such cautions may be rightly raised.

Even so, if we miss the clear note Müller is sounding, we shall be the losers: “God is *faithful still*, and *hears prayer still*.” Though we cannot follow Müller in everything, surely we must follow him in this. In our day of hedging all bets, covering all bases, where is the God of Müller? Scripture affirms He is searching the earth for others like this friend of the English orphan on whose behalf He might show Himself strong. Will you be such a one?

“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him...” (2Ch 16:9a).

¹ **August Hermann Franke** (1663-1727) – German Lutheran minister, biblical scholar, and Pietist.

² **Pietist** – member of a movement in the 17th century Lutheran church; the term was apparently first used in reference to the followers of Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705). Pietism was a Bible-oriented, experiential approach to the Christian life that laid stress on individual regeneration evidenced by a life of godly living. A lifestyle of holiness as more important than the formal structures of theology (doctrine) and church order. Initially Pietism was a movement within the Lutheran Church in Germany that sought to correct, the focus on mere assent to doctrine, which the Pietists believed led to “dead orthodoxy.” The movement’s emphasis on experience, when not guided by Scripture, could lead to mysticism, that is, relying on exalted feelings as a way of acquiring knowledge.

Faith

A Common Faith (1842)

I **DESIRE** that all the children of God, who may read these details, may thereby be led to increased and more simple confidence in God for everything which they may need under any circumstances, and that these many answers to prayer may encourage them to pray, particularly as regards the conversion of their friends and relatives, their own progress in grace and knowledge, the state of the saints whom they may know personally, the state of the Church of God at large, and the success of the preaching of the gospel. Especially I affectionately warn them against being led away by the device of Satan to think that these things are peculiar to me and cannot be enjoyed by all the children of God; for though, as has been stated before, every believer is not called upon to establish Orphan Houses, Charity Schools, etc., and trust in the Lord for means,³ yet all believers are called upon, in the simple confidence of faith, to cast all their burdens upon Him, to trust in Him for everything, and not only to make everything a subject of prayer, but to expect answers to their petitions that they have asked according to His will, and in the name of the Lord Jesus—Think not, dear reader, that I have the gift of faith,⁴ that is, the gift of which we read in 1 Corinthians 12:9 and that is mentioned along with “the gifts of healing,” “the working of miracles,” “prophecy”—and that on that account I am able to trust in the Lord...

From my inmost soul I do ascribe it to God alone that He has enabled me to trust in Him, and that He has not suffered my confidence in Him to fail. But I thought it needful to make these remarks, lest anyone should think that my depending upon God was a particular gift given to me, which other saints have no right to look for; or lest it should be thought that this, my depending upon Him, had only to do with the obtaining of *money* by prayer and faith. By the grace of God I desire that my faith in God should extend towards *every* thing: the smallest of my own temporal and spiritual concerns, and the smallest of the temporal and spiritual concerns of my family, towards the saints among whom I labor, the Church at large, everything that has to do with the temporal and spiritual prosperity of the Scriptural Knowledge Institution,⁵ etc. Dear reader, do not

³ **means** – income, resources, revenue.

⁴ **gift of faith** – “That faith of which he speaks is special, as is evident from the clause that is immediately added—so that I remove mountains—...Paul, however, as I have already stated, is his own interpreter by restricting faith, here, to miracles. It is what Chrysostom calls the ‘faith of miracles,’ and what we term a ‘special faith’ because it does not apprehend a whole Christ, but simply His power in working miracles; and hence it may sometimes exist in a man without the Spirit of sanctification, as it did in Judas.”—John Calvin on 1 Corinthians 13:2

⁵ **Scriptural Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad** – organization founded by Müller in 1834, its purpose was 1) aiding Christian schools and missionaries by distributing the Bible and Christian

think that I have attained in faith (and how much less in other respects!) to that degree to which I might and ought to attain.

Lastly, let not Satan deceive you in making you think that you could not have the same faith, but that it is only for persons who are situated as I am. When I lose such a thing as a key, I ask the Lord to direct me to it, and I look for an answer to my prayer; when a person with whom I have made an appointment does not come at the fixed time, and I begin to be inconvenienced by it, I ask the Lord to be pleased to hasten him to me, and I look for an answer. When I do not understand a passage of the Word of God, I lift up my heart to the Lord, that He would be pleased, by His Holy Spirit, to instruct me, and I expect to be taught, though I do not fix the time when, and the manner how, it should be. When I am going to minister in the Word, I seek help from the Lord, and while I, in the consciousness of natural inability as well as utter unworthiness, begin this His service, I am not cast down, but of good cheer, because I look for His assistance and believe that He, for His dear Son's sake, will help me. Oh! I beseech you, do not think me an extraordinary believer, having privileges above other of God's dear children that they cannot have; nor look on my way of acting as something that would not do for other believers. Make but trial! Do but stand still in the hour of trial and you will see the help of God, if you trust in Him. But there is so often a forsaking the ways of the Lord in the hour of trial, and thus the food of faith, the means whereby our faith may be increased, is lost.

Strengthening Faith (1842)

This leads me to the following important point. You ask, "How may I, a true believer, have my faith strengthened?" The answer is this:

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jam 1:17).

As the increase of faith is a good gift, it must come from God, and therefore He ought to be asked for this blessing. The following means, however, ought to be used:

1. The careful reading of the Word of God, combined with meditation on it. Through reading of the Word of God, and especially through meditation on the Word of God, the believer becomes more and more acquainted with the nature and character of God, and thus sees more and more, besides His holiness and justice, what a kind, loving, gracious, merciful, mighty, wise, and faithful Being He is. Therefore, in poverty, affliction of body, bereavement in his family, difficulty in his service, want⁶ of a situation or employment, he will repose upon the ability of God to help him, because he has not only learned from His Word that He is of almighty power and infinite wisdom, but he has also seen instance upon instance in the Holy Scriptures in which His almighty power and infinite wisdom have been actually exercised in helping and delivering His people. He will repose

tracts and 2) providing day schools, Sunday schools, and adult schools, all upon a Scriptural foundation.

⁶ want – lack.

upon the willingness of God to help him, because he has not only learned from the Scriptures what a kind, good, merciful, gracious, and faithful Being God is, but because he has also seen in the Word of God how in a great variety of instances He has proved Himself to be so. And the consideration of this, if God has become known to us through prayer and meditation on His own Word, will lead us, in general at least, with a measure of confidence to rely upon Him. Thus meditation on the Word of God will be one special means to strengthen our faith.

2. As with reference to the growth of every grace of the Spirit it is of the utmost importance that we seek to maintain an upright heart and a good conscience, and therefore do not knowingly and habitually indulge in those things which are contrary to the mind of God, so it is also particularly the case with reference to the growth in faith. How can I possibly continue to act in faith upon God concerning anything, if I am habitually grieving Him, and seek to detract from the glory and honor of Him in whom I profess to trust, upon whom I profess to depend? All my confidence towards God, all my leaning upon Him in the hour of trial, will be gone if I have a guilty conscience, and do not seek to put away this guilty conscience but still continue to do things which are contrary to the mind of God. And if, in any particular instance, I cannot trust in God because of the guilty conscience, then my faith is weakened by that instance of distrust. For faith with every fresh trial of it, either increases by trusting God and thus getting help, or it decreases by not trusting Him—and then there is less and less power of looking simply and directly to Him, and a habit of self-dependence is begotten or encouraged. One or the other of these will always be the case in each particular instance. Either we trust in God, and in that case we neither trust in ourselves, nor in our fellowmen, nor in circumstances, nor in anything besides; or we DO trust in one or more of these, and in that case do NOT trust in God.

3. If we, indeed, desire our faith to be strengthened, we should not shrink from opportunities where our faith may be tried, and therefore, through the trial, be strengthened. In our natural state we dislike dealing with God alone. Through our natural alienation from God we shrink from Him and from eternal realities. This cleaves to us, more or less, even after our regeneration. Hence it is that more or less, even as believers, we have the same shrinking from standing with God alone—from depending upon Him alone, from looking to Him alone—and yet this is the very position in which we ought to be if we wish our faith to be strengthened. The more I am in a position to be tried in faith with reference to my body, my family, my service for the Lord, my business, etc., the more shall I have opportunity of seeing God's help and deliverance—and every fresh instance, in which He helps and delivers me, will tend towards the increase of my faith. On this account, therefore, the believer should not shrink from situations, positions, circumstances, in which his faith may be tried; but should cheerfully embrace them as opportunities where he may see the hand of God stretched out on his behalf to help and deliver him, and whereby he may thus have his faith strengthened.

