



Helps to Holiness

Chapter 11 – YOUR OWN SOUL

I was once asked the question by a woman: "Cannot one take too much care of one's own soul? I see all about me, everywhere, so much sorrow and suffering and injustice that I am perplexed at God's way of ruling the world; and it seems to me as though every Christian ought to be trying to help others, instead of looking out for one's own soul."

Here is a common perplexity. Every Christian sees around him sorrow and suffering which he cannot help, and his perplexity at the sight is the Lord's prompting for him to take the very uttermost care of his own soul, lest he stumble and fall through doubt and discouragement.

By the care of his soul I do not mean that he shall coddle and pet and pity himself, nor work himself up into some pleasant feeling. But I mean that he should pray and pray and pray, and seek the presence and teaching of the Holy Spirit, until his soul is filled with light and strength, that he may have unquestioning faith in the wisdom and love of God, that he may have unwearied patience in learning His will (Heb. vi. 12), and that his love may be equal to the great need he sees all about him.

Reader, maybe you, too, are troubled by the sight of unhelped wretchedness near you. No living soul can answer to your satisfaction the questions that will rise up within you, and that Satan will suggest as you look on the misery of the world. But the blessed Comforter will satisfy your heart and your head, if you have the faith and patience to wait while He teaches you "all things" and leads you "into all truth" (John xvi. 13).

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength" (Isa. xl. 31). You cannot help people if you go to them robbed of your strength through doubts and fears and perplexities. So, wait on God till He strengthens your heart.



Do not become impatient. Do not try beforehand to find out what God will say, nor just how He will say it. He will surely teach you; but you must let Him do it in His own way, and then you will be able to help people with all the might and wisdom of Jehovah.

You must trust His love and you must abide His time; but you must wait on Him and expect Him to teach you. If the King of England is coming to Windsor Castle, the servants do not lie around listlessly nor hunt up a lot of work to do; but every one stands in his own place and waits with eager expectancy. This is what I mean by waiting upon God. Of this kind of taking care of your own soul you cannot do too much, and do not let any one drive you from it by ridicule or entreaty.

The woodman would be very foolish who thought he had so much wood to cut that he could not take time to grind his axe. The servant would be useless who went to the city to buy things for his master, but was in such a hurry that he did not come to his master for orders and the needed money. How much worse is he who attempts to do God's work without God's direction and God's strength!

One morning, after a half-night of prayer which I led, and in which I had worked very hard, I got up early to be sure of an hour with God and my Bible, and God blessed me till I wept. An officer who was with me was much moved, and then confessed:

"I do not often find God in prayer – I have not time. People who do not find God in prayer must hinder His cause instead of hoping it.

Take time. Miss breakfast if necessary, but take time to wait on God, and when God has come and blessed you, then go to the miserable ones about you and pour upon them the wealth of joy, the love and peace God has given you. But do not go until you know you are going in His power.

I once heard William Booth say in an officer's council: "Take time to pray God's blessing down on your own soul every day. If you do not, You will lose God. God is leaving men every day. They



once had power. They walked in the glory and strength of God but they ceased to wait on Him and earnestly seek His face, and He left them. I am a very busy man, but I take time to get alone with God every day and commune with Him. If I did not, He would soon leave me."

God bless the dear Founder!

Paul said, "Take heed therefore (1) unto yourselves, and (2) to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers" (Acts xx. 28). And again, "Take heed (1) unto thyself; and (2) to the doctrine; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself; and them that hear thee" (2 Tim. iv. 16).

Paul did not mean to promote selfishness by telling us to first take heed to ourselves; but he did mean to teach that, unless we do take heed to ourselves and are full of faith and hope and love in our own souls, we shall be unable to help others.