

**THUS
SAITH
THE LORD**

*Thy word is a lamp unto my
feet, and a light unto my path.*

—Psalm 119:105

Every new year is an uncharted and unknown sea. No ship has ever sailed this way before. The wisest of earth's sons and daughters cannot tell us what we may encounter on this journey. Familiarity with the past may afford us a general idea of what we may expect, but just where the rocks lie hidden beneath the surface or when that "tempestuous wind called Euroclydon" may sweep down upon us suddenly, no one can say with certainty. . . .

Now more than at any other time in generations, the believer is in a position to go on the offensive. The world is lost on a wide sea, and Christians alone know the way to the desired haven. While things were going well, the world scorned them with their Bible and hymns, but now the world needs them desperately, and it needs that despised Bible, too. For in the Bible, and there only, is found the chart to tell us where we are going on this rough and unknown ocean. The day when Christians should meekly apologize is over—they can get the world's attention not by trying to please, but by boldly declaring the truth of divine revelation. They can make themselves heard not by compromise, but by taking the affirmative and sturdily declaring, "Thus saith the Lord." TWP009-010

*Lord, guide me carefully as I seek You in Your Word.
Then use me mightily as Your servant as I boldly pro-
claim Your word in leading others. Amen.*

THE SET OF OUR SAILS

But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank.

—Daniel 1:8

*T*hough we do not hear much of it in this age of spineless religion, there is nevertheless much in the Bible about the place of moral determination in the service of the Lord. “Jacob vowed a vow,” and it was the beginning of a very wonderful life with God. . . .

Daniel “purposed in his heart,” and God honored his purpose. Jesus set His face like a flint and walked straight toward the cross. Paul “determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). . . .

These are only a few of the many men . . . of the Bible who have left us a record of spiritual greatness born out of a will firmly set to do the will of God. . . .

Let us, then, set our sails in the will of God. If we do this we will certainly find ourselves moving in the right direction, no matter which way the wind blows. SOS011-013

Lord, help us to serve You unreservedly. We are often pulled in other directions, but keep us focused and faithful, undeterred and undefiled. In Jesus' name, Amen.

FACE DOWN, LISTENING

*And Abram fell on his face: and
God talked with him, saying, As
for me, behold, my covenant is
with thee, and thou shalt be a fa-
ther of many nations.*

—Genesis 17:3-4

The Scriptures declare, “Abram fell on his face” as the Lord talked with him (Genesis 17:3). Abraham was reverent and submissive. Probably there is no better picture anywhere in the Bible of the right place for mankind and the right place for God. God was on His throne speaking, and Abraham was on his face listening!

Where God and man are in relationship, this must be the ideal. God must be the communicator, and man must be in the listening, obeying attitude. If men and women are not willing to assume this listening attitude, there will be no meeting with God in living, personal experience. . . .

Yes, Abraham was lying facedown in humility and reverence, overcome with awe in this encounter with God. He knew that he was surrounded by the world’s greatest mystery. The presence of this One who fills all things was pressing in upon him, rising above him, defeating him, taking away his natural self-confidence. God was overwhelming him and yet inviting and calling him, pleading with him and promising him a great future as a friend of God! MMG021-022

*Lord, we don't spend nearly enough time facedown before
You. Draw me to a position of humility and reverence, I
pray. Amen.*

A FRIEND OF GOD

And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

—James 2:23

What higher privilege and experience is granted to mankind on earth than to be admitted into the circle of the friends of God? . . .

It is well for us to remember that Divine-human friendship originated with God. Had God not first said “You are My friends,” it would be inexcusably brash for any man to say, “I am a friend of God.” But since God claims us for His friends, it is an act of unbelief to deny the offer of such a relationship. . . .

The spiritual giants of old were those who at some time became acutely conscious of the presence of God. They maintained that consciousness for the rest of their lives. . . .

The essential point is this: These were men who met and experienced God! How otherwise can the saints and prophets be explained? How otherwise can we account for the amazing power for good they have exercised over countless generations?

Is it not that indeed they had become friends of God? Is it not that they walked in conscious communion with the real Presence and addressed their prayers to God with the artless conviction that they were truly addressing Someone actually there? MMG013-014

I pray that I might catch a glimpse of what it means to walk in conscious communion with You, and might increasingly move into the intimate joy of experiencing You as a personal Friend. Amen.

LET GOD ALONE

But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

—James 1:4

God is saying, “I stand ready to pour a little liquid fire into your heart, into your spiritual being!”

We respond: “No, Lord, please excuse me. That sounds like fanaticism—and I would have to give up some things!” So we refuse His desire, even though we want all the benefits of His cross.

There is this thoughtful phrase in *The Cloud of Unknowing*: “He wills thou do but look on Him and let Him alone.” Let God alone. In other words, let Him work! Don’t stop Him. Don’t prevent Him from kindling your heart, from blessing you and leading you out of a common state into that of special longing after Him. . . .