4. The last important point for the strengthening of our faith is that we let God⁷ work for us, when the hour of the trial of our faith comes, and do not work a deliverance of our own. Wherever God has given faith, it is given, among other reasons, for the very purpose of being tried. Yea, however weak our faith may be, God will try it—only with this restriction: that as in every way He leads on gently, gradually, patiently, so also with reference to the trial of our faith. At first our faith will be tried very little in comparison with what it may be afterwards, for God never lays more upon us than He is willing to enable us to bear. Now when the trial of faith comes, we are naturally inclined to distrust God, and to trust rather in ourselves, or in our friends, or in circumstances. We will rather work a deliverance of our own somehow or other, than simply look to God and wait for His help. But if we do not patiently wait for God’s help, if we work a deliverance of our own, then at the next trial of our faith it will be thus again: we shall be again inclined to deliver ourselves—and thus, with every fresh instance of that kind, our faith will decrease. Whilst, on the contrary, were we to stand still in order to see the salvation of God, to see His hand stretched out on our behalf, trusting in Him alone, then our faith would be increased; with every fresh case in which the hand of God is stretched out on our behalf in the hour of the trial of our faith, our faith would be increased yet more. Would the believer, therefore, have his faith strengthened, he must especially give time to God, Who tries his faith in order to prove to His child, in the end, how willing He is to help and deliver him, the moment it is good for him.

The Life of Faith (1855)

Excerpt taken from “*The Autobiography of George Müller*,” pp. 226-227

If anyone desires to live a life of faith and trust in God he must:

1. Not merely say that he trusts in God but must really do so. Often individuals profess to trust in God, but they embrace every opportunity where they may directly or indirectly tell someone about their need. I do not say it is wrong to make known our financial situation, but it hardly displays trust in God to expose our needs for the sake of getting other people to help us. God will take us at our word. If we do trust in Him, we must be satisfied to stand with Him alone.

2. The individual who desires to live this way must be content whether he is rich or poor. He must be willing to live in abundance or in poverty. He must be willing to leave this world without any possessions.

3. He must be willing to take the money in God’s way, not merely in large sums, but in small. Many times I have had a single shilling⁸ given to me. To have refused such tokens of Christian love would have been ungracious.

4. He must be willing to live as the Lord’s steward. If anyone does not give out of the blessings that the Lord gives to him, then the Lord, Who influences the hearts of His children to give, would soon cause those channels to be dried up. My good income

⁷ **we let God** – sinful human beings are not the final decision maker to “allow” God to do our will; rather we submit ourselves to God’s sovereign rule over us to do His will as our Lord.

⁸ **shilling** – silver coin of Great Britain, equal in value to 1/20 pound, or \$0.08 USD in today’s money.

increased even more when I determined that, by God's help, His poor and His work would be helped by my money. From that time on, the Lord was pleased to entrust me with more.

The Faith Principles of Ministry (1824)

1. We consider every believer bound, in one way or other, to help the cause of Christ. We have scriptural warrant for expecting the Lord's blessing on our work of faith and labor of love. Although according to Matthew 13:24-43, 2 Timothy 3:1-13, and many other passages, the world will not be converted before the coming of our Lord Jesus, still, while He tarries, all scriptural means should be employed for the ingathering of the elect of God.

2. The Lord helping us, we do not mean to seek the patronage of the world; i.e., we never intend to ask unconverted persons of rank or wealth to support this institution, because this, we consider, would be dishonorable to the Lord. "In the name of our God we will set up our banners" (Psa 20:5). He alone shall be our patron. If He helps us we will prosper; if He is not on our side, we will not succeed.

3. We do not mean to ask unbelievers for money (2Co 6:14-18); though we do not feel ourselves warranted to refuse their contributions, if they, of their own accord, should offer them (Act 28:2, 10).

4. We reject altogether the help of unbelievers in managing or carrying on the affairs of the institution (2Co 6:14-18).

5. We intend never to enlarge the field of labor by contracting debts (Rom 13:8) and afterward appealing to the Church of God for help, because this we consider to be opposed both to the letter and the spirit of the New Testament. But in secret prayer, God helping us, we shall carry the wants of the institution to the Lord, and act according to the means that God shall give.

6. We do not mean to reckon the success of the institution by the amount of money given or the number of Bibles distributed, but by the Lord's blessing on the work (Zec 4:6)—and we expect this in the proportion in which He shall help us to wait upon Him in prayer.

7. While we would avoid needless separation, we desire to go on simply according to Scripture without compromising the truth; at the same time thankfully receiving any instruction which experienced believers, after prayer upon scriptural ground, may have to give us concerning the institution.

The Kingdom and Its Treasures

Seeking First the Kingdom (1844)

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you.”

—Matthew 6:33

AFTER our Lord, in the previous verses, had been pointing His disciples to “the fowls of the air” and “the lilies of the field,” in order that they should be without carefulness about the necessities of life, He adds:

“Therefore take no thought [literally, “be not anxious”], saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things” (Mat 6:31-32).

Observe here particularly that we, the children of God, should be different from the nations of the earth, from those who have no Father in heaven, and who therefore make it their great business, their first anxious concern, what they shall eat, what they shall drink, and wherewithal they shall be clothed. We, the children of God, should, as in every other respect so in this particular also, be different from the world, and prove to the world that we believe that we have a Father in heaven Who knoweth that we have need of all these things. The fact that our almighty Father—Who is full of infinite love to us His children, and Who has proved to us His love in the gift of His only begotten Son and His almighty power in raising Him from the dead—knows that we have need of these things, should remove all anxiety from our minds.

There is, however, one thing which we ought to attend to with reference to our temporal necessities. It is mentioned in our verse: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” The great business which the disciple of the Lord Jesus has to be concerned about (for this word was spoken to disciples, to professed believers) is to seek the kingdom of God, i.e., to seek, as I view it, after the external and internal prosperity of the Church of God. If, according to our ability and according to the opportunity which the Lord gives us, we seek to win souls for the Lord Jesus, that appears to me to be seeking the external prosperity of the kingdom of God; and if we, as members of the body of Christ, seek to benefit our fellow members in the body, helping them on in grace and truth, or caring for them in any way to their edification, that would be seeking the internal prosperity of the kingdom of God. But in connection with this we have also to “seek His righteousness,” which means (as it was spoken to disciples, to those who have a Father in heaven, and not to those who were without), to seek to be more and more like God, to seek to be inwardly conformed to the mind of God. If these two things are attended to (and they imply also that we are not slothful in business), then do we come under that precious promise: “And all these things [that is food, raiment, or anything

else that is needful for this present life] shall be added unto you.” It is not *for* attending to these two things that we obtain the blessing, but *in* attending to them.

I now ask you, my dear reader, a few questions in all love, because I do seek your welfare. I do not wish to put these questions to you without putting them first to my own heart. Do you make it your primary business, your first great concern, to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness? Are the things of God—the honor of His name, the welfare of His Church, the conversion of sinners, and the profit of your own soul—your chief aim? Or does your business, your family, or your own temporal concerns, in some shape or other, primarily occupy your attention?

I never knew a child of God who acted according to the above passage, in whose experience the Lord did not fulfill His word of promise, “All these things shall be added unto you.”

Treasures in Heaven (1844)

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Matthew 6:19-21

Observe, dear reader, the following points concerning this part of the divine testimony:

1. It is the Lord Jesus, our Lord and Master, Who speaks this as the lawgiver of His people—He Who has infinite wisdom and unfathomable love to us, Who therefore knows what is for our real welfare and happiness, and Who cannot exact from us any requirement inconsistent with that love which led Him to lay down His life for us.

Remembering then Who it is who speaks to us in these verses, let us consider them:

2. His counsel, His affectionate entreaty, and His commandment to us His disciples is: “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth.” The meaning obviously is that the disciples of the Lord Jesus, being strangers and pilgrims on earth, i.e., neither belonging to the earth nor expecting to remain in it, should not seek to increase their earthly possessions, in whatever these possessions may consist. This is a word for poor believers as well as for rich believers.

3. Our Lord says concerning the earth that it is a place “where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.” All that is of the earth, and in any way connected with it, is subject to corruption, to change, to dissolution. There is no reality or substance in anything else but in heavenly things. Often the careful amassing of earthly possessions ends in losing them in a moment by fire, by robbery, by a change of mercantile concerns, by loss of work, etc.—but suppose all this were not the case, still, yet a little while, and thy soul shall be required of thee (Luk 12:20); or yet a little while, and the Lord Jesus will return. And what profit shalt thou then have, dear reader,

if thou hast carefully sought to increase thy earthly possessions? My brother, if there were one particle of real benefit to be derived from it, would not He, whose love to us has been proved to the utmost, have wished that you and I should have it? If, in the least degree, it could tend to the increase of our peace, or joy in the Holy Ghost, or heavenly-mindedness, He, Who laid down His life for us would have commanded us, to “*lay up treasure upon earth*”!

