

The
Blessing
— of —
Doing



By James McConkey

The Blessing of Doing

"If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye *do* them." (John 13:17, R.V.)

"He that hath my commandments and keepeth them . . . I will . . . *manifest* myself to him." (John 14:21).

One of the fondest memories of your boyhood days is that of the old swimming hole. Hidden away in the cool depths of the woods, it was your favorite boyish resort. Especially do you recall one hot summer day when you betook yourself to it for a cool swim. The day was stifling. Your body was throbbing and feverish with the great heat. You were soon ready for the plunge. You raised your hands above your head. And then you hesitated. You dipped your foot into the water. You touched it with the tip of your fingers. You sprinkled a bit of it upon your heated body. But still you dallied and delayed. And all the while you postponed your plunge there came no physical blessing to your body. But by and by your indecision ended. You raised your hands above your head. You backed off and took a little run. And then came the plunge. And the refreshing sense of physical blessing that suffused your tired, overheated body, and set it all aglow and a-tingle with the sheer sense of physical joy. So long as you dallied and hesitated there came no manifestation of physical blessing. But as soon as you plunged, it was there. It was **the blessing of doing.**

That is a homespun illustration of our Lord's

luminous statement, "If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them." What does He mean by this teaching? Simply this. There are some truths which we need only to *believe*, in order to have the blessing of them. But there are others which need to be *obeyed* ere that blessing comes. Merely to know them is not enough. We must also do them. Such are all of Christ's commands. The blessing from them comes in the doing of them. And it is only as we obey them that the rich blessing of them becomes ours.

What the Blessing Is

Suppose some day I meet you upon the street. Your face is radiant. Your voice is vibrant with feeling. Your whole attitude shows the stress of a great emotion. I say to you, "You must have had a great blessing today somewhere." Then you tell me what it was, that had just happened. As you suddenly turned the corner of a street you came upon your beloved mother. You did not dream she was within a hundred miles of the city. But all unexpectedly you came face to face with her dear self and it has filled your heart with unbounded joy and blessing. Ah, I see what your blessing is. **It is the manifested personal presence of one most dearly beloved to yourself.** There could be no greater blessing than this. But that which is true in the sphere of the affections is also true in the spiritual life. The greatest possible blessing of our spiritual beings is the personal manifestation of Jesus Christ in our innermost hearts. When Jacob ended his all night struggle against the unseen God the narrative tells us "He blessed him there." Jacob

showed what the heart of that blessing was by the name which he gave to the place. He called it "Peniel," which means "the face of God." "For," said he, "I have seen God face to face." With Jacob, as with all of God's children, blessing was the personal revelation of God to his own soul.

Our Lord beautifully sets forth this truth in John 13:17. There He says that if we know His commandments, blessed are we if we do them. Now link this with John 14:21. There He says that if we keep (or do) His commandments He will **manifest** Himself to us. Thus the supreme and precious blessing of the personal manifestation of Jesus Christ's presence in our hearts is conditioned upon our **doing His will**. How mysterious and how incomprehensible do we make this conscious presence of Christ in our hearts to be! Yet how simple, clear, and comprehensible does our Lord make it in a statement so luminous that a child could understand it. Instead of being a mystical, difficult truth it is one which lies right upon the surface in the full sunshine of His clear and beautiful teaching. Let us consider some of the commandments which bring to us the joy of the Christ-consciousness and which we are daily trampling upon without realizing that by so doing we cloud the manifestation of that precious presence which is the greatest conscious spiritual blessing of the soul.

The Blessing of Believing

A young Southern lad was brought up under the tutelage of an old Negro "uncle." The strong affection common in such cases sprang up

between them. All through his boyhood days the old man cared tenderly and affectionately for the young lad. Uncle Charley could not read but his young master read "Pilgrim's Progress" to him. The old man led the boy to the Lord. By and by the latter went off to enter college. The years rolled on. In due course, he entered the seminary to prepare himself for the Gospel ministry, and went out to his life-work. One day came the message from home to him that Uncle Charley was dying and was longing to see his young master. Dropping everything the latter hastened to the side of his beloved old friend, eager to render any ministry he could in his last hours. "Marse Jim, read my text for me," said the dying man. The young minister read John 3:16, the picture of God's wondrous love for lost men. "Marse Jim, sign my name to dat text," said old Uncle Charley. And the young minister wrote his name, and made his mark as they were wont to do in the old slavery days for those who could not write. As he did so, the dying slave said, "Marse Jim, lemme tech de pen." The slave never would leave the plantation after "Freedom," but had been deeded a little cabin and an acre of land, and had "made his mark" when the contract was drawn up. And the young minister suffered the old man to touch the tip of the penholder with his finger as the mark was made. Presently the old man grew delirious. In his delirium they heard him say, "Aunt Dinah say dat I must go fru great tribulation to be saved. And Uncle Rastus say dat I got to be baptized to be saved. But Marse Jim say dat I aint got nuthin to do but to believe on de Lord Jesus Christ, and

