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THE TRUE RELATION TO LIFE

By DR. W. GRAHAM SCROGGIE

'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: 13, 14.

A true course is determined by right views and relations. The Apostle here is letting us see the secret of his own life, and telling us what made him the sort of Christian that he was. This Epistle is a spiritual autobiography, and is of permanent interest and value because it reveals what the relation should be of every true Christian to the Past, the Present and the Future, i.e. to life's entire opportunity.

The Present of every life is dominantly under one or other of two influences, that of the Past, or, that of the Future, and destiny is largely shaped by which it is. The Future shaped the life of Paul alike as to character and service: 'Forgetting the things which are behind: reaching forth unto the things which are before.'

Related to this is another truth, viz. that the Future holds 'prizes' which each of us must win or lose. 'I press on goalward unto the prize.' 'They that run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize. So run that ye may obtain.' 'That I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain.'

Only when the soul is under the right control, and has the true objective is it in the grip of the sovereign master-passion, and mid-current of the will of God. Consider then,

1. Paul and the Past

His relation to it is twofold. It is one first of—

Humble Recollection. 'Not that I have already obtained, either were already perfect: I count not myself to have apprehended.' We are repeatedly exhorted to remember the past; its sorrows and joys; failures and successes; and the ways of God with us in mercy and judgment. 'Call to remembrance the former days.' 'Forget not all His benefits.' We are to 'leave' the past, not as we leave our dead in the grave, but as a house leaves its foundation, ever resting upon it. We should ever remember it with humbleness. We have not yet obtained the prize; are not yet

perfected; our joy is not yet full; and our victory not yet complete. We have failed, have sinned, have wasted days, and have disappointed God; and as we think backward we should bow our heads.

Then, further, there is the attitude of—

Wise Forgetfulness. 'Forgetting those things which are behind.' Forget them as a runner forgets the ground he has covered. We are not to run with our eyes over our shoulders. Remembering must never be a substitute for accomplishing. We must never allow past failure to limit future success. To say 'I have failed, and therefore must fail,' is to commit moral suicide. While failures show us the way to success, we are to forget them in the pursuit of it. We shall yet do gloriously what we've never done before. Neither must we ever regard past success as the measure of future attainment. Contentment with the past is fatal to all progress. Christianity never meant us to dote on a golden age behind us. The climber who looks back may never go further up. There is no finality of Christian attainment either here or hereafter. Because our possibilities are boundless, we can afford to forget the past. 'Why should you carry about parched corn, when you dwell among fields white unto harvest? Why carry putrid water in the bottom of a rancid skin, when living in a land of fountains and brooks which run among the hills? Why clasp a handful of poor withered flowers, when the grass is sown with their bright eyes opening to the sunshine? Why live in the past, since we have God and Christ now as then, and in them may find peace for today, and endless hope for every morrow.'

We should therefore assume a comparative obliviousness to the past in our determination upon *moral onwardness*.

Think now for a moment of—

2. Paul and the Future

'*Reaching forth unto those things which are before.*' These words tell of—

Brightness of Vision. 'Those things which are before.' We should live in the future for ourselves and the Church. The men of venture and of victory are the men of vision. Abraham saw Christ's day and was glad. Moses viewed the land of Canaan from Pisgah's top. Ezekiel and Stephen saw heaven opened. Happy he who feels the breath of spring in mid-winter; who sees the

green grass under the snow; who delights in the sun while it is hidden by the clouds; who sees the ravishing picture in the box of paints; who anticipates the peace beyond the war.

We should live in the future also for all the world. Daniel and John did, and the end they saw was not defeat, darkness, sorrow, death, chaos, but the Holy City; the race redeemed; the earth restored; and Christ enthroned. In these days we should think much of 'those things which are before.' Wretched must he be in whose heart is no vision. These words also tell of—

Lust of Possession. 'Reaching forth unto . . .' as the athlete throws himself forward in the race. 'Lust' does not necessarily imply evil desire, but intense desire whether good or bad. It is not enough to have a vision of the glorious, we must move on to the possession of 'those things'. The vision of a luscious spread will not satisfy the hungry man, he must sit down to it. We are told that 'all things are ours,' then why do we sit still and take them not?

'A man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?' Vision begets desire, and feeds it. We must first see, and then seize the rich future, if we would improve the present.

Finally our attention is called to—

3. Paul and the Present

'One thing I do—I press towards the mark for the prize.' In the Present, that nexus between the past and the future, three things characterized the Apostle: Definiteness of Purpose, Concentration of Energy, and Persistency of Action.

Definiteness of Purpose. It is essential to enthusiasm to have our natures unified in a single glorious purpose. Enthusiasm is passionate ardour in the pursuit of an object, but where there is no object there is no enthusiasm. What is life without a ruling purpose and master passion? Everyone should have a clearly defined object in life, an end which he keeps steadily before him.

A ship does not leave dock without having a destination. A man does not begin to build without having a plan. A runner does not start on a race without having a goal. A writer does not commence an article without having an idea. And shall we try to *live* without having an object or end?

Are we what Emerson has called 'Victims of Miscellany'?—
'Art thou troubled about many things?'

Distinguish 'means' and 'ends'. Everyone should ask himself, 'What am I living for?' To make money? To build a home? To cultivate intellect? To rise to power? These things are good, but they are means and not ends. What in your mind are they means towards?