4. Our Lord does not merely bid us not to lay up treasure upon earth; if He had said no more, this commandment might be abused, and persons find in it an encouragement for their extravagant habits, their love of pleasure, and their habit of spending everything they have, or can obtain, upon themselves. It does not mean, then, as is the common phrase, that we should “live up to our income”; for He adds: “But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.” There is such a thing as laying up in heaven as truly as there is laying up on earth; if it were not so, our Lord would not have said so. Just as persons put one sum after another into the bank, and it is put down to their credit, and they may use the money afterwards: so truly the penny, the shilling, the pound,⁹ the hundred pounds, the ten thousand pounds, given for the Lord’s sake and constrained by the love of Christ, to poor brethren or in any way spent in the work of God, He marks down in the book of remembrance; He considers as laid up in heaven. The money is not lost; it is laid up in the bank of heaven—yet so that, whilst an earthly bank may break or through earthly circumstances we may lose our earthly possessions, the money thus secured in heaven cannot be lost.

But this is by no means the only difference; I notice a few more points. Treasures laid up on earth bring along with them many cares; treasures laid up in heaven never give care. Treasures laid up on earth never can afford spiritual joy; treasures laid up in heaven bring along with them peace and joy in the Holy Ghost even now. Treasures laid up on earth, in a dying hour cannot afford peace and comfort, and when life is over they are taken from us; treasures laid up in heaven draw forth thanksgiving that we were permitted and counted worthy to serve the Lord with the means with which He was pleased to entrust us as stewards. And when this life is over we are not deprived of what was laid up there, but when we go to heaven we go to the place where our treasures are, and we shall find them there. Often we hear it said when a person has died: “he died worth so much.” But whatever be the phrases common in the world, it is certain that a person may die worth fifty thousand pounds sterling, as the world reckons, and yet that individual may not possess in the sight of God one thousand pounds sterling, because he was not rich towards God, he did not lay up treasures in heaven.

Dear reader, does your soul long to be rich towards God, to lay up treasures in heaven? The world passes away and the lust thereof (1Jo 2:17)! Yet a little while, and our stewardship will be taken from us. At present we have the opportunity of serving the Lord with our time, our talents, our bodily strength, our gifts, and also with our property; but shortly this opportunity may cease. Oh, how shortly it may cease! Before ever this is read by anyone, I may have fallen asleep; and the very next day after you have

⁹ **pound** – standard British monetary unit consisting of 20 shillings.

read this, dear reader, you may fall asleep! And therefore whilst we have the opportunity let us serve the Lord—I believe, and therefore I speak. My own soul is so fully assured of the wisdom and love of the Lord toward us His disciples as expressed in this Word, that by His grace I do most heartily set my seal to the preciousness of the command, and I do from my inmost soul not only desire not to lay up treasures upon earth, but believing as I do what the Lord says, I do desire to have grace to lay up treasures in heaven.

(5) The Lord lastly adds: “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Where should the heart of the disciple of the Lord Jesus be, but in heaven? Our calling¹⁰ is a heavenly calling; our inheritance is a heavenly inheritance; our citizenship is in heaven; but if we believers in the Lord Jesus lay-up treasures on earth, the necessary result of it is that our hearts will be upon earth—nay, the very fact of our doing so proves that they are there! Nor will it be otherwise till there be a ceasing to lay up treasures upon earth. The believer who lays up treasures upon earth may, at first, not live openly in sin; he in a measure may yet bring some honor to the Lord in certain things—but the injurious tendencies of this habit will show themselves more and more, whilst the habit of laying up treasures in heaven would draw the heart more and more heavenward. [This habit] would be continually strengthening his new, his divine nature, his spiritual faculties, because it would call his spiritual faculties into use, and thus they would be strengthened—and he would more and more, whilst yet in the body, have his heart in heaven and set upon heavenly things. And thus the laying up treasures in heaven would bring along with it, even in this life, precious spiritual blessings as a reward of obedience.

Stewardship

The child of God has been bought with the “precious blood of the Christ” (1Pe 1:19) and is altogether His property, with all that he possesses: his bodily strength, his mental strength, his ability of every kind, his trade, business, art, profession, his property, etc.—for it is written: “Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price” (1Co 6:19-20). The proceeds of our calling are therefore not our own in the sense of using them as our natural heart wishes us to do, whether to spend them on the gratification of our pride, our love of pleasure, or sensual indulgences, or to lay by the money for ourselves or our children, or use it in any way as we naturally like. But we have to stand before our Lord and Master, whose stewards we are, to seek to ascertain His will, how He will have us use the proceeds of our calling. But is this indeed the spirit in which the children of God generally are engaged in their calling? It is but too well known that it is not the case!

Can we then wonder at it, that even God’s own dear children should so often be found greatly in difficulty with regard to their calling, and be found so often complaining about stagnation or competition in trade, and the difficulties of the times, though there have been given to them such precious promises as: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Mat 6:33), or “Let

¹⁰ **calling** – summons or command of God addressed to sinners in the gospel, which directs them to repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for the saving of their souls.

your conversation [disposition or turn of mind] be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee'" (Heb 13:5)? Is it not obvious enough that, when our Heavenly Father sees that we His children do, or would, use the proceeds of our calling as our natural mind would desire, He either cannot at all entrust us with means or will be obliged to decrease them? No wise and really affectionate mother will permit her infant to play with a razor or with fire, however much the child may desire to have them; and so the love and wisdom of our Heavenly Father will not, cannot, entrust us with pecuniary¹¹ means (except it be in the way of chastisement or to show us finally their utter vanity), if He sees that we do not desire to possess them as stewards for Him, in order that we may spend them as He may point out to us by His Holy Spirit, through His Word.

In connection with this I give a few hints to the believing reader on three passages of the Word of God. In 1 Corinthians 16:2, we find it written to the brethren at Corinth, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him." A contribution for the poor saints in Judea was to be made, and the brethren at Corinth were exhorted to put by every Lord's Day, according to the measure of success which the Lord had been pleased to grant them in their calling during the week. Now, ought not the saints in our day also to act according to this word? There is no passage in the Word of God telling us not to do so, and it is altogether in accordance with our pilgrim character, not only once or twice, or four times a year, to see how much we can afford to give to the poor saints, or to the work of God in any way, but to seek to settle it weekly...

It might also be said by a brother whose earnings are small, "Should I also give according to my earnings? They are already so small that my wife can only with the greatest difficulty manage to make them sufficient for the family." My reply is: Have you ever considered, my brother, that the very reason why the Lord is obliged to let your earnings remain so small may be the fact of your spending everything upon yourselves, and that if He were to give you more, you would only use it to increase your own family comfort, instead of looking about to see who among the brethren are sick, or who have no work at all, that you might help them, or how you might assist the work of God at home and abroad? There is a great temptation for a brother whose earnings are small to put off the responsibility of assisting the needy and sick saints, or helping on the work of God, and to lay it upon the few rich brethren and sisters with whom he is associated in fellowship, and thus rob his own soul!

It might be asked, "How much shall I give of my income? The tenth part, or the fifth part, or the third part, or one half, or more?" My reply is, God lays down no rule concerning this point. What we do we should do cheerfully and not of necessity (2Co 9:7). But if even Jacob, with the first dawning of spiritual light (Gen 28:22), promised to God the tenth of all He should give to him, how much ought we believers in the Lord Jesus to do for Him?—we, whose calling is a heavenly one, and who know distinctly that

¹¹ **pecuniary** – relating to money.

we are children of God and joint heirs with the Lord Jesus! Yet do all the children of God give even the tenth part of what the Lord gives them?

In connection with 1 Corinthians 16:2, I would mention two other portions.