I've signed de Book to show dat I do."

Behold the blessing of believing! Through it comes the blessing of salvation. Not that a man can do anything to save himself. No work, no merit, no effort of his own can save him. Salvation is all of grace. But it is "*By grace through faith.*" Until the command to believe in Jesus Christ is obeyed the grace of God in salvation can never be known. Until man obeys that command he literally "makes void the grace of God," so far as it concerns his own salvation. Thus the blessing of salvation, while it is wholly of God in Christ Jesus, is also the blessing of believing. "Blessed are they," said Christ to Thomas, "who have not seen and yet have believed."

A Christian worker was trying to lead a young man to accept the grace of God in Christ by faith alone. The young man suddenly turned upon him and said, "I will never believe until I have an experience." The Christian worker flashed back, "You will never have an experience until you believe." And he was right. The manifestation of Jesus Christ in salvation comes to the man who obeys His command to believe. Here, as elsewhere, it is "If ye keep my commandments . . . I will manifest myself unto you." Not only is this true of salvation but also for the saved there is —

The Blessing of Trusting

You will recall that when God sent Moses into Egypt He told him to tell the people that it was the I AM who sent him. But do you notice that Christ also calls Himself I AM? That is, Christ's

presence is an eternally continued present. Even when He came to promise His presence to His disciples as He gave them the last commission, with almost 2,000 years of that presence before them, He said not "Lo, I will be with you alway," but "Lo, *I am* with you alway." And so because His life was an ever continuous today He warned them earnestly in the sixth of Matthew against anxious care of tomorrow. So the believer who steps out of this trust of the today, steps out from the conscious presence of Him who is the I AM. The secret of abiding peace in Christ is to learn this great lesson of living in today.

**"Build a little fence of trust
around today;
Fill the space with loving deeds,
And therein stay."**

It is the hedging of today with this little fence of trust and staying therein that is one of the profound secrets of continuous peace in Christ in the Christian life. It is the violation of this profound and simple secret of faith that is responsible for the oft-repeated recurrence of the troubled heart in our lives, against which Christ so earnestly warns us. Christ never projected Himself into the tomorrow of anxious care as we do. He never lived that way when He was upon earth. Neither will He live that way in us. Therefore we are bound to dim and mar the consciousness of His presence whenever we step out of the charmed circle of today's trust into the gloom of tomorrow's anxiety. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace . . . **because he trusteth in Thee.**" Trust is the inexorable condition of the believer's peace in Christ Jesus. And the

inevitable result of unfaith is anxiety. Andrew Murray has beautifully stated it. "The beginning of faith is the end of anxiety." Nor will we ever know victory over anxiety until we begin to treat it as sin. For such it is. It is deep-seated distrust of the tender care of a Father who assures us again and again that even the falling sparrow is in His tender love and care. Suffering we may know, and sorrow we may know and have the Lord's conscious presence with us in it all. But anxiety is a demon from the pit; born of distrust; and nurtured in our soul at the costliest price we can possibly pay for it, and that is the abiding peace of Jesus Christ to those who trust Him. Tear the mask from the face of anxiety and back of it you will always find the scowling visage of unfaith. "O ye of little faith," is the sore spot upon which Jesus Christ must often place His finger of love. Let us be faithful enough to our own spiritual selves to face this destroyer of our peace as a sin against God. When trust becomes enshrined in our hearts, anxiety will become a foe under our feet. No so-called venial sin is more destructive in its ravages upon our spiritual lives than this one of anxious care. It falls like a deadly blight upon everything within its reach, and blackens the beautiful flower of faith wherever it touches it. And one of the most sobering phases of its deadly work is this. In throttling faith, anxiety chokes the very channel through which God is seeking to pour in His peace and power.

