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June 2017

How to Make Spiritual Progress

The complacency of Christians is the scandal of Christianity.

Time is short, and eternity is long.

The end of all things is at hand. Man has proved himself morally unfit to manage the world in which he has been placed by the kindness of the Almighty. He has jockeyed himself to the edge of the crater and cannot go back, and in terrible fear he is holding his breath against the awful moment when he will be plunged into the inferno.

In the meantime, a company of people exist on the earth who claim to have the answer to all life's major questions. They claim to have found the way back to God, release from their sins, life everlasting and a sure guarantee of heaven in the world to come.

These are the Christians. They declare that Jesus Christ is very God of very God, made flesh to dwell among us. They insist that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. They testify that He is to them Wisdom, Righteousness,

Sanctification and Redemption, and they steadfastly assert that He will be to them the Resurrection and the Life for eternity to come.

These Christians know, and when pressed will admit, that their finite hearts have explored but a pitifully small part of the infinite riches that are theirs in Christ Jesus. They read the lives of the great saints whose fervent desire after God carried them far up the mountain toward spiritual perfection, and for a brief moment they may yearn to be like these fiery souls whose light and fragrance still linger in the world where they once lived and labored. But the longing soon passes. The world is too much with them and the claims of their earthly lives are too insistent; so they settle back to live their ordinary lives and accept the customary as normal. After a while they manage to achieve some kind of inner content and that is the last we hear of them.

This contentment with inadequate and imperfect progress in the life of holiness is, I repeat, a scandal in the Church of the First-born. The

whole weight of Scripture is against such a thing. The Holy Spirit constantly seeks to arouse the complacent. "Let us go on" is the word of the Spirit. The apostle Paul embodies this in his noble testimony as found in his Philippian epistle:

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, . . . that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection. . . . But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:7-8, 10, 3-4

If we accept this as the sincere expression of a normal Christian, I do not see how we

Continuing...

can justify our own indifference toward spiritual things. But should someone feel a desire to make definite progress in the life of Christ, what can he do to get on with it? Here are a few suggestions:

~ *Strive to get beyond mere pensive longing.* Set your face like a flint and begin to put your life in order. Every man is as holy as he really wants to be. But the want must be all-compelling.

Tie up the loose ends of your life. Begin to tithe; institute family prayer; pay up your debts as far as possible and make some kind of frank arrangement with every creditor you cannot pay immediately; make restitution as far as you can; set aside time to pray and search the Scriptures; surrender wholly to the will of God. You will be surprised and delighted with the results.

~ *Put away every un-Christian habit from you.* If other Christians practice it without compunction, God may be calling you to come nearer to Him than these other Christians care to come. Remember the words, "Others may, you cannot." Do not condemn or criticize, but seek a better way. God will honor you.

~ *Get Christ Himself in the focus of your heart and keep Him there continually.* Only in Christ will you find complete fulfillment. In Him you may be united to the Godhead in conscious, vital awareness. Remember that all of God is accessible to you through Christ. Cultivate His knowledge above everything else on earth.

~ *Throw your heart open to the Holy Spirit and invite Him to fill you.* He will do it. Let no one interpret the Scriptures for you in such a way as to rule out the Father's gift of the Spirit. Every man is as full of the Spirit as he wants to be. Make you heart a vacuum and the Spirit will rush into fill it.

Nowhere in the Scriptures nor in Christian biography was anyone ever filled with the Spirit who did not know that he had been, and nowhere was anyone filled who did not know when. And no one was every filled gradually.

~ *Be hard on yourself and easy on others.* Carry your own cross but never lay one on the back of another. Begin to practice the presence of God. Cultivate the fellowship of the Triune God by prayer, humility, obedience and self-abnegation.

Let any Christian do these things and he will make rapid spiritual progress. There is every reason why we should all go forward in our Christian lives and no reason why we should not. Let us go on.

A.W. TOZER

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\$ 8,000

\$ 7,000

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\$ 5,000

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\$2357

May 2017

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PRAYER FOR THE NATION

Judge of the nations, hear us;
We rest our faith in Thee.
Stay Thou forever near us
And guide us constantly.
Through all our days protected
By Thy unfailing light,
We shall not be deflected
From paths of truth and right.
Eternal Father, teach us
The courage of the free.
With Thy pure spirit reach us
With faith and charity.
Illumine all around us
With brotherhood and love.
In all our ways surround us
With wisdom from above.
God of the years, remind us
Of our great history,
The memories that bind us
In one fraternity ~~
Heroes who served before us,
Whose valor paved the way
For this flag floating o'er us ~
Oh, bless this land today!