1. 2 Corinthians 9:6

“He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” (2Co 9:6). It is certain that we children of God are so abundantly blessed in Jesus, by the grace of God, that we ought to need no stimulus to good works. The forgiveness of our sins, the having been made for ever the children of God, the having before us the Father’s house as our home, these blessings ought to be sufficient motives to constrain us in love and gratitude to serve God abundantly all the days of our life, and cheerfully also to give up, as He may call for it, that with which He has entrusted us of the things of this world. But whilst this is the case, the Lord nevertheless holds out to us in His Holy Word motives why we should serve Him, deny ourselves, use our property for Him, etc.—and the last mentioned passage is one of that kind. The verse is true, both with reference to the life that is now and that which is to come. If we have been sparingly using our property for Him, there will have been little treasure laid up in heaven, and therefore a small amount of capital will be found in the world to come—so far as regards reaping. Again, we shall reap bountifully if we seek to be rich towards God, by abundantly using our means for Him, whether in ministering to the necessities of the poor saints, or using otherwise our pecuniary means for His work.

Dear brethren, these are realities! Very shortly will come the reaping time, and then will be the question whether we shall reap sparingly or bountifully.

But while this passage refers to the life hereafter, it also refers to the life that now is. Just as now the love of Christ constrains us to communicate of that with which the Lord entrusts us, so will be the present reaping, both with regard to spiritual and temporal things. Should there be found therefore in a brother the want of entering into his position as being merely a steward for the Lord in his calling, and should he give no heed to the admonitions of the Holy Ghost to communicate to those who are in need or to help the work of God; then can such a brother be surprised that he meets with great difficulties in his calling, and that he cannot get on? This is according to the Lord’s Word.

He is sowing sparingly, and he therefore reaps sparingly. But should the love of Christ constrain a brother out of the earnings of his calling to sow bountifully, he will even in this life reap bountifully, both with regard to blessings in his soul and with regard to temporal things. Consider in this connection the following passage, which though taken from the Book of Proverbs, is not of a Jewish character,¹² but true concerning believers under the present dispensation also:

¹² **Jewish character** – By saying the Proverbs are not *Jewish* in character, the author is likely emphasizing the present applicability of them in contrast to certain aspects of the *Jewish* law, such as laws of animal sacrifice, which have been done away with.

“There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself” (Pro 11:24-25).

2. Luke 6:38

In connection with 1 Corinthians 16:2, I would also direct my brethren in the Lord to the promise made in Luke 6:38,

“Give and it shall be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.”

This refers evidently to the present dispensation, and evidently in its primary meaning to temporal things. Now let anyone constrained by the love of Christ act according to this passage; let him on the first day of the week communicate as the Lord has prospered him, and he will see that the Lord will act according to what is contained in this verse. If pride constrains us to give, if self-righteousness makes us liberal, if natural feeling induces us to communicate, or if we give whilst we are in a state of insolvency, not possessing more perhaps than ten shillings in the pound were our creditors to come upon us; then we cannot expect to have this verse fulfilled in our experience. Nor should we give at any time for the sake of receiving again from others, according to this verse. But if indeed the love of Christ constrain us to communicate according to the ability that the Lord gives us, then we shall have this verse fulfilled in our experience, though this was not the motive that induced us to give. Somehow or other the Lord will abundantly repay us through the instrumentality of our fellow men, what we are doing for His poor saints or in any way for His work; and we shall find that in the end we are not losers even with reference to temporal things, whilst we communicate liberally of the things of this life.

Here it might be remarked: if it be so that even in this life, and with regard to temporal things it is true, that “To him that gives shall be given, good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over,” and that “He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully,” then in the end the most liberal persons would be exceedingly rich.

Concerning this we have to keep in mind that the moment persons were to begin to give for the sake of receiving more back again from the Lord, through the instrumentality of their fellow men, than they have given; or the moment persons wished to alter their way, and no more go on sowing bountifully, but sparingly in order to increase their possessions, whilst God is allowing them to reap bountifully, the river of God’s bounty towards them would no longer continue to flow. God had supplied them abundantly with means because He saw them act as stewards for Him. He had entrusted them with a little which they used for Him, and He therefore entrusted them with more; and if they had continued to use the much also for Him, He would have still more abundantly used them as instruments to scatter abroad His bounties. The child of God must be willing to be a channel through which God’s bounties flow, both with regard to

temporal and spiritual things. This channel is narrow and shallow at first, it may be; yet there is room for some of the waters of God's bounty to pass through. And if we cheerfully yield ourselves as channels, for this purpose, then the channel becomes wider and deeper, and the waters of the bounty of God can pass through more abundantly. Dropping figurative language it is thus: At first we may be instrumental in communicating £5, £10, £20, £50, £100, or £200 per year, but afterwards double as much; and if we are still more faithful in our stewardship, after a year or two four times as much, afterwards perhaps eight times as much, at last perhaps twenty times or fifty times as much. We cannot limit the extent to which God may use us as instruments in communicating blessing, both temporal and spiritual, if we are willing to yield ourselves as instruments to the living God—and are content to be only instruments and to give Him all the glory. But with regard to temporal things it will be thus: that if indeed we walk according to the mind of God in these things, whilst more and more we become instruments of blessing to others, we shall not seek to enrich ourselves, but be content when the last day of another year finds us still in the body, to possess no more than on the last day of the previous year or even considerably less, whilst we have been, however, in the course of the year the instruments of communicating largely to others through the means with which the Lord had entrusted us.

As to my own soul, by the grace of God it would be a burden to me to find that I was increasing in earthly possession, for it would be a plain proof to me that I had not been acting as a steward for God, and had not been yielding myself as a channel for the waters of God's bounty to pass through. I also cannot but bear my testimony here, that in whatever feeble measure God has enabled me to act according to these truths for the last sixty-four years and a half, I have found it to be profitable, most profitable to my own soul, and, as to temporal things, I never was a loser in doing so, but I have most abundantly found the truth of 2 Corinthians 9:6, Luke 6:38, and Proverbs 11:24-25 verified in my own experience. I only have to regret that I have acted so little according to what I have now been stating, but my godly purpose is, by the help of God, to spend the remainder of my days in practicing these truths more than ever; and I am sure that, when I am brought to the close of my earthly pilgrimage, either by death or by the appearing of our Lord Jesus, I shall not have the least regret in having done so. I know that should I leave my dear child behind, the Lord will abundantly provide for her and prove that there has been a better provision made for her than her father could have made, if he had sought to insure his life or lay up money for her.¹³

¹³ **money for her** – The Lord is the best provider; nevertheless, supplying our own households is a duty, the neglect of which is condemned in strong terms (1Ti 5:8).

Partnership with God

*“And truly our fellowship is with the Father,
and with His Son Jesus Christ.”*

—1 John 1:3

OBSERVE:

1. The words *fellowship*, *communion*, *co-participation*, and *partnership* mean the same.

2. The believer in the Lord Jesus does not only obtain forgiveness of all his sins (as he does through the shedding of the blood of Jesus, by faith in His name), does not only become a righteous one before God (through the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, by faith in His name), is not only begotten again, born of God, and partaker of the divine nature, and therefore a child of God and an heir of God—but he is also in fellowship or partnership with God. Now, so far as regards God and our standing in the Lord Jesus, we have this blessing once for all; nor does it allow of either an increase or a decrease. Just as God’s love to us believers, His children, is unalterably the same (whatever may be the manifestations of that love), and as His peace with us is the same (however much our peace may be disturbed), so it is also with regard to our being in fellowship or partnership with Him: it remains unalterably the same, so far as God is concerned.

3. But then there is an experimental¹⁴ fellowship, or partnership, with the Father and with His Son, which consists in this: that all which we possess in God, as being the partners with God, is brought down into our daily life, is enjoyed, experienced, and used. This experimental fellowship, or partnership, allows of an increase or a decrease in the measure in which faith is in exercise, and in which we are entering into what we have received in the Lord Jesus. The measure in which we enjoy this experimental fellowship with the Father and with the Son is without limit; for without limit we may make use of our partnership with the Father and with the Son, and draw by prayer and faith out of the inexhaustible fullness that there is in God.

Let us take a few instances in order to see the practical working of this experimental partnership with the Father and with the Son. Suppose there are two believing parents who were not brought to the knowledge of the truth until some years after the Lord had given them several children. Their children were brought up in sinful, evil ways whilst the parents did not know the Lord. Now the parents reap as they sowed. They suffer from having set an evil example before their children; for their children are unruly and behave most improperly. What is now to be done? Need such parents despair? No! The first thing they have to do is to make confession of their sins to God, with regard to

¹⁴ **experimental** – through personal experience; experiential.

neglecting their children whilst they were themselves living in sin; and then to remember that they are in partnership with God, and therefore to be of good courage though they are in themselves still utterly insufficient for the task of managing their children. They have in themselves neither the wisdom, patience, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, love, decision and firmness, nor anything else that may be needful in dealing with their children aright. But their Heavenly Father has all this. The Lord Jesus possesses all this. And they are in partnership with the Father and the Son, and therefore they can obtain by prayer and faith all they need out of the fullness of God. I say "by prayer and faith," for we have to make known our need to God in prayer, ask His help, and then we have to believe that He will give us what we need. Prayer alone is not enough. We may pray never so much, yet if we do not believe that God will give us what we need, we have no reason to expect that we shall receive what we have asked for. So then these parents would need to ask God to give them the needful wisdom, patience, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, love, decision, firmness, and whatever else they may judge they need. They may in humble boldness remind their Heavenly Father that His Word assures them that they are in partnership with Him, and as they themselves are lacking in these particulars, ask Him to supply their need—and then they have to believe that God will do it, and they will receive according to their need.

