

## Canadian Pulpit.

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## Quiet Strength.

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TEXT:—Isaiah xxx., 15: "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." God's dealings with His chosen people are a lesson for all Apostles and for all times. They teach us all that God expects and how man disappoints. Jehovah was constantly indicating the way which would lead to the promised land of rest, and contentment and success. Israel was constantly choosing another, even though it had been often proved that the self-selected paths were very dangerous, and generally made the feet weary and the heart sad. The Lord had bidden them fear not the many enemies they were sure to meet in their journey toward the promised land. But the people of Israel refused to walk in the way of God's appointing, to accept his leadership and championship, and drove proudly from their hearts the quiet confidence in God which would have given them at once happiness and success.

I desire, in the first division of the discourse, to point out to you the truth and wisdom of the statement as regards any duty or relation of life—to point out the superiority of quietness and confidence over loudness and boastfulness. This is the distinguishing feature of individual strength, of a strong personality, of a strongman, even quietness and confidence. It is this, the reserve power, the hidden strength, the restrained and concealed activity, which makes a great and powerful man—we are mistaken if we think that we are drawn to men, or that they become popular or famous, because of what they do, or of the efforts they put forth—it is not so. 'Tis not the straining or the striving, however successful; 'tis not brilliant conversation, however sparkling; 'tis not marked ability, however masterful; which makes a man great, or makes him loved. 'Tis something far deeper than all these, something in the restfulness of the man, in the quiet confidence of his manner, in the repose of his great spirit which attracts other men to him. Take and read the lives of a host of distinguished men, and you will find that there was not in their career sufficient to justify their fame—the largest part of their power was latent. This is what we call force, a reserved power which acts directly by its presence and without means. We see an illustration of this force of quiet confidence in our friends with whom we hold intercourse every day—here is one who shakes your hand with much warmth and violence, or perhaps takes it between both of his and declares over and over again his joy at seeing you, yet you are not impressed—here is another whose eyes meet yours in quiet earnestness, whose hand gently presses yours with a magnetism charged with sympathy, who does not need to say he is glad to see you, for you feel it.

I desire to apply this truth more particularly to the Church and to the Christian life. We need this check to our impulsiveness and our demonstrativeness just as much as did the Israelites, and we are just as prone to be boastful of ourselves and faithless toward God. We have an equally fine land to journey toward. Our leaders are just as fallible, our dangers as great, our difficulties as many, and for us it is as necessary as for them to remember well to keep our eyes fixed on the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire, and to listen to the divine voice, as it says to:

"In quietness and confidence shall be your strength."

First, notice how *quietness* is enjoined as a source of strength—how we forget that, and think, that the more noise a Christian makes the stronger he is. I believe, however, that the world is turning to see that the quiet men are the strong men. "Silence is Golden" our quiet moments are our strongest and our happiest moments. Take the Queen upon her throne—we would say her strongest and her happiest hours are when she is greeted with loyal shouts from the throats of tens of thousands, and when the great Lion of Britain stoops to lick her feet—I venture to say that they are rather the hours which find her in the quiet seclusion of the bosom of her family. The strength of the great preacher is not in the hour when listening multitudes hang upon his lips and when all save him are silent—it is rather to be found in the quiet hour when he himself is silent and plunged in communion or in thought—the quiet moment is the fatal moment—the quiet hour is the hour of triumph. I have sometimes thought that there is not enough religious quietness—not that I would have men dumb on the question of eternal interest—there is too much religious cowardice already, too many professing Christians whose profession is the only label by which they could be classified at all, but we have run to speeches, and exhortations, and conferences, and conventions far more than to quiet labor. I was once present at a public gathering in the interests of that new and laudable society called the Society of Christian Endeavor, at which I ventured to say that its strength would be increased if it were to eliminate from its constitution that clause which demands a promise to take some public part at every meeting, for I believe that there are often times when to be silent is more helpful than to speak, and when we realize the strength of quietness.

