

Learning the Secret to Live the Christian Life for God's Good Pleasure

- 1 Speak, Lord, in the stillness,
While I wait on Thee;
Hushed my heart to listen,
In expectancy.
- 2 Speak, O blessed Master,
In this quiet hour;
Let me see Thy face, Lord,
Feel Thy touch of power.
- 3 For the words Thou speakest,
They are life indeed;
Living bread from heaven,
Now my spirit feed!
- 4 All to Thee is yielded,
I am not my own;
Blissful, glad surrender,
I am Thine alone.
- 5 Speak, Thy servant heareth,
Be not silent, Lord;
Waits my soul upon Thee
For the quickening word.
- 6 Fill me with the knowledge
Of Thy glorious will;
All Thine own good pleasure
In Thy child fulfill.
- 7 Like a watered garden,
Full of fragrance rare,
Lingering in Thy presence,
Let my life appear. (*Hymns*, #809)

The above hymn describes the intimate and personal fellowship of a seeker after God who has learned the secret of living the Christian life for God's good pleasure. The contents of this hymn reveal a quiet consciousness and an inner motivation to match the intrinsic and ardent yearning in God's heart—a fervent intention concealed within Him from eternity. Emily May Grimes, the author of this hymn, was born in England in 1864 (some records suggest it may have been in 1868). In 1893 Miss Grimes traveled to South Africa as a missionary. While there she wrote this hymn under the title of "The Quiet Hour." The hymn chronicles how she opens her soul and spirit to the Lord, cultivating a rich fellowship with Him in an attitude of quietness and submission, listening attentively to His familiar speaking so that she might see His face,

feel His touch of power, be fed in her spirit and enlivened in her soul with His speaking, and be filled with the knowledge of His glorious will. Her purpose is to allow God to fulfill all His good pleasure in her. This hymn ostensibly opens an opportunity for us to accompany Miss Grimes on her journey of intimate fellowship. She addresses the Lord as her Master, and her supplications indicate that He is her unique source of full supply. To accompany her, we need to contemplate her pattern.

The Life of a Believer— a Union of God and Redeemed Humanity

It is the right and privilege of every believer in Christ to spend time with the living God on a daily basis, contacting Him in a very personal way. Hebrews particularly admonishes us not to neglect the great salvation which God in Christ has given to us: "Let us therefore come forward with boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help" (4:16; cf. 10:19-22). Every believer knows that the way has been opened for us to enter into direct fellowship with God. However, most believers rarely develop a personal relationship with the Lord. Even those who observe a "morning watch" or "quiet time" typically spend a minimal amount of time in a very objective way, perhaps reading a selected Bible verse drawn from a box of "promise" verses and then uttering a routine laundry list of requests in so-called prayer. Or they may come in an overly subjective way, full of emotional cries for help or pleadings for leading without any consciousness of what God has ordained and willed. Even those who read the Bible and open their heart to the Lord often do so without a clear comprehension of what is in the heart of God according to His good pleasure.

Participating in the Divine Life

The Bible reveals that according to God's desire, we have become participants in the divine life and nature of God, with all the rich elements of His divine being, through regeneration (John 1:12-13; 3:5-6; 2 Pet. 1:3-4). In the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, we were mingled with the Triune God through the Spirit (John 14:16-20). Although we can never participate in His Godhead, we are organically joined to God as members of the Body of Christ to become His glorious corporate expression in His

new creation. Therefore, we need to learn to live together with God by being sensitive and obedient to His inner operation in us, doing all things with, in, by, and through Him. God has not called us to do something *for* Him; He is operating *in* us to accomplish His purpose *in* us. He does not need our effort, but He does require our cooperation with Him in faith to allow Him to carry out His purpose in and through us. When we contemplate this hymn, we need to consider it in the light of our union with the Triune God.