Another instance: Suppose I am so situated in my business that day by day such difficulties arise that I continually find that I take wrong steps, by reason of these great difficulties. How may the case be altered for the better? In myself I see no remedy for the difficulties. In looking at myself I can expect nothing but to make still further mistakes, and therefore trial upon trial seems to be before me. And yet I need not despair. The living God is my partner; I have not sufficient wisdom to meet these difficulties so as to be able to know what steps to take, but He is able to direct me. What I have, therefore, to do is this: in simplicity to spread my case before my Heavenly Father and my Lord Jesus. The Father and the Son are my partners. I have to tell out my heart to God, and to ask Him that, as He is my partner, and I have no wisdom in myself to meet all the many difficulties which continually occur in my business, He would be pleased to guide and direct me, and to supply me with the needful wisdom. And then I have to believe that God will do so, and go with good courage to my business, and expect help from Him in the next difficulty that may come before me. I have to look out for guidance, I have to expect counsel from the Lord; and, as assuredly as I do so, I shall have it. I shall find that I am not nominally, but really in partnership with the Father and with the Son.

Another instance: There are two believing parents with seven small children. The father works in a factory but cannot earn more than ten shillings per week. The mother cannot earn anything. These ten shillings are too little for the supply of nourishing and wholesome food for seven growing children and their parents, and for providing them with the other necessaries of life. What is to be done in such a case? Surely not to find fault with the manufacturer, who may not be able to afford more wages, and much less to murmur against God. But the parents have in simplicity to tell God, their partner, that the wages of ten shillings a week are not sufficient in England to provide nine

persons with all they need, that their health may not be injured. They have to remind God that He is not a hard master, not an unkind being, but a most loving Father, Who has abundantly proved the love of His heart in the gift of His only begotten Son. And they have in childlike simplicity to ask Him, that either He would order it so that the manufacturer may be able to allow more wages, or that the Lord would find them another place where the father would be able to earn more, or that He would be pleased somehow or other, as it may seem good to Him, to supply them with more means. They have to ask the Lord in childlike simplicity again and again for it, if He does not answer their request at once; and they have to believe that God, their Father and partner, will give them the desire of their hearts. They have to expect an answer to their prayers; day by day they have to look out for it, and to repeat their request till God grants it. As assuredly as they believe that God will grant them their request, so assuredly it shall be granted.¹⁵

Again, suppose I desire more power over my besetting sins; suppose I desire more power against certain temptations; suppose I desire more wisdom, or grace, or anything else that I may need in my service among the saints, or in my service towards the unconverted; what have I to do, but to make use of my being in fellowship with the Father and with the Son? Just as, for instance, an old faithful clerk—who is this day taken into partnership by an immensely rich firm, though himself altogether without property—would not be discouraged by reason of a large payment having to be made by the firm within three days, though he himself has no money at all of his own, but would comfort himself with the immense riches possessed by those who so generously have just taken him into partnership. So should we, the children of God and servants of Jesus Christ, comfort ourselves by being in fellowship, or partnership, with the Father and the Son—though we have no power of our own against our besetting sins, though we cannot withstand temptations which are before us in our own strength, and though we have neither sufficient grace nor wisdom for our service among the saints or towards the unconverted. All we have to do is to draw upon our partner, the living God. By prayer and faith we may obtain all needful temporal and spiritual help and blessings.

In all simplicity we have to tell out our heart before God, and then we have to believe that He will give to us according to our need. But if we do not believe that God will help us, could we be at peace? The clerk, taken into the firm as partner, believes that the firm will meet the payment though so large, and though in three days it is to be made—and it is this that keeps his heart quiet, though altogether poor himself. We have to believe that our infinitely rich partner, the living God, will help us in our need, and we shall not only be in peace, but we shall actually find that the help we need will be granted to us.

Let not the consciousness of your entire unworthiness keep you, dear reader, from believing what God has said concerning you. If you are indeed a believer in the Lord Jesus, then this precious privilege, being in partnership with the Father and the Son, is yours, though you and I are entirely unworthy of it. If the consciousness of our

¹⁵ **it shall be granted** – in addition to faith, framing our prayers according to God's will is also required (1Jo 5:14), and His will is revealed in Scripture (2Ti 3:15-17).

unworthiness were to keep us from believing what God has said concerning those who depend upon and trust in the Lord Jesus for salvation, then we should find that there is not one single blessing with which we have been blessed in the Lord Jesus from which, on account of our unworthiness, we could derive any settled comfort or peace.

The Study of Scripture

The Benefits of Meditation (1842)

WHILE I was staying at Nailsworth,¹⁶ it pleased the Lord to teach me a truth, irrespective of human instrumentality as far as I know, the benefit of which I have not lost—though now, while preparing the eighth edition for the press, more than forty years have since passed away. The point is this: I saw more clearly than ever that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was to have my soul happy¹⁷ in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not how much I might serve the Lord, how I might glorify the Lord, but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner man might be nourished. For I might seek to set the truth before the unconverted, I might seek to benefit believers, I might seek to relieve the distressed, I might in other ways seek to behave myself as it becomes a child of God in this world; and yet, not being happy in the Lord, and not being nourished and strengthened in my inner man day by day, all this might not be attended to in a right spirit.

Before this time my practice had been at least for ten years previously, as an habitual thing, to give myself to prayer after having dressed in the morning. Now I saw that the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God and to meditate on it, that thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reproved, instructed; and that thus, whilst meditating, my heart might be brought into experimental communion with the Lord. I began, therefore, to meditate on the New Testament from the beginning, early in the morning. The first thing I did, after having asked in a few words the Lord's blessing upon His precious Word, was to begin to meditate on the Word of God, searching, as it were, into every verse to get blessing out of it—not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word, not for the sake of preaching on what I had meditated upon, but for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul. The result I have found to be almost invariably this: that after a very few minutes my soul has been led to confession, thanksgiving, intercession, or supplication; so that though I did not, as it were, give myself to prayer but to meditation, yet it turned almost immediately more or less into prayer. When thus I have been for a while making confession, intercession, or supplication, or have given thanks, I go on to the next words or verse, turning all, as I go on, into prayer for myself or others, as the Word may lead to it; but still continually keeping before me that food for my own soul is the object of my meditation. The result of this is that there is always a good deal of confession, thanksgiving, supplication, or intercession mingled with my meditation, and that my inner man almost invariably is even sensibly nourished and strengthened, and that by breakfast time, with rare exceptions, I am in a peaceful if not happy state of heart. Thus

¹⁶ **Nailsworth** – town in Gloucestershire, England.

¹⁷ **happy** – blessed; enjoying the presence and favor of God.

also the Lord is pleased to communicate unto me that which, very soon after, I have found to become food for other believers, though it was not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word that I gave myself to meditation, but for the profit of my own inner man.

The difference then between my former practice and my present one is this: Formerly, when I rose I began to pray as soon as possible, and generally spent all my time till breakfast in prayer, or almost all the time. At all events, I almost invariably began with prayer, except when I felt my soul to be more than usually barren, in which case I read the Word of God for food, or for refreshment, or for a revival and renewal of my inner man, before I gave myself to prayer. But what was the result? I often spent a quarter of an hour, or half an hour, or even an hour on my knees, before being conscious to myself of having derived comfort, encouragement, humbling of soul, etc.; and often, after having suffered much from wandering of mind for the first ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour, or even half an hour, I only then began really to pray. I scarcely ever suffer now in this way. For my heart being flourished by the truth, being brought into experimental fellowship with God, I speak to my Father, and to my Friend (vile though I am, and unworthy of it!) about the things that He has brought before me in His precious Word.

