

**CHAPTER VIII.****CLOSING COUNSELS AND PARTING WORDS.****THE WAY OF PROGRESS. DANGERS AND DIFFICULTIES.**

A fourth part should, of right, be added, if our limits were not already reached. Many practical questions of deep and general interest, such as growth in grace, discipline, temptations, self-examination, watching and prayer, reading, study of the Scriptures, methods of doing good, and the like, might well form the conclusion of a work upon experimental religion.

However, if we must leave these topics untouched, it is a consolation to know, that whoso shall find Christ in His fulness, *and dwell in Him*, will live in Him, and in His Word, and His Spirit, counsel and strength which no work of man — no human hand or human heart could give.

At best, authors or ministers, are but like the finger and the tongue of John the Baptist pointing to Jesus — always present — as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

We must get beyond the minister, however wise and good he may be; and beyond the book, however full and clear its teachings, to find Jesus. The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's, gives the truth in words of honied sweetness, when the bride is made to say,

"I sought him but I found him not:

"I will arise now and go about the city in the streets,

"And in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth:

"I sought him but I found him not.

"The watchmen that go about the city found me: —

"To whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?

*"It was but a little that I passed from them;*

*"But I found him whom my soul loveth.*

*"I held him and would not let him go."*

Ah! when we find him, and while we will not let him go there is safety, progress, happiness, usefulness, for us. Satan cannot lay hold on us.

A little child, who was told by her mother that the tempter could not get her, because Jesus would be with her, answered, "Why, mother, *I am in Jesus!*"

We are in Jesus, if we abide in him.

Therefore it is that exhortations may be dispensed with, because abiding in Jesus we shall be watchful and prayerful, diligent and faithful, secure from the adversary and cheerful as the lark.

Like jets and chandeliers connected by hidden pipes with the great meter at the works, our light will burn on, and shine evermore, because Christ is our unfailing fountain head.

He in whom Christ dwells by faith will pray with all prayer and without ceasing, because prayer has become his vital breath; and like the beating of his heart and the heaving of his lungs, his soul will go out in prayer and praise, spontaneously without the lashings of conscience and the urgencies of duty. Songs in the night will come welling up from the overflowing joys of his heart; and his very dreams will take on heavenly hues and shapes.

He will be active. The spirit in him will be love; a constraining fire in his bones; he cannot but be active. He will be generous. If he abide in Christ — who, though rich, for our sakes became poor — himself the free gift of God to us — he cannot but give freely for his Master and his Master's cause.

He will grow in grace; for he has a living union with Him who is full of grace and truth; and from Him he will receive grace for grace.

He will have no longer occasion to examine himself to see whether he is a Christian at all or not saying and singing the mournful strain,

"Oft it causes anxious thought;

Am I his or am I not?"

For he will have left the dim line of uncertainty so far behind in his race, that his days of groping will be ended forever. His examinations will be to see whether he is "*in the faith:*" *abiding in Jesus:* not lifted up, not turned aside, but in the fulness of the faith.

He will press for the mark; for every day the mark of the prize will brighten and swell out toward the proportions of an actual presence, a substantial verity; and every day his urgency will accelerate, as on eagle wing he mounts up toward the goal of hope.

But what is it to abide in Jesus?

To abide in Jesus, is just to keep always the very attitude taken when Jesus was accepted.

As ye have *received* the Lord Jesus Christ, so walk ye in him — rooted and grounded in him, saith the apostle.

We received him very humbly. We felt our place to be the dust. Our righteousness to be rags. Our power to be weakness. And looked to Christ for all things.

Even so abide. So walk ye in him.

He who is lifted up with the idea of some exalted state of purity, or power, or safety gained, has in so far forgotten the apostolic injunction and is not in the lowly way where Christ was received by him. His joy is in *his state*, not in Christ. His trust is in his own attainments, not in Christ.

The command is not — Now you have got into a high and holy state, so walk in *that*; but even as ye *received* CHRIST JESUS, so walk in HIM.

One who had found the blessed Saviour by faith, and had his eyes opened to see the folly of his blind struggles to gain the goal by works:— became so enamored of *faith*, as to think of that night and day, and extol it to all listeners. But his comforts began to fail, and his light grew dim. His soul pined away into leanness again, and grew hungry, he could not tell why. By-and-by, however, a beam from the Sun of Righteousness dispelled his darkness. He saw that he had magnified faith instead of Christ. Just as if one should look at the system of iron pipes underlaying the city streets, and conducting the waters into every house, and forgetting the fountain, which supplies them, should say — "Ah, it is these pipes which bring their crystal streams to all! We owe all to these pipes."

Satan even tempted him to question whether, the power was not in the faith itself independent of Jesus. So that if there were no Saviour, yet if faith could be the same, whether the salvation would not be received. But even while he questioned thus, the power began to wane, as the supply of water in our houses would begin to fail, the instant the fountain head was shut off from the conducting pipes. And it was only when he returned again to Jesus as the fountain which supplies the Waters of the River of Life, that the streams began to flow again in full current into his heart.

We received CHRIST AS ALL-SUFFICIENT, even so let us abide in Him.

#### FATHER A-----.

A venerable and lovely Christian, instructed in the way, but trembling and hesitating whether, after all, it would do for him to trust in *Jesus alone*, without some sign or seal of his acceptance, arose in a social meeting and touched every heart by the childlike simplicity, and lucid clearness in which he set forth the way, and the humility with which he confessed his own past mistakes. Then in conclusion he said — "But now as for me, I see that the only way is to trust in Jesus. Every other Way has failed me. I have no hope in anything else. I see that it is His to save me from my sins, just the same as it is His to save me from hell. And I know He is able to save to the uttermost. But — but — whether He will do it — for *me* — I — I — dare not say."