You recall that story of one of Cromwell's officers who was given to this sin of anxious care. One day his godly servant who knew how

to live in the today and leave the tomorrow to the care of His Lord said to his worrisome master, "Master, the Lord ran this world before you came into it," to which his master quickly assented. "You expect Him to run it after you leave it, do you not?" Again the master nodded assent. "Then how would it do to let Him run it **while you are in it?**" It would make a vast difference in our harassed worried lives if we decided to trust Him to run this world while we are in it! He is going to do it anyhow and we might as well live in the quiet rest of faith as in the feverish torment of anxiety.

The Blessing of Praying

Henry Gibbud was a mission worker in the city of New York. He spent his life in work among the slums of that great city. He was a man of great devotion and wonderful power in prayer. On one occasion he had been working all night in the slums of the great city. Tired and sleepy at the end of his toil, he made his way in the dark of the morning to the Brooklyn ferry dock. He put his hand in his pocket to pay his fare homeward on the ferry boat. To his dismay he discovered that he did not have even the three cents needful to pay his fare. His heart sank in deepest discouragement. He closed his eyes and began to pray. "Lord I have been toiling all night in Thy service, trying to bring lost men and women to Jesus Christ. I am hungry, tired, and sleepy. I want to get home to my beloved wife, and have not even the three cents needful for my fare. You have promised to supply all my needs. Will you not help me?" As he closed his earnest

prayer, he opened his eyes. They fell upon something shining in the dust at his feet. He reached down and picked up the glittering object. It was a fifty-cent piece. He paid his fare and went on his way homeward rejoicing. What was the joy that flooded his heart? It was Jesus Christ's fulfillment of His promise. "If ye keep my commandments, I will manifest myself." Henry Gibbud had kept His commandment to pray in time of need. And Christ had wonderfully fulfilled the promise of His revealed person.

Men talk much of the philosophy of prayer; of the mystery of prayer; and of the reflex influence of prayer on the life. But the greatest truth the Christian man needs to know about prayer is **the necessity of praying**. The blessing of prayer is the blessing of doing. It comes not as we philosophize about prayer but as we pray. Samuel said to the children of Israel, "God forbid that I should sin against God in ceasing to pray for you." **The greatest prayer disaster in any believer's life is the ceasing to pray.** "If ye know this thing, blessed are ye if ye do it," is intensely true of the command to pray.

The Blessing of Choosing

I was standing on the top of a high city building in the early dawn of an autumn day. The city was lost in the gray and the gloom of an enveloping fog. You could not see a hundred feet into its depths. Presently I turned my head upward. Instantly the whole scene changed. Great patches of blue were breaking through heavy fog. The white clouds were grouping

themselves to begin their day's journey across the face of the sky. The rising sun was tipping their fleecy summits with the glory of the coming day. It was mine **to choose** which of these scenes should fill my innermost being. When I turned my face downward, I was filled with the gray and the gloom of the dismal fog. When I turned upward, I was filled with the glory and the splendor of the coming day. Whichever I opened to, filled me. If I knew this fact, blessed was I when I acted upon it. I had something to do with the fullness, whether it should be a fullness of gloom or a fullness of glory.

Is not this what Paul means when he says, "Be not drunken with wine, but **be filled** with the Spirit?"

Clearly he is teaching this. Your life is being lived in a two-fold environment. On the one hand are the world, the Flesh, the devil. On the other are Christ, the things of the Spirit, and the things of the heavenlies. You may open to the things of the Flesh, as for example to wine drinking, gluttony, and other lusts of the Flesh. Or you may choose to open to the Word, Christ, communion, prayer, service, and the other blessed things of the Spirit. **It is yours to choose. Whichever you open your heart and members to will fill you.** So that while fullness is of God and is His gift, it is also, in a profound sense, your own choice which determines whether you will be filled with the things of the Spirit, or those of the Flesh. The tragedy of the unsaved life is that light has come into the world and men love, that is they choose, darkness rather than

light. And the tragedy of the worldly Christian's life is that while the Spirit is here with His fullness of life, and the Flesh is also here, he chooses the things of the Flesh rather than those of God. Through the one comes the manifestation of the world; through the other that of Jesus Christ.