It often now astonishes me that I did not sooner see this. In no book did I ever read about it. No public ministry ever brought the matter before me. No private intercourse¹⁸ with a brother stirred me up to this matter. And yet now, since God has taught me this point, it is as plain to me as anything, that the first thing the child of God has to do morning by morning is to obtain food for his inner man. As the outward man is not fit for work for any length of time except we take food, and as this is one of the first things we do in the morning, so it should be with the inner man. We should take food for that, as everyone must allow. Now what is the food for the inner man?—not prayer but the Word of God; and here again not the simple reading of the Word of God so that it only passes through our minds, just as water runs through a pipe, but considering what we read, pondering over it, and applying it to our hearts.

When we pray we speak to God. Now prayer, in order to be continued for any length of time in any other than a formal manner, requires, generally speaking, a measure of strength or godly desire. And the season, therefore, when this exercise of the soul can be most effectually performed, is after the inner man has been nourished by meditation on the Word of God, where we find our Father speaking to us, to encourage us, comfort us, instruct us, humble us, reprove us. We may therefore profitably meditate with God's blessing, though we are ever so weak spiritually; nay, the weaker we are, the more we need meditation for the strengthening of our inner man. There is thus far less to be feared from wandering of mind, than if we give ourselves to prayer without having had previously time for meditation.

¹⁸ **intercourse** – communion.

I dwell so particularly on this point because of the immense spiritual profit and refreshment I am conscious of having derived from it myself, and I affectionately and solemnly beseech all my fellow believers to ponder this matter. By the blessing of God I ascribe to this mode the help and strength that I have had from God to pass in peace through deeper trials in various ways than I had ever had before; and after having now above forty years tried this way, I can most fully, in the fear of God, commend it. How different when the soul is refreshed and made happy early in the morning, from what it is when, without spiritual preparation, the service, the trials, and the temptations of the day come upon one!

Preparation for Preaching (1830)

That which I now considered the best mode of preparation for the public ministry of the Word, from deep conviction and from the experience of God's blessing upon it, is as follows: I ask the Lord that He would graciously be pleased to teach me on what subject I shall speak, or what portion of His Word I shall expound. Sometimes it happens that a subject, or a passage, has been in my mind; in that case I ask Him whether I should speak on it. If after prayer I feel persuaded that I should, I fix upon it, yet so that I would desire to leave myself open to the Lord to change it if He please. Frequently however, it occurs that I have no text or subject in my mind before I give myself to prayer. In this case, I wait some time for an answer, trying to listen to the voice of the Spirit¹⁹ to direct me. If then a passage or subject is brought to my mind, I again ask Him, and that sometimes repeatedly, whether it be His will I should speak on it. Frequently it happens that I not only have no text or subject, but also do not obtain one after once or twice or more times praying about it. What I do is to go on with my regular reading of the Scriptures, praying whilst I read, for a text. I have even had to go to the place of meeting without a text, and obtained it perhaps only a few minutes before I was going to speak; but I have never lacked the Lord's assistance at the time of preaching, provided I had earnestly sought it in private.

Now when the text has been obtained, whether it be one or two or more verses, or a whole chapter, I ask the Lord that He would graciously be pleased to teach me by His Holy Spirit whilst meditating over it. Within the last sixty-three years I have found it the most profitable plan to meditate with my pen in my hand, writing down the outlines, as the Word is opened to me. This I do for the sake of clearness, as being a help to see how far I understand the passage. I very seldom use any other help, besides the little I understand of the original of the Scriptures and some good translations in other languages. My chief help is prayer. I have never in my life begun to study one single part of divine truth without gaining some light about it, when I have been able really to give myself to prayer and meditation over it. This I most firmly believe: that no one ought to

¹⁹ **voice of the Spirit** – The reader must not conclude that every subjective feeling, impression, or thought entering the mind is the immediate direction of God. One can make great mistakes without biblical discernment. The written Word (2Ti 3:16), the prayer for wisdom (Jam 1:5), and the multitude of counselors (Pro 11:14; 15:22; 24:6) are a safe path for believers.

expect to see much good resulting from his labors if he is not much given to prayer and meditation.

That which I have found most beneficial in the public ministry of the Word is expounding the Scriptures. This may be done in a twofold way, either by entering minutely into the bearing of every point occurring in the portion, or by giving the general outlines and thus leading the hearers to see the meaning and connection of the whole. The benefits which I have seen resulting from expounding are these:

1. The hearers are thus, with God's blessing, led to the Scriptures. This induces them to bring their Bibles, and I have observed that those who at first did not bring them, have afterwards been induced to do so; so that in a short time few were in the habit of coming without them. This is no small matter, for everything which in our day will lead believers to value the Scriptures is of importance.

2. The expounding of the Scriptures is in general more beneficial to the hearers than if on a single verse, or half a verse, or two or three words of a verse, some remarks are made, so that the portion of Scripture is scarcely anything but a motto for the subject.

3. The expounding of the Scriptures leaves to the hearers a connecting link, so that the reading over again the portion of the Word that has been expounded brings to their remembrance what has been said—and thus, with God's blessing, leaves a more lasting impression on their minds. Expounding the Word of God brings little honor to the preacher from the unenlightened or careless hearer, but it tends much to the benefit of the hearers in general.

Simplicity of expression, whilst the truth is set forth, is of the utmost importance. It should be the aim of the teacher so to speak that children, servants, and people who cannot read may be able to understand him, so far as the natural mind can comprehend the things of God. It should also be considered, that if the preacher strive to speak according to the rules of this world, he may please many, particularly those who have a literary taste but in the same proportion he is less likely to become an instrument in the hands of God for the conversion of sinners or for the building up of the saints. For neither eloquence nor depth of thought makes the truly great preacher, but such a life of prayer, meditation, and spirituality as may render him "a vessel...meet for the master's use" (2Ti 2:21) and fit to be employed both in the conversion of sinners and in the edification of the saints.

Discerning the Will of God

Reprinted from “*George Müller - Man of Faith and Miracles*,”
by Basil Miller, pp. 50-51

MANY asked Mr. Müller how he sought to know the will of God, in that nothing was undertaken, not even the smallest expenditure, without feeling certain he was in God’s will. In the following words he gave his answer.

“1. I seek at the beginning to get my heart into such a state that it has not will of its own in regard to a given matter. Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the Lord’s will, whatever it may be. When one is truly in this state, it is usually but a little way to the knowledge of what His will is.

“2. Having done this, I do not leave the result to feeling or simple impressions. If so, I make myself liable to great delusions.

“3. I seek the will of the Spirit of God through or in connection with the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone without the Word, I lay myself open to great delusions also.

“4. Next I take into account providential circumstances. These plainly indicate God’s will in connection with His Word and Spirit.

“5. I ask God in prayer to reveal His will to me aright.

“6. Thus through prayer to God, the study of the Word, and reflection, I come to a deliberate judgment according to the best of my ability and knowledge, and if my mind is thus at peace,²⁰ and continues so after two or three more petitions, I proceed accordingly. In trivial matters and in transactions involving most important issues, I have found this method always effective.”

And did this plan work? one asks. Let Mr. Müller’s testimony answer.

“I never remember,” he wrote three years before his death, “in all my Christian course, a period now of sixty-nine years and four months, that I ever *sincerely* and *patiently* sought to know the will of God by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, through the instrumentality of the Word of God, but I have been always directed rightly. But if honesty of heart and uprightness before God were lacking, or if I did not patiently wait upon God for instruction, or if I preferred the counsel of my fellow men to the declarations of the Word of the living God, I made great mistakes.”

²⁰ **peace** – Inward peace may be indicative of a good conscience, which, if well instructed by Scripture, may be helpful in discerning the will of God. Yet inward peace is not infallible evidence that we are in the right way. Sometimes the will of God leads us into trials that may occasion anxiety. If inward peace were Jesus’ criterion for discerning His Father’s will, would He ever have gone to the cross? See Matthew 26:38, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.”

Encouragement to Those with Unconverted Family and Friends

Reprinted from *"The Autobiography of George Müller"* pp. 135-138

FOR the encouragement of believers who are tried by having unconverted relatives and friends, I will relate the following circumstance which I know is true. Baron von Kamp, who lived in Prussia, had been a disciple of the Lord Jesus for many years. In the year 1806, great financial distress came upon many thousands of weavers in the area. They had no employment because the whole continent was in an unsettled state from the war. The baron believed that it was the will of the Lord to use his wealth to furnish these poor weavers with work in order to save them from complete ruin. There was not only no prospect of personal gain, but rather the certain prospect of immense loss. Nevertheless, he found employment for about six-thousand weavers.

