

house, and he kept trading with that, and it made him very miserable, for he could never make it go far enough.

He went again and again to his friend, telling him he wanted money for such-and-such a purpose. His friend loved to see him come, and he welcomed him gladly and graciously, and though it was always with the same request, he never grew tired. He said, "Here is the gold in my coffer, take it and use it, for all mine is thine."

The poor man—poor every way, in the midst of boundless wealth—went to the coffer once or twice in great extremities and timidly took away a small piece of gold, and it was marvellous what he was able to do with it; but generally he just stood and looked at it, thinking in his heart how thankful he was to be safe in his friend's house; then he pulled out his own miserable little purse, counted over the worthless coins, and planned, and toiled, and vexed himself, trying to make the best of it.

And yet, if he was asked if he had entirely given up his past life he answered Yes—that he was now in his friend's house for ever; but still he kept his little moneys; and people outside wondered that where all was his own—such a friend, and such boundless wealth—they heard that there always seemed to be something amiss with him, something wanting still. Sometimes they had thoughts of joining him: but they reflected that the life did not seem to answer altogether, and they fancied he was not so much better off than themselves.

And the great friend looked with sorrow's eyes of love, and often wondered how much longer it would be before the poor man would throw away the hateful purse that seemed to eclipse the coffers of gold, and come running with glad, joyful face to return his love by using the gifts he had supplied.

Dear friend, may I ask if you know something of such a life as this—not in an *earthly*, but in a spiritual way?

You are "bought with the price of Christ's blood; you know your sins to be pardoned, and yourself to be his, and yet you are in trouble. Your life is—how shall I say it?—*unsatisfactory*."

In great troubles and trials you put your trust in God and rely upon Him, and find that He *does* deliver you; but

it is in the small, common things of every-day life that you fail. There is not that symmetry, that quietness, that patience, and gentleness, and self-forgetfulness in you which you know *ought* to be there as a tangible mark to yourself, to your family, and to the world, that you are truly a follower of Christ. The graces of Christianity, the "fruits of the Spirit," do not shine in you. You are irritable, uncertain, dogmatic, harsh sometimes; giving way to indolence and ease. Your very relaxations and recreations you do not *thoroughly* enjoy; there is ever a "something still which prompts the eternal sigh" in your heart. In a word, you do not feel that you are pleasing God, nor that He is *smiling* upon you.

You have within you the witness of the Holy Spirit that you belong to God; you have the witness that you *desire* to walk with him in all things according to his commandment; but you have not the witness that you "*are* mortifying the deeds of the flesh," nor are you always sure that you are "*led*" by the Holy Spirit.

The spirit in which you live is more "the spirit of bondage to fear" than "the spirit of adoption, crying, Abba Father," in which two last words there seems to me to be hid—nay, revealed—the utter confidence and hope to God, in God, which will carry us through all.

But why is there this failure? How is it? Are there not, perhaps, two things needed—*willingness* to see and receive God's way for us, *obedience* to follow that way?

In the little illustration (which, like almost all illustrations, is inadequate, and cannot be pushed to its furthest limits) the man had entered his rich friend's house, and was living with him; but he was not willing to give up everything of his own, nor was he willing to *take* everything of his friend's.

You have really given yourself to Christ, and know yourself to be his, but is there a something you are keeping back, and are not willing to surrender to Him? If so, you are not honest, you are not whole-hearted. In God's loving command, "Give me thy heart," is included life, hope, sins, possessions, circumstances, will—*all*. You know He cannot rule, and govern, and lead you, if you are keeping a portion of your life