Quietness should be characteristic of the Church, of the Christian life then, because it has a great work to do—of all great enterprise, stillness is a characteristic—the ascending water, the descending rain, the revolving planet, the electric current are all illustrative of mighty law combined with mighty stillness, and so with men. I have seen the surgeon draw the knife about the spot diseased where the slightest incision meant death—how still he was. I have seen the pilot direct his ship between the cruel and expectant rocks—how quiet! I have seen the judge sentence to death a human criminal—how subdued he was!—how consistent is quietness with the consciousness of the execution of a mighty task! The greatest upholders of, and suffers for, our common Christianity have always been the quiet men, the silent people. We sometimes feel annoyed at the reserve and quiet of the Scotch, their apparent absence of enthusiasm, their undemonstrative reserve, their silent and emotionless souls, and yet who are the men that endured all hardship, that defied all persecution, that abandoned all comfort, and even home itself, that were pursued from one quarter to another, that suffered in silence all torture and indignity that bound their sturdy frames to death itself, but the same silent though dauntless men? In quietness has been their strength.

But the strength of the Christian, or of Christ's Church, does not lie in quietness more than in confidence, in fact, the latter is the cause and condition of the former. God would expressly teach here to his people that their great hope was faith in God, in taking him at His word, in preserving their position as God had given it, in receiving by simple faith the strength that he had promised, and in expecting confidently the victory which He had told them would be surely theirs. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit," saith the Lord of Hosts. 'Twas the same truth as Jesus taught when He urged His disciples by faith to abide in Him, warning them that without Him they could do nothing. 'Twas the same truth as John taught when he pronounced that whole symposium:—"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

And how true this is, how applicable to every Christian life, hear it, all ye sons of men; hear it, ye who toil, and labour, and strive, and weep, and fret, and pray, and doubt. Have quiet confidence in God who is ever active, ever willing, ever moving and yet whose is the ocean of tranquil rest over which no restless billow ever breaks; hear it, ye men who fight and struggle against temptation, whose souls are tossed this way and that way, every moment but to demonstrate their weakness. Your strength shall be in a confident trust in the Lord God Almighty who is the centre of the system of the souls of men, on whom stayed, every spirit shall find a strength that passeth understanding.

In quietness and confidence shall be the strength of men, because these conditions are those begotten only of a lively faith, and faith is strength. They are the conditions of him who can watch the earthquake and rejoice that his soul is in the keeping of a God who can shake the world, they are the happy atmosphere in which that spirit breathes which can sing triumphantly:—"Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, but the Lord, our refuge." Yes, my friends, this

must ever be the ground of the quietness and the confidence of the Christian, even the greatness, the power, omniscience, the constancy, the love of the object in whom that trust is stayed, it is because the soul can undisturbed behold the convulsions of fate or fortune, since the bells of the inner life keep ever chiming forth that "God is love."

My friends, let us test ourselves as to what degree of this quietness and confidence we possess, or are our lives turbulent and restless, a Christian faith should bring a Christian rest and confidence.

And so, fasten thy soul upon the Christ whose great soul was ever in the repose that became Divinity, and whilst thou mayst not know that changeless tranquillity which knew no variation, thou shalt come to know rest, deep, sweet rest, thou shalt come to love deeply, tranquilly, and perpetually.

God said: "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." Christ repeated the sentiment when He said: "Have faith in God, and thou shalt be strong to cast out devils, to banish from the life the influences which weaken and destroy—have confidence in God, and thou shalt be strong, even to pluck the mountains from their eternal roots, to hurl from the life the obstacles and difficulties, the cares and the sorrows which can only be removed by the strength which God poureth through the channel of confidence in His Almighty name—have quiet confidence in God, and thou shalt be thyself surprised at the calm that shall pervade the stormy sea, at the wind that shall swell the sails of the fragile bark of life, at the distinctness with which the mountains of Delectation shall loom before the believing view—have faith in God, and the restfulness of life shall be prophetic of the rest that remains for the people of God, to be enjoyed when we have fought our last fight, and shed our last tear, and fallen our last fall, when, eating of the tree of life, drinking of the flowing River, listening to the rapturous song, we shall enter on the rest, sweet rest of Heaven, a rest that is to be found only within the gates of pearl.



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