But the baron was not content with this. He also wanted to minister to the souls of these weavers. He set believers as overseers over his immense weaving concern. The weavers were instructed in spiritual things, and he personally shared the truth of the gospel with them. The work went on for a good while until at last, on account of the loss of most of his property, he was obliged to think about giving it up. But by this time, his precious act of mercy had proven its worth to the government. It was taken up by them and carried on until the times changed. Baron von Kamp was appointed director of the whole concern as long as it existed.

This dear man of God was not content with this. He traveled through many countries to visit the prisons for the sake of improving the physical and spiritual condition of the prisoners. He also assisted poor students at the University of Berlin, especially those who studied theology, in order to win them for the Lord. One day a talented young man heard of the aged baron's kindness to students. He wrote to the baron requesting his assistance, because his own father could not afford to support him any longer. A short time afterward, young Thomas received a kind reply from the baron inviting him to come to Berlin. But before this letter arrived, the young student had heard that Baron von Kamp was a "Pietist" or "mystic," as true believers were contemptuously called in Germany. Young Thomas was deeply involved in philosophy, reasoning about everything, questioning the truth of revelation, questioning even the existence of God. He disliked the prospect of going to the old baron for help. Still, he thought he could try, and if he did not like it he was not obligated to remain in connection with him. Thomas arrived in Berlin on a day when the baron was out of town on business. He began to speak about his philosophies to the steward of the baron. The steward, however, was a believer, and he turned the conversation to spiritual things. At last the baron arrived. He received Thomas in the most affectionate and familiar manner.

The baron offered him a room in his house and a place at his table while Thomas studied in Berlin. Thomas accepted the offer. The baron now sought in every way to treat the young student in the most kind and affectionate way, to serve him as much as possible, and to show him the power of the gospel in his own life. He did all this without arguing with him or even speaking to him directly about his soul. Thomas obviously had a skeptical mind, and the baron avoided getting into any argument with him. The student often said to himself, "I wish I could get into an argument with this old fool. I would show him how irrational his beliefs are." But the baron avoided it. When the baron heard the young student come home in the evening, he would go to meet him and serve him in any way he could, even helping him to take off his boots. Thus this lowly, aged disciple went on for some time.

While Thomas still sought an opportunity for arguing with him, he wondered how the baron could continue to serve him. One evening when Thomas returned to the baron's house, the baron was making himself his servant as usual. The student could restrain himself no longer and burst out, "Baron, how can you do all this? You see I do not care about you. How are you able to continue to be so kind to me and serve me like this?" The baron replied, "My dear young friend, I have learned it from the Lord Jesus. I wish you would read through the Gospel of John. Good night." The student now for the first time in his life sat down and read the Word of God with an open heart and a willingness to learn. Up to that time, he had never read the Holy Scriptures unless he wanted to find out arguments against them. God blessed him; from that time he became a follower of the Lord Jesus and has continued in the faith ever since.

Address to Young Converts

*Transcribed from a spoken message
given by invitation to a special meeting.*

As one who for fifty years has known the Lord, and has labored in word and doctrine, I ought to be able in some little measure to lend a helping hand to these younger believers. And if God will only condescend to use the acknowledgment of my own failures to which I refer, and of my experience, as a help to others in walking on the road to heaven, I trust that your coming here will not be in vain. This was the very purpose of my leaving home—that I might help these dear young brethren.

Reading the Word

One of the most deeply important points is that of attending to the careful, prayerful reading of the Word of God, and meditation thereon. I would therefore ask your particular attention to one verse in the Epistle of Peter, where we are especially exhorted by the Holy Ghost through the apostle, regarding this subject. For the sake of the connection, let us read the first verse:

“Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1Pe 2:2).

The particular point to which I refer is contained in the second verse, “as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word.” As growth in the natural life is attained by proper food, so in the spiritual life; if we desire to grow, this growth is only to be attained through the instrumentality of the Word of God. It is not stated here, as some might be very willing to say, that “the reading of the Word may be of importance under some circumstances.” Nor is it stated that you may gain profit by reading the statement which is made here. It is of the Word and of the Word alone that the apostle speaks, and nothing else.

You say that the reading of this tract or of that book often does you good. I do not question it. Nevertheless, the instrumentality which God has been specially pleased to appoint and to use is that of the Word itself. Just in the measure in which the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ attend to this, they will become strong in the Lord; and in so far as it is neglected, so far will they be weak.

There is such a thing as babes being neglected, and what is the consequence? They never become healthy men or women, because of that early neglect. Perhaps—and it is one of the most hurtful forms of this neglect—they obtain improper food, and therefore do not attain the full vigor of maturity. So with regard to the divine life. It is a most deeply important point that we obtain right spiritual food at the very beginning of that life. What is that food? It is “the sincere milk of the word” that is the proper

nourishment for the strengthening of the new life. Listen, then, my dear brethren and sisters, to some advice with regard to the Word.

Consecutive Reading

First of all, it is of the utmost moment that we read regularly through the Scripture. We ought not to turn over the Bible, and pick out chapters as we please here and there, but we should read it carefully and regularly through. I speak advisedly, and as one who has known the blessedness of thus reading the Word for the last forty-six years.

I say forty-six years, because for the first four years of my Christian life I did not carefully read the Word of God. I used to read a tract or an interesting book, but I knew nothing of the power of the Word. I read very little of it, and the result was that, although a preacher then, yet I made no progress in the divine life. And why?—just for this reason: I neglected the Word of God. But it pleased God, through the instrumentality of a beloved Christian brother, to rouse in me an earnestness about the Word, and ever since then I have been a lover of it.

Let me, then, press upon you my first point, that of attending regularly to reading through the Scriptures. I do not suppose that you all need the exhortation. Many, I believe, have already done so, but I speak for the benefit of those who have not. To those I say, My dear friends, begin at once. Begin with the Old Testament, and when you have read a chapter or two, and are about to leave off, put a mark that you may know where you have left off. I speak in all simplicity for the benefit of those who may be young in the divine life. The next time you read, begin the New Testament, and again put a mark where you leave off.

And thus go on, always reading alternately the Old and the New Testaments. Thus, by little and little, you will read through the whole Bible; and when you have finished, begin again at the beginning.

Why is this so deeply important?—simply that we may see the connection between one book and another of the Bible, and between one chapter and another. If we do not read in this consecutive way, we lose a great part of what God has given to instruct us. Moreover, if we are children of God, we should be well acquainted with the whole revealed will of God, the whole of the Word. “All scripture is given by inspiration, and is profitable” (2Ti 3:16).

And much may be gained by thus carefully reading through the whole of the revealed will of God. Suppose a rich relative were to die and leave us, perhaps, some land, houses, or money; should we be content with reading only the clauses that affected us particularly? No, we would be careful to read the whole will right through. How much more then with regard to the revealed will of God ought we to be careful to read it through, and not merely one and another of the chapters or books.

And this careful reading of the Word of God has this advantage: that it keeps us from making a system of doctrine of our own, and from having our own particular favorite views, which is very pernicious. We often are apt to lay too much stress on certain views of the truth which affect us particularly. The will of the Lord is that we should know His

whole revealed mind. Again, variety in the things of God is of great moment; and God has been pleased to give us this variety in the highest degree. The child of God, who follows out this plan, will be able to take an interest in every part of the Word.

Suppose one says, "Let us read in Leviticus." Very well, my brother. Suppose another says, "Let us read in the prophecy of Isaiah." Very well, my brother. And another will say, "Let us read in the Gospel according to Matthew." Very well, my brother, I can enjoy them all; and whether it be in the Old Testament or the New Testament, whether in the Prophets, the Gospels, the Acts, or the Epistles, I should welcome it, and be delighted to welcome the reading and study of any part of the divine Word.

And this will be of particular advantage to us, in case we should become laborers in Christ's vineyard, because in expounding the Word we shall be able to refer to every part of it. We shall equally enjoy the reading of the Word whether of the Old or the New Testament, and shall never get tired of it. I have, as before stated, known the blessedness of this plan for forty-six years, and though I am now nearly seventy years of age and though I have been converted for nearly fifty years, I can say by the grace of God that I more than ever love the Word of God, and have greater delight than ever in reading it.

And though I have read the Word nearly a hundred times right through, I have never got tired of reading it, and this is more especially through reading it regularly, consecutively, day by day—and not merely reading a chapter here and there, as my own thoughts might have led me to do.

Reading the Word Prayerfully

Again, we should read the Scripture prayerfully, never supposing that we are clever enough or wise enough to understand God's Word by our own wisdom. In all our reading of the Scriptures let us seek carefully to have the help of the Holy Spirit; let us ask, for Jesus' sake, that He will enlighten us. He is willing to do it.

