

Practicing  
His Presence

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# I The Foretaste

**January 3, 1930**

To be able to look backward and say, “This has been the finest year of my life” — that is glorious! But anticipation! To be able to look ahead and say, “The present year can and shall be better!” — that is more glorious!

If we said such things about our achievements, we would be consummate egotists. But if we are speaking of God’s kindness, and we speak truly, we are but grateful. And this is what I do witness. I have done nothing but open windows — *God has done all the rest*. There have been few if any conspicuous achievements. There has been a succession of marvelous experiences of the presence of God. I feel, as I look back over the year, that it would have been impossible to have held much more without breaking with sheer joy. It was the loneliest year, in some ways the hardest year, of my

life, but the most glorious, full of voices from heaven.

As for me, I resolved that I would succeed better this year with my experiment of filling *every minute full of the thought of God than I succeeded last year.*

### **January 20, 1930**

Although I have been a minister and a missionary for fifteen years, I have not lived the entire day of every day, minute by minute to follow the will of God. Two years ago a profound dissatisfaction led me to begin trying to line up my actions with the will of God about every fifteen minutes or every half hour. Other people to whom I confessed this intention said it was impossible. I judge from what I have heard that few people are really trying even that. But this year I have started out to live all my waking moments in conscious listening to the inner voice, asking without ceasing, "What, Father, do you desire said? What, Father, do you desire this minute?"

It is clear that this is exactly what Jesus was doing all day every day.

### **January 26, 1930**

For the past few days I have been experimenting in a more complete surrender than ever before. I am taking by deliberate act of will, enough time from each hour to give God much thought. Yesterday and today I have made a new adventure, which is not easy to express. I am feeling God in each movement, by an act of will — willing that He shall direct these fingers that now strike this typewriter — willing that He shall pour through my

steps as I walk — willing that He shall direct my words as I speak, and my very jaws as I eat!

You will object to this intense introspection. Do not try it, unless you feel dissatisfied with your own relationship with the Lord, but at least allow me to realize all the leadership of God I can. Paul speaks of our liberty in Christ. I am trying to be utterly free from everybody, free from my own self, but completely enslaved to the will of God every moment of this day.

We used to sing a song in the church in Benton which I like, but which I never really practiced until now. It runs:

“Moment by moment I’m kept in His love;  
Moment by moment I’ve life from above;  
Looking to Jesus till glory doth shine;  
Moment by moment, O Lord, I am Thine.”

It is exactly that “moment by moment,” every waking moment, surrender, responsiveness, obedience, sensitiveness, pliability, “lost in His love,” that I now have the mind-bent to explore with all my might, to respond to Jesus Christ as a violin responds to the bow of the master.

In defense of my opening my soul and laying it bare to the public gaze in this fashion, I may say that it seems to me that we really seldom do anybody much good excepting as we share the deepest experiences of our souls in this way. It is not the fashion to tell your inmost thoughts, but there are many wrong fashions, and concealment of the *best in us is wrong*. I disapprove of the usual practice of talking “small talk” whenever we meet, and holding a veil over our souls. If

we are so impoverished that we have nothing to reveal but small talk, then we need to struggle for more richness of soul. As for me, I am convinced that this spiritual pilgrimage which I am making is infinitely worthwhile, the most important thing I know of to talk about. And talk I shall while there is anybody to listen.

Outside the window, as I completed the last page, has been one of the most splendid sunsets I have ever seen. And these words came singing through my soul, "Looking to Jesus 'till glory doth shine!" Open your soul and entertain the glory of God and after a while that glory will be reflected in the world about you and in the very clouds above your head.

## II Undiscovered Continents

**January 29, 1930**

I feel simply carried along each hour, doing my part in a plan which is far beyond myself. This sense of cooperation with God in little things is what so astonishes me, for I never have felt it this way before. I need something, and turn round to find it waiting for me. I must work, to be sure, but there is God working along with me. God takes care of all the rest. My part is to live this hour in continuous inner conversation with God and in perfect responsiveness to his will, to make this hour gloriously rich. This seems to be all I need think about.

**March 1, 1930**

The sense of being led by an unseen hand which takes mine while another hand reaches ahead and prepares the way, grows upon me daily. I do not need to strain at all to find opportunity. It piles in upon me as the waves

roll over the beach, and yet there is time to do something about each opportunity.

Perhaps a man who has been an ordained minister since 1914 ought to be ashamed to confess that he never before felt the joy of complete hourly, minute by minute — now what shall I call it? — more than surrender. I had that before. More than listening to God. I tried that before. I cannot find the word that will mean to you or to me what I am now experiencing. It is a *will* act. I compel my mind to open straight out toward God. I wait and listen with determined sensitiveness. I fix my attention there, and sometimes it requires a long time early in the morning. I determine not to get out of bed until that mind set upon the Lord is settled. After a while, perhaps, it will become a habit, and the sense of effort will grow less.

But why do I constantly harp upon this inner experience? Because I feel convinced that for me, and for you who read, there lie ahead undiscovered continents of spiritual living compared with which we are infants in arms.

And I must witness that people outside are treating me differently. Obstacles which I once would have regarded as insurmountable are melting away like a mirage. People are becoming friendly who suspected or neglected me. I feel, I feel like one who has had his violin out of tune with the orchestra and at last is in harmony with the universe.

As for me, I never lived, I was half dead, I was a rotting tree, until I reached the place where I wholly, with utter honesty, resolved and then re-resolved that