Secrets of a Believer's Living

This hymn begins with a simple prayer in stanza 1: "Speak, Lord, in the stillness, / While I wait on Thee." Then there is a response of quieting the heart in order to listen in expectancy: "Hushed my heart to listen, / In expectancy." The Christian life depends on an intimate and personal touch with the Lord. God is not visible for us to touch or to hear in a physical sense, yet He is mysteriously present in a hidden and secret way. To fellowship with Him requires us to stop and wait on Him with our entire being quieted and attentive to His unseen presence.

In the rush of today's frenzied world, it seems nearly impossible for us to find the time and the atmosphere that allow us to enter into quiet fellowship with the Lord, yet such fellowship is an indispensable prerequisite to living a life in oneness with Him. The Lord Jesus called His disciples to come to Him out of all their toil and burdens so that He might give them rest: "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30). In spite of such comforting words, very few of the Lord's disciples today have learned to stop in the midst of their extremely busy lives to quiet and calm their hearts before the Lord.

Stanza 2 says, "Speak, O blessed Master, / In this quiet hour; / Let me see Thy face, Lord, / Feel Thy touch of power." Miss Grimes may have had in view the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ shining into her heart with the resultant life-changing power of Christ as the wonderful treasure within her (cf. 2 Cor. 4:6-9). Obviously, the touch of power spoken of in this hymn is not some external power that is coveted by many believers today—fixing their attention on the miraculous power of signs and wonders. The power sought in the prayer of this hymn is the resurrection power of the Lord Jesus that overcomes the weakness and the death in our created and fallen human nature. It is the power that withstands every effort of the world, the flesh, and the devil to frustrate God's operation in us as earthen vessels. It is this power that shows His excellency, a power that is of Him and not of us.

Stanza 3 speaks of the parallels in our spiritual life to our physical life, particularly as they relate to the matter of nourishment: "For the words Thou speakest, / They are life indeed; / Living bread from heaven, / Now my spirit

feed!" The Lord Jesus told His disciples that He is the living bread out of heaven. In John 6 Jesus was led by the Father to feed five thousand men from a meager supply of five loaves of bread and two small fish. Henry Alford argues that the words of verse 55—"My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink"—cannot be understood as an allegory or a metaphorical statement: "Food and drink are not here mere metaphors;—rather are our common material food and drink mere shadows and imperfect types of this only real reception of refreshment and nourishment into the being" (768). It is not our common physical food and drink that constitute our true food and true drink. Rather, Christ is our true food and true drink. The words *because of* in verse 57, Alford suggests, indicate that His nourishing flesh and blood are the efficient cause of our living (768). We must learn this vital fact. Based on the Lord's speaking in John 6, Emily Grimes wrote the very significant words in the third stanza. She understood that words of revelation are words of life coming from the Spirit of God into us. If we have a heart to hear the Lord's speaking to us, we must learn to know and to use our human spirit. The Spirit in our spirit gives us the real food that nourishes and energizes.

In stanza 4 the hymn turns for a moment to the prerequisite to receive God's speaking: "All to Thee is yielded, / I am not my own; / Blissful, glad surrender, / I am Thine alone." Most Christians today have never imagined the thought and feeling of unconditional surrender to God. We live in an atmosphere in which a demand for human rights pervades everything. This attitude easily carries over into our approach to God. We are willing to concede, of course, that God's rights exceed our own because He is bigger and more powerful, but because of our underlying concept of rights themselves, our manner of contact with God becomes a matter of negotiating between His rights and our perceived rights. However, the real scope of our relationship with God is very different from that which is supposed by the majority of believers, which has as its basis the person and righteousness of God. He is everything, and we are nothing. Absolute and "glad surrender" is based on the acknowledgement of our absolute indebtedness to Him. We have been purchased. We are not our own. We belong to Him because He has paid the entire debt. The debt could only be paid at the cost of death. He paid that debt for us on the cross, leading us to realize the fact that "He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised" (2 Cor. 5:15). We are not our own; we have been bought with a priceless sacrifice. When we are graced to make such a firm commitment to Him, we will find it to be a "blissful, glad surrender." It is only when we arrive at a point of handing ourselves over to the Lord without condition that we are able to fully hear His speaking. Otherwise, our concepts, opinions, and judgments will drown out His often soft speaking in His tender care.