I will tell you how it fared with me at the very first; it may be for your encouragement. It was in the year 1829 when I was living in Hackney. My attention had been called to the teaching of the Spirit by a dear brother of experience. "Well," I said, "I will try this plan, and will give myself, after prayer, to the careful reading of the Word of God and to meditation, and I will see how much the Spirit is willing to teach me in this way."

I went accordingly to my room and locked my door, and putting the Bible on a chair, I went down on my knees at the chair. There I remained for several hours in prayer and meditation over the Word of God; and I can tell you that I learned more in those three hours which I spent in this way, than I had learned for many months previously. I thus obtained the teaching of the divine Spirit, and I cannot tell you the blessedness which it was to my own soul. I was praying in the Spirit, and putting my trust in the power of the Spirit, as I had never done before.

You cannot, therefore, be surprised at my earnestness in pressing this upon you, when you have heard how precious to my heart it was, and how much it helped me.

Meditate on the Word

But again, it is not enough to have prayerful reading only, but we must also meditate on the Word. As in the instance I have just referred to, kneeling before the chair, I meditated on the Word. It was not simply reading it, not simply praying over it. It was all that, but in addition it was pondering over what I had read. This is deeply important. If you merely read the Bible and no more, it is just like water running in at one side and out at the other. In order to be really benefited by it, we must meditate on it. We cannot all of us, of course, spend many hours, or even one or two hours, each day in this manner. Our business demands our attention. Yet, however short the time you can afford, give it regularly to reading, prayer, and meditation over the Word, and you will find it will well repay you.

In connection with this, we should always read and meditate over the Word of God with reference to ourselves and our own heart. This is deeply important, and I cannot press it too earnestly upon you. We are apt often to read the Word with reference to others. Parents read it in reference to their children, children for their parents; evangelists read it for their congregations, Sunday school teachers for their classes. Oh! This is a poor way of reading²¹ the Word; if read in this way, it will not profit. I say it deliberately and advisedly: the sooner it is given up, the better for your own souls. Read the Word of God always with reference to your own heart, and when you have received the blessing in your own heart, you will be able to communicate it to others.

Whether you labor as evangelists, as pastors, or as visitors, superintendents of Sunday schools, teachers, tract distributors, or in whatever other capacity you may seek to labor for the Lord, be careful to let the reading of the Word be with distinct reference to your own heart. Ask yourselves, “How does this suit me, either for instruction, for correction, for exhortation, or for rebuke (2Ti 3:16)? How does this affect me?” If you thus read and get the blessing in your own soul, how soon it will flow out to others!

Read in Faith

Another point. It is of the utmost moment in reading the Word of God that the reading should be accompanied with faith. “The word preached did not profit them; not being mixed with faith in them that heard it” (Heb 4:2). As with the preaching, so with the reading; it must be mixed with faith.

Not simply reading it as you would read a story, which you may receive or not; not simply as a statement, which you may credit or not; or as an exhortation, to which you may listen or not—but as the revealed will of the Lord, that is, receiving it with faith. Received thus it will nourish us, and we shall reap benefit. Only in this way will it benefit us; we shall gain from it health and strength in proportion as we receive it with real faith.

²¹ **poor way of reading** – Müller’s emphasis here may be similar to that in Luke 6:42b: “Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother’s eye.” If so, he is advising readers to go to the Word *primarily*, though not exclusively, with reference to their own life, that of others.

Be Doers of the Word

Lastly, if God does bless us in reading His Word, He expects that we should be obedient children and that we should accept the Word as His will, and carry it into practice. If this be neglected, you will find that the reading of the Word, even if accompanied by prayer, meditation, and faith, will do you little good. God does expect us to be obedient children, and will have us practice what He has taught us. The Lord Jesus Christ says: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (Joh 13:17). In the measure in which we carry out what our Lord Jesus taught, so much in measure are we happy children. In such measure only can we honestly look for help from our Father, even as we seek to carry out His will.

If there is one single point I would wish to have spread all over this country and over the whole world, it is just this: that we should seek, beloved Christian friends, not to be hearers of the Word only, but "doers of the Word" (Jam 1:22). I doubt not that many of you have sought to do this already, but I speak particularly to those younger brethren and sisters who have not yet learned the full force of this. Oh! seek to attend earnestly to this; it is of vast importance.

Satan will seek with much earnestness to put aside the Word of God; but let us seek to carry it out and to act upon it. The Word must be received as a legacy from God, which has been communicated to us by the Holy Ghost,

The Fullness of the Revelation Given in the Word

And remember that, to the faithful reader of this blessed Word, it reveals all that we need to know about the Father, all that we need to know about the Lord Jesus Christ, all about the power of the Spirit, all about the world that lieth in the wicked one, all about the road to heaven and the blessedness of the world to come. In this blessed book we have the whole gospel and all rules necessary for our Christian life and warfare. Let us see then that we study it with our whole heart and with prayer, meditation, faith, and obedience.

Prayer

The next point on which I will speak for a few moments has been more or less referred to already; it is that of prayer. You might read the Word and seem to understand it very fully, yet if you are not in the habit of waiting continually upon God, you will make little progress in the divine life. We have not naturally in us any good thing, and cannot expect, save by the help of God, to please Him. Therefore it is the will of the Lord that we should always own our dependence upon Him in prayer.

The blessed Lord Jesus Christ gave us an example in this particular. He gave whole nights to prayer. We find Him on the lonely mountain engaged by night in prayer. And as in every way He is to be an example to us, so in particular on this point. He is an example to us. The old evil corrupt nature is still in us though we are born again; therefore we have to come in prayer to God for help. We have to cling to the power of the Mighty One. Concerning everything, we have to pray. Not simply when great troubles

come, when the house is on fire, or a beloved wife is on the point of death, or dear children are laid down in sickness—not simply at such times, but also in little things. From the very early morning, let us make everything a matter of prayer, and let it be so throughout the day and throughout our whole life. A Christian lady said lately that thirty-five years ago she heard me speak on this subject in Devonshire, and that then I referred to praying about little things. I had said that suppose a parcel came to us, and it should prove difficult to untie the knot, and you cannot cut it; then you should ask God to help you, even to untie the knot.

I myself had forgotten the words but she has remembered them, and the remembrance of them, she said, had been a great help to her again and again. So I would say to you, my beloved friends, there is nothing too little to pray about. In the simplest things connected with our daily life and walk, we should give ourselves to prayer; and we shall have the living, loving Lord Jesus to help us. Even in the most trifling matters I give myself to prayer; and often in the morning, even ere I leave my room, I have two or three answers to prayer in this way. Young believers, in the very outset of the divine life in your souls, learn in childlike simplicity to wait upon God for everything! Treat the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Friend, able and willing to help you in everything. How blessed it is to be carried in His loving arms all the day long! I would say that the divine life of the believer is made up of a vast number of little circumstances and little things. Every day there comes before us a variety of little trials; and if we seek to put them aside in our own strength and wisdom, we shall quickly find that we are confounded. But if, on the contrary, we take everything to God, we shall be helped and our way shall be made plain. Thus our life will be a happy life!

A Word to the Unconverted

I am here tonight addressing believers, those who have felt the burden of their sins and have accepted Christ as their Savior, and who now through Him have peace with God and seek to glorify Him. But if there be any here who are still in their sins, in a state of alienation from God, let me say: if they die in this state, the terrible punishment of sin must fall upon them. Unless their sins are pardoned and they are made fit for the divine presence, they can never enter heaven. But, dear friends, Christ came to save the lost, and as sinners, you are lost; you have no power of your own to save yourselves. The world talks of turning over a new leaf, but that will not satisfy divine justice. Sin must be punished, or God's righteousness would be set aside. Jesus came into the world to bear that punishment. He has borne it in our room and stead. He has suffered for us. Now, what God looks for from us is that we accept Jesus as our Savior and put our trust in Him for the salvation of our souls. Whosoever looks really and entirely to Him shall assuredly be saved. Let his sins be ever so many, he shall have the forgiveness of them all. Nay, more, he will be accepted by God as His child. He will become an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ. Oh, what a great and glorious salvation so freely given! May it be as thankfully accepted!

And may we who rejoice in Him stand boldly out and confess Christ—and work for Him. May we not be half-hearted, but be valiant soldiers of Christ. Let us be decided for Christ. Let us walk as in God's sight, in holy, peaceful, happy fellowship with Him, in the enjoyment of that nearness into which we are brought in Christ. Oh, the blessedness of this privilege of living near to God in this life! May we then seek His guidance in everything, so that we may be a blessing to others, and thus we shall be greatly blessed in our own souls.