“Look on Him—and let Him work, let Him alone.” Get your hands down to your side and stop trying to tell God where to cut. Stop trying to make the diagnosis for God. Stop trying to tell God what to give you. He is the Physician! You are the patient. . . .

Let Him work and your spiritual life will begin to blaze like the rising sun. ITB063-064

*Lord, I'll try to stay out of Your way, take my hands off
and let You work! Amen.*

THE COMPELLING CALL

*For though I preach the gospel,
I have nothing to glory of: for ne-
cessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is
unto me, if I preach not the gos-
pel!*

—1 Corinthians 9:16

The true minister is one not by his own choice but by the sovereign commission of God. From a study of the Scriptures one might conclude that the man God calls seldom or never surrenders to the call without considerable reluctance. The young man who rushes too eagerly into the pulpit at first glance seems to be unusually spiritual, but he may in fact only be revealing his lack of understanding of the sacred nature of the ministry.

The old rule, “Don’t preach if you can get out of it,” if correctly understood, is still a good one. The call of God comes with an insistence that will not be denied and can scarcely be resisted. Moses fought his call strenuously and lost to the compulsion of the Spirit within him; and the same may be said of many others in the Bible and since Bible times. Christian biography shows that many who later became great Christian leaders at first tried earnestly to avoid the burden of the ministry; but I cannot offhand recall one single instance of a prophet’s having applied for the job. The true minister simply surrenders to the inward pressure and cries, “Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” GTM087-088

*Lord, I’m here in this ministry not because I chose to be,
but because I’ve sensed Your call on my life. Help me
always to be faithful to that call, in the power of Your
Holy Spirit. Amen.*

THE CALL OF GOD

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.

—1 Timothy 1:12

“Your calling,” said Meister Eckhart to the clergy of his day, “cannot make you holy; but you can make it holy.” No matter how humble that calling may be, a holy man can make it a holy calling. A call to the ministry is not a call to be holy, as if the fact of his being a minister would sanctify a man; rather, the ministry is a calling for a holy man who has been made holy some other way than by the work he does. The true order is: God makes a man holy by blood and fire and sharp discipline. Then he calls the man to some special work, and the man being holy makes that work holy in turn. . . .

Every person should see to it that he is fully cleansed from all sin, entirely surrendered to the whole will of God and filled with the Holy Spirit. Then he will not be known as what he *does*, but as what he *is*. He will be a man of God first and anything else second. WTA059-060

Keep me focused today on being the person You want me to be, no matter how significant or insignificant the work You ask me to do. Amen.

**PEOPLE
FOLLOW
LEADERS**

*Be ye followers of me, even as I
also am of Christ.*

—1 Corinthians 11:1

The history of Israel and Judah points up a truth taught clearly enough by *all* history, viz., that the masses are or soon will be what their leaders are. The kings set the moral pace for the people. . . .

Whatever sort of man the king turned out to be, the people were soon following his leadership. They followed David in the worship of Jehovah, Solomon in the building of the Temple, Jeroboam in the making of a calf and Hezekiah in the restoration of the temple worship.

It is not complimentary to the masses that they are so easily led, but we are not interested in praising or blaming; we are concerned for truth, and the truth is that for better or for worse religious people follow leaders. A good man may change the moral complexion of a whole nation; or a corrupt and worldly clergy may lead a nation into bondage. . . .

Today Christianity in the Western world is what its leaders were in the recent past and is becoming what its present leaders are. The local church soon becomes like its pastor. GTM059-060

*Strengthen us in the power of Your Holy Spirit, that we
might be leaders worth following. Amen.*

**MEDITATE
LONG AND
OFTEN**

*I remember the days of old; I
meditate on all thy works; I
muse on the work of thy hands.
I stretch forth my hands unto
thee: my soul thirsteth after
thee, as a thirsty land.*

—Psalm 143:5-6

*A*mong Christians of all ages and of varying shades of doctrinal emphasis there has been fairly full agreement on one thing: They all believed that it was important that the Christian with serious spiritual aspirations should learn to meditate long and often on God.

Let a Christian insist upon rising above the poor average of current religious experience and he will soon come up against the need to know God Himself as the ultimate goal of all Christian doctrine. Let him seek to explore the sacred wonders of the Triune Godhead and he will discover that sustained and intelligently directed meditation on the Person of God is imperative. To know God well he must think on Him unceasingly. Nothing that man has discovered about himself or God has revealed any shortcut to pure spirituality. It is still free, but tremendously costly. TIC135

Slow me down, Lord, and quiet my heart. Favor me with an acute awareness of Your presence as I meditate quietly. I want to know You, God, so I can indeed move well beyond that "poor average of current religious experience." Amen.

LONGING AFTER GOD

Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight.