He resumed his seat, and for a moment breathless silence reigned. Then another arose and said, "Father A. reminds me of the counsellors of Washington at the Brandywine. The American army had crossed the bridge, and were going on to meet the enemy. Washington

called a council. His officers assembled. He proposed the question, 'Shall we burn the bridge?' They said, 'No — we may want it to retreat over.' Washington overruled them, saying, 'Burn the bridge! Then there will be no retreating!' So the order was given, 'Burn the bridge!' and the bridge was laid in ashes."

The brother was going on to apply this to Father A., but he sprang to his feet, exclaiming, "I'll burn the bridge!" And he did. From that hour he was a living witness, and a lovely one, too, that Jesus is the way. All sufficient without signs or anything else to Him who receives Him.

That's the way! Burn the bridge! Leave no retreat! Venture wholly.

This we have done — if we have — done it. Even so abide in Christ. Wholly in Him. Always in Him.

Suppose comforts fail, light grows dim, clouds arise, the heart becomes laggard, courage sinks, joys fall into the sear and yellow leaf — or begin to, what then?

Fly to means? No — fly to Christ. Christ is what we want. Christ is all we want. Having him we shall have light, comfort, courage, joy and everything — without him we shall have nothing.

Suppose you were in a church or hall at night. The lights were dim. Hardly light enough to make the darkness visible. And suppose you should see the sexton busy, working away at the burners, trying to enlarge their apertures of escape for the gas, to increase the light, and all the while you know that the gas is partially shut off, in the pipe connecting with the main, and that is the reason of its faintness in the jets.

You will go to him saying, Man! Man! let the jets alone! Go turn on the gas from the main! Then let him do it, and instantly the room is full of light. *Every burner does its duty*. Ten to one he will have to go round to each burner and reduce the light to keep it within bounds.

Even so every man who has full and abiding union with Jesus will do his duty. His light will shine, and he will rather need restraint than spurs and goads.

"I am the door," said the Master. We all believe that. There is no other.

But the same lips said these other words, "I am the way," and this is equally true. There is no other. Practically, many believe in Jesus as the door. By him they enter the gateway to glory — and then, too, they expect to be met at the end of the way by angel messengers, and ushered into the presence of Jesus. But between whiles, they expect to journey in the straight and narrow way by virtue of their own resolutions and watchings, with such help from God and man as they can secure from time to time.

Lame faith! O what a wretched life of ups and downs they have of it, living in that way.

O that they only knew that Jesus is the way. He not only offers to be with them the pillar of cloud and of fire, the manna and the fountain, but he is *The Way* and there is no other. There is no real progress heavenward but IN JESUS.

Abiding in Him.

One thing more — vital to this abiding union with Jesus in its fulness: that is a constantly renewed consecration to do his will.

"If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love: even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love."

It is an every day freshness of full purpose to do all the will of Jesus, that is here enjoined as the way to abide in his love.

Every day the panorama of life shifts its scenes indeed kaleidoscope-like, our circumstances change to the turn of every moment, almost.

Some disciples think they must look over the ground of duty at the end of each year, and begin anew on New Year's day. Most of those who pretend to serve the Master feel it incumbent when setting out in the world for themselves, or when commencing married life, or when engaging in a new business then to seek a new adjustment to their new circumstances. But this should be the daily, hourly, constant manner of the disciples of Christ. "I do always the

will of my Father," said the blessed Saviour, "and if you will keep my commandments you shall abide in my love, as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love."

Just here many and many a truly converted one has missed the way and slid into darkness.

There is no living in the light without living in obedience.

Remember! Faith accepts the command and obeys, just as it also accepts the promise and rests upon it.

The branch abiding in the vine, adjusts itself to the times and seasons of the vine. It puts forth buds, blossoms and leaves in the spring, fruit in the summer, and in the fall ripens its precious burden for the husbandman, then drops its leaves, and composes itself for the rest and strength-gathering time of the winter. Just so we need to adjust ourselves to the will of the Master daily and hourly.

So shall we abide in his love, and so shall his love also abide in us forever.

Before closing, there is one practical question — always important, doubly so now — concerning young converts: What shall we tell them?

Shall we tell them — as alas, is too often done — Ah, you are joyous now, but your joys will soon fade?

No. That would be cruel, even if true; but it need not be true. Tell them rather — Abide in Jesus, and your joys shall be full.

Tell them like Paul to press for the mark, and like President Edwards, to be more urgent in seeking the Lord than before conversion, and then with Paul you shall be filled with all the fulness of God, and with Edwards your joy in God shall be so great that when you walk in the fields everything shall be alive with God, and you shall not be able to *speak* forth *his praises* — your swelling emotions will seek expression in song — his statutes shall be *literally* your songs in the house of your pilgrimage, and as your joys so also shall your usefulness be. The joy of the Lord shall be your strength. You shall be abundant in labors and abundant in success.

But what shall we tell the young convert about the higher life?

Tell him that he must go through a long process of seeking — must try all the byways before finding the highway? No. No.

Tell him simply to abide in Jesus. As he has received him, so to walk in him. Give himself to Jesus, soul, body and spirit.

Commit the keeping of his soul to Jesus.

Commit the purifying of his soul to Jesus. Commit all the affairs of life to Jesus. Cast all his cares upon Jesus.

Take Jesus as all in all, and find all in him. Take up every cross. Keep every commandment and walk in his love. Tell him to do this and he shall not grope in darkness, but will be in the higher life —

"And all that life is love!"

Tell him the words of Jesus.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine: no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love: even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

Tell them further from Jesus —“This do, and the ‘promise of the Father’ shall be shed upon you, and ‘Ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost’ is given you; then shall ye be ‘witnesses unto me.’”

And now, unto Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.