The Blessing of Cleansing

"Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." (II Cor. 7:1)

You remember the story of the heathen idol, "Dagon." The Philistines placed Dagon in the same temple with the Ark of the Covenant which represented the presence of God. On the second morning, Dagon was found lying face downward, decapitated, and with the palms of his hands cut off, leaving only a mutilated torso in the presence of the Ark of God. The lesson is sharp and clear. There is no fellowship between the Spirit of Christ and the flesh. If Christ manifests Himself to His children who keep His commandments, then of necessity that manifestation is dimmed and veiled by the failure to cleanse ourselves from the sins of the Flesh. We are too careless and too heedless about this searching command to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the Flesh. The blessing of cleansing here is the blessing of a deeper, richer manifestation of the presence of Christ than we could possibly have if we endure tamely the presence and practice of the sins of the Flesh. Whoso endures unchallenged, unpurged the practice of a known sin in his life and walk, pays

the costly price of a quenched manifestation of the presence of Jesus Christ at that particular point. Myriads of Christians fail to see this, and are suffering untold loss because of it.

I had a beloved Christian friend. He knew the Lord in a deep, rich way. But he was a long standing victim of the tobacco habit. Frequently the Spirit had convicted him for a separation from the habit. But the matter seemed to him to be trivial and the obedience correspondingly so. One day he was walking alone in a long covered bridge. The old issue came up. He fought the battle to a finish and settled it by throwing away his tobacco. He came out of the bridge with a radiant face and a heart full of the manifestation of the Lord. He testified afterward that this seemingly trifling act of obedience had brought into his heart one of the greatest spiritual blessings of his life. The Lord had simply proven the truth of His words that He would manifest Himself to His children who walked in the pathway of His will however trivial the issue seemed to be to them. The issue which God raises with us in our secret soul may seem to be a trifle. But disobedience itself is no trifling thing. It lost Saul his kingdom. It will lose us something of the surpassingness of the knowledge of Christ in our hearts.

The Blessing of Yielding

"Yield yourselves unto God." (Rom. 6:13)

A great London preacher was discoursing on that beautiful text in II Chronicles 29:27:

"When the burnt offering began, the song of the

Lord began also."

He called attention to the fact that in the Temple ritual the song of the Lord was not permitted to rise until the burnt offering had been laid upon the altar. He went on to show the precious truth that it was only when the life of the believer was laid upon the altar of consecration to Jesus Christ that the fullest joy of the Lord filled his heart and rose up in thanksgiving and praise to God. The next morning the great preacher went downtown to the railroad station to take a train out of the city. As he stepped upon the station platform he was greeted by a grimy-faced railroad porter with this striking sentence, "Mr. Brown, I live in the country where the music is." Archibald Brown looked upon the railroad porter in amazement, utterly failing to grasp the meaning of this sentence. Recovering himself from his astonishment, he said, "I do not understand you, my dear man." Then the porter smiled again and said, "Mr. Brown, I was in your church service last night. I heard you preach upon that beautiful text which says that the song of the Lord was not allowed to rise in the temple until the burnt offering had been laid upon the altar. Mr. Brown, I want to say that I know all about that, for I live in the country where the music is." And the humble porter began and told the great preacher a story of the power, peace, and wondrous blessing which had overflowed into his life when he laid it in sacrifice at Jesus Christ's feet, a story which thrilled the great messenger of God from head to foot with the beauty, simplicity, and certainty with which God had met the offered

sacrifice of the porter's life, and had caused him from that time forward to live in the country where the music is.

Reader, do you live in the country where the music is? And do you realize that the richest spiritual music of the heart, the song of the Lord in its fullness, only rises after the burnt offering has been laid upon His altar? The blessing of the manifestation of Jesus Christ in our innermost heart is all of grace. Yet is is also the blessing of doing, and God is waiting for that yielding on your part in order that He may fulfill His promise of manifestation to them who keep His commandments. "Abraham, because thou hast **done this thing**, I will bless thee," said the Lord to His great servant. But what was this thing of which He spake? It was the yielding up of His all to God in the person of his beloved son, Isaac. And when he yielded there came a rich blessing which God explained by saying, "Because thou hast **done this thing**." Do this thing and Jesus Christ will make true to you the promise of His manifestation to all them who obey His commandments.

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Published and available from:
SILVER PUBLISHING SOCIETY
2700 Stuart Avenue
Richmond, VA 23220

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