—Exodus 33:13

Come near to the holy men and women of the past and you will soon feel the heat of their desire after God. They mourned for Him, they prayed and wrestled and sought for Him day and night, in season and out, and when they had found Him the finding was all the sweeter for the long seeking. Moses used the fact that he knew God as an argument for knowing Him better. “Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight” (Exodus 33:13); and from there he rose to make the daring request, “I beseech thee, shew me thy glory” (33:18). God was frankly pleased by this display of ardor, and the next day called Moses into the mount, and there in solemn procession made all His glory pass before him. POG015

Restore to us today this deep longing, I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**LONGING
FOR
GOD**

As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?

—Psalm 42:1-2

O God, I have tasted Thy goodness, and it has both satisfied me and made me thirsty for more. I am painfully conscious of my need of further grace. I am ashamed of my lack of desire. O God, the Triune God, I want to want Thee; I long to be filled with longing; I thirst to be made more thirsty still. Show me Thy glory, I pray Thee, that so I may know Thee indeed. Begin in mercy a new work of love within me. Say to my soul, “Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.” Then give me grace to rise and follow Thee up from this misty lowland where I have wandered so long. In Jesus’ name. Amen. POG020

“I want to want Thee; I long to be filled with longing; I thirst to be made more thirsty still.” Amen.

TO THINK GOD'S THOUGHTS

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

—Joshua 1:8

To think God's thoughts requires much prayer. If you do not pray much, you are not thinking God's thoughts. If you do not read your Bible much and often and reverently, you are not thinking God's thoughts. . . .

There also has to be a lot of meditation. We ought to learn to live in our Bibles. Get one with print big enough to read so it does not punish your eyes. Look around until you find a good one, and then learn to love it. Begin with the Gospel of John, then read the Psalms. Isaiah is another great book to help you and lift you. When you feel you want to do it, go on to Romans and Hebrews and some of the deeper theological books. But get into the Bible. Do not just read the little passages you like, but in the course of a year or two see that you read it through. Your thoughts will one day come up before God's judgment. We are responsible for our premeditative thoughts. They make our mind a temple where God can dwell with pleasure, or they make our mind a stable where Christ is angry, ties a rope and drives out the cattle. It is all up to us. RRR042

Lord, help us to lead Your people wisely, despite the barrage of outside influences we face every day. Amen.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

—Hebrews 5:12

Probably the most widespread and persistent problem to be found among Christians is the problem of retarded spiritual progress. Why, after years of Christian profession, do so many persons find themselves no farther along than when they first believed? . . .

The causes of retarded growth are many. It would not be accurate to ascribe the trouble to one single fault. One there is, however, which is so universal that it may easily be the main cause: *failure to give time to the cultivation of the knowledge of God. . . .*

The Christian is strong or weak depending upon how closely he has cultivated the knowledge of God. . . .

Progress in the Christian life is exactly equal to the growing knowledge we gain of the Triune God in personal experience. And such experience requires a whole life devoted to it and plenty of time spent at the holy task of cultivating God. God can be known satisfactorily only as we devote time to Him. ROR010-012

Lord, I'd like to devote the remaining years of my life and ministry to the "holy task of cultivating God." Help me to know You first, and then out of the overflow of that growing knowledge can come whatever ministry You choose to bless me with. Amen.

PERSONAL FEEDING ON GOD'S WORD

*O how love I thy law! it is my
meditation all the day.*

—Psalm 119:97

I remember James M. Gray, the noted Bible teacher, telling of a Christian brother, a Michigan farmer, whose spiritual life had suddenly blossomed until there was an overflowing of God's presence. Many in the man's community recognized the change in his life and personality and sought spiritual counsel from him. Dr. Gray had opportunity to ask the man about the transformation of his spiritual life and witness.

"Dr. Gray, I began to devote myself to the Scriptures for my own need," the man humbly explained. "Something happened when God opened my spiritual understanding as I studied the book of Ephesians. I cannot really explain what the Lord is doing for me and through me, but it has come through prayerful meditation in the Word of God."

None of us can expect to get the rich, transforming blessings from God apart from the Scriptures. . . .

Too many of us ministers and Sunday school teachers are content to reach for a commentary on the Scriptures. What we need most is to search the Scriptures for ourselves. MMG047

Deliver me today from the shortcuts, and help me to discipline myself to long, concentrated study of the Scriptures themselves. Amen.

HEARING FROM GOD

Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of [John] in Jordan, confessing their sins.

—Matthew 3:5-6

Let me give you some reasons why I believe God could honor John the Baptist in that day in which he lived.

First, John had the ability to live and meditate in solitude. He knew the meaning of quietness. He was in the desert until the time of his showing forth unto Israel as a prophet. He came out of his lonely solitude to break the silence like a drumbeat or as the trumpet sounds. The crowds came—all gathered to hear this man who had been with God and who had come from God.

In our day we just cannot get quiet enough and serene enough to wait on God. Somebody has to be talking. Somebody has to be making noise. But John had gone into the silence and had matured in a kind of special school with God and the stars and the wind and the sand. . . .

I do not believe it is stretching a point at all to say that we will most often hear from God in those times when we are silent.

CES130-131

Oh, Lord, help me to carve out of my busy schedule some time with “God and the stars and the wind and the sand.” Amen.