



“You will know them by their fruits.” Mt. 7:16

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(Methodist)

In reviewing my past life, I discover no period in which I have not been the subject of deep religious impressions. My father died when I was not yet three years of age, and, consequently, my education and training relied entirely upon my mother. She was a woman of deep piety – of much prayer, and faithfully did she discharge her duty to me.

She was a member of the Reformed Dutch Church, and mildly, but firmly insisted on my regular attendance upon the services of the Church and Sabbath School. Through the influence of my mother’s brother, who had been converted and joined the Methodist Church, I was induced for some time to attend the Sabbath School of the Halsey Street M. E. Church, Newark, N. J. Here my religious impressions and convictions were deepened, and I often purposed to seek the Lord. It was not, however, until I had reached my fifteenth year that I sought and found Christ. My sense of pardon, through the witness of the Spirit, was so clear and satisfactory, that I never after had a doubt of my adoption with God. At the first opportunity I connected myself with the Methodist Church, and commenced working in the vineyard of the Lord. My early labors were crowned with success, and I had the satisfaction of seeing one after another of my companions brought to Christ.

With my conversion there came a call to the ministry, for which I at once began to prepare – not only by diligent study of the word of God, and of various branches of knowledge, but, also, by going out into the neighborhoods round about the city where I dwelt, holding religious meetings, and urging sinners to come to Christ.

When I was in my seventeenth year I began to preach as a helper on the Flemington Circuit – and for a portion of the three years following I was employed on this, the Haverstraw and Middletown Circuits, under the Presiding Elder.

At the age of nineteen I joined the New Jersey Conference; since that period I have been (with the exception of one year, when I was laid aside on account of failing health,) actively engaged in the great work of the Gospel ministry. My ministerial life has been full of labor, and not, thank God, without success. I always contended for, and strove to enjoy vital godliness – and many, many seasons of refreshing did I realize. My delight was to labor in the service of God, and to see His cause and kingdom prosper. Hence I built and repaired, and remodeled a number of churches; labored hard in ordinary and extraordinary services; visited the people as faithfully as I could, as a pastor; and, I think I can say truthfully, shunned no work which I thought would honor my Master. Yet, in all this, I fear there was very much of selfishness mingled, and almost a morbid sensitivity to my reputation and ministerial position and standing. And too often I indulged in “foolish talking and jesting,” which I found to my mortification and sorrow, were not only “not convenient” but exceedingly injurious to my religious character and ministerial usefulness.

At a very early period of my religious experience, my mind was exercised, especially by the teachings and drawings of the Holy Spirit, on the subject of Christian holiness, perfect love. In fact, I distinctly remember that only a few weeks after my conversion my heart was sweetly drawn toward this subject. But it at once was presented to my mind, there are Brother A. and Sister B., old members of the

Church, and they do not profess to enjoy this blessing, and it would be preposterous for you to seek after it, or to try to enjoy it. This settled the question in my mind, and without seeking holiness definitely, I aimed to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” In my early ministry, again I was led to feel the need of the fullness of the blessing. But about this time the views of some of my intimate friends (generally then known as the “Hodgsonian theory”) were pressed upon my attention. I thought that I had found in them a happy solution to all my difficulties, and, to my mind, the theory was truly beautiful. But, alas! When I came to test it, not only by the word of God and our Wesleyan theology, but, also, by my own experience, and the general experience of the Church of God (so far as I was acquainted with it), I found that it was utterly without foundation, and that beautiful as it had appeared to me, my religious convictions of truth and duty would not allow me to entertain it.

I was, then, on this question for a long period out at sea. Sometimes I doubted strongly whether any one could attain to Christian holiness in this world. Then, I thought, that a few persons of a refined spiritual nature, with pleasant surrounding and favoring influences might, perhaps, enjoy the blessing. And yet again, I often thought that if ever I attained to this state, it would be through a process of severe affliction. Sometimes when my mind has been greatly exercised on the subject, I have even wished that God’s afflictive hand might be laid upon me, and that I might pass through the fiery furnace that I might thus be refined. One thing which always tended to keep this question before my mind was this: that in nearly every charge where I labored there was always some one or more who consistently professed this blessing and whose lives republished the testimony of their lips. I always esteemed, respected, and almost venerated them. But, yet, I comforted myself with the thought that their circumstances differed from mine, and that if I ever enjoyed the blessing at all, it would most likely be towards the close of my life. Thus more than a score of years of my history and ministry passed away. About two years ago, during and after my return from my summer’s vacation, the question was ever present with me, “How can I be more useful?”

I was satisfied that, at the farthest, probably not more than fifteen or twenty years of active ministry remained to me, and the question was urged upon my heart by the Holy Spirit, “How can I make the most of those years?”

Of two things I was well convinced: First, That I could not labor any harder in the ministry and pastorate than I had done; and, secondly, that I could not study more hours or with greater intensity to prepare for the pulpit than I had done. What then remained? What did I yet lack? The answer came, “A deeper consecration to God – the full baptism of the Spirit. That consecration I resolved to make, but with a determination to say nothing about it, and only to let my life declare it. A little subsequent to this I arranged with Brother Inskip and wife to come and labor for two weeks in my charge. They came, and his manner of presenting this subject disarmed me of my prejudices, and led me on in the path I had before chosen. About a week after he had come with us, I was gently led by the Spirit fully to consecrate myself to Christ, and to believe that the blood of Jesus cleanseth me, even me, from all sin. But this was not until after a very severe struggle. The question came to my mind, “What, will be the consequences of professing this blessing?” “Suppose that by so doing you are isolated from your brethren, and you are sent to a small and out-of-the-way appointment, what then?” I replied, “I can be happy anywhere and under any circumstance, if Christ is with me, and I will act up to my convictions of duty.” I simply “believed,” and I “entered into rest.” The evidence of the power of the cleansing blood and of the sanctifying Spirit was just as clear to my mind and heart as was that of justifying, and regenerating, grace. And when I had obtained the blessing, it was the easiest thing in the world for me to speak of it. In fact I could not keep still. But I felt just like a little child in this new stage or degree of Christian experience. I felt that I had everything to learn, and was willing and anxious to sit at the feet of Christ’s saints, and learn of them.

Since that blessed period, the 15th of January, 1866, I have endeavored to live near to Christ and I have enjoyed much of sweet communion with Him. And, although deeply conscious of many imperfections, short-comings, and of occasional lapses, yet I am certain that through grace I have been raised to a plane of religious experience which I have never known or enjoyed before. At the same time my soul lies humbled in the dust before Him. I am nothing; but Christ is everything. At times the sense of my unworthiness, my weaknesses, and my vileness is almost overwhelming; but then my faith cordially and heartily accepts of Christ as my wisdom, my righteousness, my sanctification, and my redemption. Here I rest. Jesus' blood cleanses me. The Holy Spirit sanctifies me, and is carrying forward His work in me. All is well.

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