

OCCUPATION WITH THE OBJECT

There is a form of self-righteousness which leads many believers to doubt their acceptance with God because of the imperfections which they find in themselves. You may say, "But ought I not to have misgivings when I find my spirit and the state of my mind so contrary to that which befits a Christian?" That you ought to judge yourself, and be humbled before your Father about these things, is most true; but it is in no wise true that your righteousness and acceptance with God depend upon yourself, or are measured by your condition or conduct. To have such a thought in the mind is really to suppose that you could be in the favor of your Father by being worthy of that favor in yourself. It is simply self-righteousness.

Then there is the perennial problem of self-improvement, which always results in self-disappointment. But self-disappointment is a very different thing from self-judgment. Indeed, if there were true self-judgment there would never be self-disappointment. If in honesty and sobriety of soul I have judged "that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing," I shall certainly not expect anything from myself, and it has been well said that where there is no expectation there can be no disappointment.

But I feel sure that many young believers, and I dare say some older ones too, are very familiar with the wretched depressing experience which I have spoken of as self-disappointment. They have made many fresh starts; they have often been stirred up, and have made up their minds to be more for Christ; they have thought, "I shall do better now; I am more earnest about it than I was before," but it has all ended in disappointment. They have no idea that they are trying to improve themselves; they would repudiate such a thought. They suppose that they know better than to look for good in themselves; and yet their disappointment is the plain proof that, in spite of all their knowledge of Scripture, they have expected to make themselves better, for they are disappointed because they have not succeeded in doing so.

A word must be shared in the grave matter of self-gratification. On the negative side, the key thing is to meet every proposal of self-gratification armed with the mind to suffer in the flesh. Sin is the gratification of the flesh, but "he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin" (1 Peter 4:1). If you allow yourself to entertain a suggestion of self-gratification--if you consider it, and give it a place in your mind--you are done for. You have laid aside your armor, and will fall an easy prey to the foe. But there will be no response to the suggestion or temptation if you stand armed with the mind to suffer in the flesh.

That which is proposed to you is exactly opposite to what you are set for. It is suggested that you should be pleased and gratified in that very thing in which you are fully minded to suffer. You are now in conflict with sin--not going along with it; you suffer in the flesh, and have "ceased from sin." You no longer live the rest of your "time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God" (1 Peter 4:2).

Probably the occupation most detrimental to growth is self-occupation. Some minds are always attracted by what is experiential. They do not know deliverance, and experiential truths seem to offer that which they are seeking. They are not looking for an increased knowledge of the grace of God, or deepened acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ; their object of desire is to have a more satisfactory experience. That is, the old self is still their center.

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And such souls are constantly occupied either in bemoaning how little they have got or attained, or in complacently assuming that they have reached a certain stage of experience. It has often been observed that in the writings of those who advocate "holiness by faith" the beauty and perfection of what the Lord Jesus is in Himself as an all-blessed Object for the heart is very little presented. He is set forth as One who can bring about a new experience in the believer, and it is easy to see that the new experience has often a more prominent place in the mind than the Lord Jesus Christ.

You will find that when souls are engrossed with experience--whether it be in connection with holiness, power for service, or spiritual attainment--they always have something before them less than the purpose of God. They are either pursuing, or are satisfied with, something less than that which divine love purposes, and thus they are losers to an incalculable extent.

It is when the purpose of God in its greatness is before our hearts, and we are attracted by it, that our experience becomes like that of the beloved servant who could say, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: 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" (Phil. 3:12-14). This is Christian experience--the experience of a man who was not thinking of his experience, but of the exceeding greatness of the purpose of God.

Finally, a great hindering weight in the Christian life is self-occupation in service. It is a sad thing when service interferes with spiritual growth. Service may take possession of the heart until it becomes the theme of conversation, the subject-matter of correspondence, and the center round which the thoughts continually revolve. It is possible to be so engrossed with service that one's meditations are colored by it, one's prayers are full of it, and the Word of God becomes simply a quarry out of which material for sermons and addresses can be dug. This is a serious loss to the soul, and many are thereby hindered from making spiritual progress.

Very often young believers who have not even peace with God are encouraged to take up service, and they become so occupied with what they are doing that they are not at leisure to learn or to take their place in the favor of their Father. Hence, so long as the service prospers, and they get on well with it, they are happy. The service is their life. But when there is no success, and the whole thing seems to be a failure, their joy collapses; and they have to discover how little they have really got, and in many cases to find that they are perfect strangers to the liberty and joy of acceptance with their Father. Anything which occupies us so that we are diverted from our acceptance and growth is a positive hindrance, even if it be a thing apparently so excellent as service.

It is a wonderful moment for the believer when by faith he occupies his standing in the favor of his Father--when he knows that he is received by Him in all the acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ. He does not then think of himself, or of his worthiness, at all. He thinks of the Lord Jesus--His perfections, His suitability to divine favor, His infinite acceptance with His Father--and by faith he has access into the favor of which He is so worthy. --C.A. Coates



Before one becomes a new creation in Christ and sees that true success is but fulfilling God's plan, purpose, or will for his life, all he knows about success is based upon what type of totem pole (status symbols) that the society in which he lives has placed before him. This is why oftentimes society is blamed for the failure of an individual.

The word *walk* is used in the Word of God to signify the whole realm of activities of an individual's life. Notice how the believer walked before he was saved.

EPHESIANS 2:1-3 "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins:

"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.

"Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

EPHESIANS 4:17 "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind."

ROMANS 6:4B "Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

II CORINTHIANS 5:7 "For we walk by faith, not by sight."

GALATIANS 5:16 "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh."

EPHESIANS 2:10 "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

EPHESIANS 4:1 "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."

EPHESIANS 5:2 "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour."

EPHESIANS 5:8 "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light."

EPHESIANS 5:15,16 "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,
"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

COLOSSIANS 4:5 "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time."

COLOSSIANS 2:6 "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him."