The world is full of moral and spiritual tramps, people who are not pilgrims but wanderers, who have no settled goal, but who zigzag hither and thither as the moment's conditions prescribe. The feet of such an one guide him, and not he his feet. His movements may be continuous and rapid, but he is a tramp and not a traveller, and having no definitely conceived ideal, makes no definite progress. That is not how we carry on our ordinary business and professional concerns. If we determine to be tradesmen, doctors, lawyers, we lay down our courses in advance and co-ordinate our powers with a view to success in our particular field. We make everything subservient to our aim. But, alas, that is not how we view our Christian life. It is not with us a business, with business definiteness of programme, and undertaken with business alertness and persistence. Just for this reason so many Christian lives are failures. We make the incidental the essential, and the essential incidental, and then wonder why we do not succeed. Some have never felt the power of a great enthusiasm. Others have let its flame die down in the heart. This was the case with Ephesian Church; it had 'lost its first love'. It had not ceased to be good, but had lost its first spontaneous passionate loyalty. Alas, how many have outgrown their enthusiasms, and have become, not only unemotional, but cynical. 'If only they would do something impulsive, impetuous, even foolish. They are like the Rhine, which has its boisterous Alpine youth, and then runs more and more slowly until in Holland we can hardly detect whether it has any current. It drags its slow length through the hot, dry land, and dies away in the monotonous strand.'

The men of success, and makers of history have all had a ruling purpose in life, a fixed object, a clearly defined aim. Abraham sought a City which had foundations; Demosthenes set his heart on oratory and became one of the greatest. Napoleon aspired to be the master of Europe, and only failed because his antagonist was God. Livingstone lived for Africa, and Hudson Taylor for China. For lack of this definiteness of purpose many men of great

gifts fail; and because of such definiteness many succeed *in spite of* great defects. We should cherish a great ambition in our hearts and should pray that the fear of God should keep clear the heavenly vision.

Added to this must be—

Concentration of Energy. 'One thing I do.' A dispersion of energies is fatal to success in any work. The great men of history have all been men of one idea, and concentrated all their thought and effort in carrying it out. As a Christian runner Paul girt up the loins of his mind, and gathered his scattered energies unto a unity. The Roman strategy forced the way of the legion through the loose-ordered ranks of barbarian foes by arraying it in a wedge-like form. He who would be a true Christian must give the same concentrated attention and unwavering energy to his Christian life which the successful business man gives to his trade. The man of one book, one idea, one aim is the formidable and the successful man. Such will be labelled a fanatic, but he will triumph. We should be men and women of endless interests, but they should all centre in, and be controlled by one master-purpose. 'The glory of God' should be the motive of 'whatsoever we do'.

And, finally, there must be—

Persistency of Action. 'I press towards the mark.' The 'mark' is perfect holiness, and towards these we must ever press on.

The unattained must ever burn so clearly before us that in comparison the attained will seem as nothing. 'Endeavour is better than success. It is more to see the Alpine heights unscathed than it is to have risen so far as we have done. They who thus have a boundless future before them have an endless source of inspiration, of energy, of buoyancy granted to them.'

The great prizes of life are gained only by persevering labour. However prodigious may be the gifts of genius they can only be developed and brought to perfection by toil and study.

Michael Angelo worked for a week without taking off his clothes. Handel hollowed every key of his harpsichord like a spoon by incessant practice. A famous sculptor polished his statue with unwearied repetitions, because he said 'the image in my head is not yet in my hands'. 'If what shone afar so grand, turn to nothing in thy hand, on again, the virtue lies in the struggle, not the prize.'

A great end is worth sacrificing everything to attain, and the

pursuit of such an end must be Definite, Concentrated, and Persistent. Life should not be a clash of discordant notes, but a sweet harmony, not a heap of stones, but a beautiful mosaic. Remember it is the spirit in which we live and work that makes life one. A hundred processes may go to the manufacture of a single article. If every duty is seen in relation to the great end of life, moral perfection, Christlikeness—then we shall be in abiding fellowship with Him Who was: Who is: and Who is to come.

Conclusion. Have you ever thought that God has a ruling passion—to recover a lost world! In the Cross the Divine Purpose, Energy and Action meet. His all should call forth our all.

WORD STUDY

'Doctrine' in the Pastoral Epistles

By EUGENE STOCK

There are two Greek words in the N.T. which signify 'doctrine' or 'teaching'—that is either the thing taught or the act of teaching. These are *didachē* and *didaskalia*. The former only occurs twice in the Pastoral Epistles, though common elsewhere; while the latter is specially characteristic of them, occurring fifteen times, and only five times elsewhere. The A.V. translates them both 'doctrine' in every case; the R.V. has 'doctrine' ten times and 'teaching' five times for *didaskalia*, and 'teaching' both times for *didachē*. Bishop Bernard* reads 'doctrine' fourteen times and 'teaching' three times, while Dr Plummer** thinks *didaskalia* generally means 'teaching' and *didachē* 'doctrine'. So doctors differ! Adopting the R.V. here, we have the following occurrences of *didaskalia* (look them up and compare them carefully): 1 Tim. 1:10; 4:1, 6, 13, 16; 5:17; 6:1, 3; 2 Tim. 3:10, 16; 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1, 7, 10.

And the following of *didachē*: 2 Tim. 4:2; Tit. 1:9.

Four times, it will be seen, Paul speaks of 'sound doctrine'. We find also 'sound words' twice (1 Tim. 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13), 'sound in the faith' twice (Tit. 1:13; 2:2), and 'sound speech' once (Tit. 2:8). This word is very interesting, and means 'healthy'

* *Camb. Gk. Test.*

** *Expository Bible.*