

THE ATTITUDE OF OBEDIENCE.

"They also serve who only stand and wait."
—*Milton*.

Impatience is the bane of many a Christian life. To learn to wait on God seems most difficult. Being engaged in active service, or what may appear to be it, gives ready satisfaction to most. And yet, if proper thought be given to the subject, it will be seen that, in the activities of Christian life, liability to err is even greater than when called to *stand and wait*; for the flow of animal spirits, ever attendant on bodily or mental activity, can easily be mistaken for Divine approval.

There are many substitutes in this life for the "Well done" of the Master. The approval of man, of the Church, of self, all may be substituted for the witness of the Spirit that we please God. Then the opposition engendered by political activity, or labors in moral reforms, may be accepted as proof that we are obeying God in all things. For example, let a Christian minister awaken the hostility of those engaged in the liquor traffic by his open advocacy of prohibition, and it is an easy matter for him to make that fact a sufficient proof that his whole life as a Christian is approved of God. And yet his associate laborer, who is not even a professor of religion, may secure like op-probrium.

Again, two men, the one a professor of religion, and the other not, heeding some urgent call to relieve distress, part with their last dollar, and both alike share in the approval of conscience for these self-denying acts. But whilst the one simply accepts the glow of self-satisfaction as the reward of virtuous action, the other is apt to go beyond this, and make it a proof that his whole religious life is right, wherein lurks, as all may see, a very subtle form of danger. Hence we argue that there are special forms of danger to the Christian in active life which are absent when in repose. But when in the *attitude* of obedience, and simply heeding the command to stand still and see the salvation of God, he has the desirable opportunity of listening for the voice of Divine approval, undistracted by many of the various counterfeits of that voice.

If, therefore, the consciousness of this approval is not as vivid, is not as satisfactory, when thus all the powers of mind and body are inactive, (we refer not now to the times of needed rest for recuperation, but to forced inactivity, when apparently wasted energies clamor for employment,) we may well give heed to the apostolic caution, "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith: Prove your own selves, know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates." Hence we infer that if we have times of dissatisfaction with our Christian life, because of lack of active mental or physical exertion in our service of the Master, the call is not for undue haste in rushing heedlessly, as the unthinking horse, into the battle, but for close examination as to our standing before God. Is Christ Jesus formed in us? If so the conscious joys of salvation cannot be wanting. His smile of approval is as easily realized without the knowledge of open success. If we are not abiding in Him, no rushing into labors many can secure the coveted experience. This union with Christ is ever attendant on faith, and is a possible experience any moment, as in absolute self-surrender we recognize and accept our blood-bought privilege in the Gospel. Therefore we claim that the attitude of obedience is satisfactory, when moment by moment we honestly present our bodies to Him as a living sacrifice, and believe that it is holy and accepted. Then, as we in the present moment restfully stand in Him, and are conscious that the blessed Spirit not only abides in us, but witnesses clearly that we are pleasing to God, so we are ready, at His slightest intimation, to walk in Him, and in His strength to go into all active labors, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Reader, have you the witness that you please God as distinctly, as satisfactorily, when times of forced inactivity are upon you, as when engaged in more active employment in Christ's vineyard? In other words, is your attitude of obedience a healthy, scriptural one?

Perhaps in answering this question you may get a wholesome rule as to the best way of eliminating self from your labors for Christ.