Stanza 5 turns again to the speaking Lord: “Speak, Thy servant heareth, / Be not silent, Lord; / Waits my soul upon Thee / For the quickening word.” When we meet with the Lord, anticipating His personal and intimate contact with us, our spirit must be exercised and attentive, and our soul must be alert and focused. We should exercise our spirit to contact God and set our mind on our spirit to hear, understand, receive, and respond to His speaking presence so that our soul waits “upon Thee.”

When Miss Grimes penned stanza 6 of this hymn, “Fill me with the knowledge / Of Thy glorious will; / All Thine own good pleasure / In Thy child fulfill,” she could have been considering Paul’s words to the church in Colossae, which tie the knowledge of His will to walking in a manner that is pleasing to Him in all things (1:9-10). The Greek word concerning the knowledge of God’s will is *epignosis*, which is literally “full knowledge.” It indicates a thorough entrance into the mind, will, purpose, and good pleasure of God’s will. By employing the phrase *glorious will*, this hymn focuses on our need to be filled with the full knowledge of His will. To arrive at such a comprehensive understanding of His glorious will requires more than our prayer. It demands our cooperation with the Lord to enter into the unveiled purpose of God with our entire being. To cooperate with the Lord in knowing His will, we must augment our prayer with the consistent reading and study of the Bible.

The final stanza of the hymn is a statement concerning both the goal of our fellowship with the Lord and the result of maintaining such fellowship: “Like a watered garden, / Full of fragrance rare, / Linger in Thy presence, / Let my life appear.” After spending time with the Lord and being saturated with His rich person, we become like a watered garden full of rare fragrances. It seems that here the author is reflecting on the typology of Song of Songs. In chapter 4 the bride, typifying the church (cf. Eph. 5:25-32), is described as “a garden enclosed... / A spring shut up, a fountain sealed... / A fountain in gardens, / A well of living water, / And streams from Lebanon” (vv. 12, 15). The Shulammitte maiden has become as a watered garden, full of fragrant spices wafting forth as a sweet perfume carried by the wind for the enjoyment of her beloved husband (typifying Christ as the Bridegroom). This stanza, reflecting the feeling of the maiden in Song of Songs, speaks of lingering in the Lord’s presence. This kind of persistent and protracted communion with the Lord produces a sanctified and loving companion for the Lord’s full satisfaction.

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by Gary Kaiser

Works Cited

Alford, Henry. *The New Testament for English Readers*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983. Print.

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Footnote from the Recovery Version of the Bible

“The **Song** of Songs, which is Solomons’s” (S.S 1:1).

Song: In the romance between the great King Solomon and the girl from the countryside (cf. vv. 5-8), because the two did not match each other, the king became a “country man” in order to go to her village to court her, to gain her love. On the one hand, he made himself the same as the country girl; on the other hand, he made the country girl a queen. This is a type of the story of God’s romance with man. God as the Husband is divine, and the wife He desires to marry is human; the two do not match each other. To fulfill His heart’s desire God became a lowly man with humanity in incarnation, and He contacted man by the way of a romance. Then in His resurrection He uplifted His humanity into His divinity in the divine power according to the Spirit of holiness, and He was designated the Son of God in His humanity (Rom. 1:3-4 and notes). Today He as the universal Bridegroom is the God-man, having both divinity and humanity. In order to make His bride, His wife, the same as He is, He regenerates His human elect, putting His divinity into their humanity and uplifting their humanity to the standard of divinity (1 Pet. 1:3, 23; John 3:6). After regenerating them, He then transforms His loving seekers gradually in their soul, and ultimately He transfigures them in their body, until in their entire being they are the same as He is in life, in nature, in image, and in function, but not in His Godhead (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18; Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2).