

NOTE E. - CHAP. VIII

NOTHING OF MYSELF

ONE would think that no words could make it plainer than the words of the Covenant state it-that the one difference between Old and New is, that in the latter everything is to be done by God Himself. And yet believers and even teachers do not take it in. And even those who do, find it hard to live it out. Our whole being is so blinded to the true relation to God, His inconceivable Omnipresent Omnipotence working every moment in us is so far beyond the reach of human conception, our little hearts cannot rise to the reality of His Infinite Love making itself one with us, and delighting to dwell in us, and to work all in us that has to be done there -that, when we think we have accepted the truth, we find it is only a thought. We are such strangers to the knowledge of what a GOD really is, as the actual life by which His creatures live. In Him we live and move and have our being. And specially is the knowledge of the Triune God too high for us, in that wonderful, most real, and most practical indwelling, to make which possible the Son became Incarnate, and the Holy Spirit was sent forth into our hearts. Only they who confess their ignorance, and wait very humbly and persistently on our Blessed God to teach us by His Holy Spirit what that all-working indwelling is, can hope to have it revealed to them.

It is not long since I had occasion, in preparing a series of Bible Lessons for our Students Association here, to make a study of the

Gospel of St. John, and of the life of our Lord as set forth there. I cannot say how deeply I have been afresh impressed with that which I cannot but regard as the deepest secret of His life on earth, His dependence on the Father. It has come to me like a new revelation. Some twelve times and more He uses the word not and nothing of Himself. Not My will. Not My words. Not My honour. Not Mine own glory. I can do nothing of Myself. I speak not of Myself. I came not of Myself. I do nothing of Myself.

Just think a moment what this means in connection with what He tells us of His life in the Father. “As the Father hath life in Himself, so He hath given to the Son to have life in Himself” (v. 26). “That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father” (v. 23). And yet this Son, who hath life in Himself even as the Father has, immediately adds (v. 30): “I can of mine own self do nothing.” We should have thought that with this life in Himself He would have the power of independent action as the Father has, but no! “The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do.” The chief mark of this Divine life He has in Himself is evidently unceasing dependence, receiving from the Father, by the moment, what He had to speak or do. Nothing of Myself is manifestly as true of Him as it ever could be of the weakest or most sinful man. The life of the Father dwelling in Christ, and Christ in the Father, meant that just as truly as when He was begotten of the Father, He received Divine life and glory from Him, so the continuation of that life came only by an eternal process of giving and receiving, as absolute as is the eternal generation itself. The more closely we study this truth, and Christ’s life in the light of it, the more we are compelled to say, the deepest root of Christ’s relationship to the Father, the true reason why He was so well-pleasing, the secret of His glorifying the Father, was this: He allowed God to do all in Him. He only received and

wrought out what God wrought in Him. His whole attitude was that of the open ear, the servant spirit, the childlike dependence that waited for all on God.

The infinite importance of this truth in the Christian life is easily felt. The life Christ lived in the Father is the life He imparts to us. We are to abide in Him and He in us, even as He in the Father and the Father in Him. And if the secret of His abiding in the Father be this unceasing self-abnegation—“I can do nothing of Myself”—this life of most entire and absolute dependence and waiting upon God, must it not far more be the most marked feature of our Christian life, the first and all-pervading disposition we seek to maintain? In a little book of William Law’s, that has just been issued, (*Dying to Self: A Golden Dialogue*. By William Law. With Notes. The thought is worked out with exceeding power, and the lesson taught that the only thing man can do for his salvation is to deny and cease from himself, that God may work in him.) he specially insists upon this in his so striking repetition of the call, if we would die to self in order to have the birth of Divine love in our souls, to sink down in humility, meekness, patience, and resignation to God. I think that no one who at all enters into this advice, but will feel what new point is given to it by the remembrance of how this entire self-renunciation was not only one of the many virtues in the character of Christ, but, indeed, that first essential one without which God could have wrought nothing in Him, through which God did work all.

Let us make Christ’s words our own: “I can do nothing of Myself.” Take it as the keynote of a single day. Lookup and see the Infinite God waiting to do everything as soon as we are ready to give up all to Him, and receive all from Him. Bow down in lowly worship, and wait for the Holy Spirit to work some measure of the mind of

Christ in you. Do not be disconcerted if you do not learn the lesson at once: there is the God of love waiting to do everything in him who is willing to be nothing. At moments the teaching appears dangerous, at other times terribly difficult. The Blessed Son of God teaches it us-this was His whole life: I can do nothing of Myself. He is our life; He will work it in us. And when as the Lamb of God He begets this His disposition in us, we shall be prepared for Him to rise on us and shine in us in His heavenly glory.

“Nothing of Myself” –that word spoken eighteen hundred years ago, coming out of the inmost depths of the heart of the Son of God -is a seed in which the power of the eternal life is hidden. Take it straight from the heart of Christ, and hide it in your heart. Meditate on it till it reveals the beauty of His Divine meekness and humility, and explains how all the power and glory of God could work in Him. Believe in it as containing the very life and disposition which you need, and believe in Christ, whose Spirit dwells in the seed to make it true in you. Begin, in single acts of self-emptying, to offer it to God as the one desire of your heart. Count upon God accepting them, and meeting them with His grace, to make the acts into habits, and the habits into dispositions. And you may depend upon it, there is nothing that will lift you so near to God, nothing that will unite you closer to Christ, nothing that will prepare you for the abiding presence and power of God working in you, as the death to self which is found in the simple word–NOTHING OF MYSELF.

This word is one of the keys to the New Covenant Life. As I believe that God is actually to work all in me, I shall see that the one thing that is hindering me is, my doing something of myself. As I am willing to learn from Christ by the Holy Spirit to say truly, Nothing of myself, I shall have the true preparation to receive all

God has engaged to work, and the power confidently to expect it. I shall learn that the whole secret of the New Covenant is just one thing: GOD WORKS ALL! The seal of the Covenant stands sure: “I the Lord have spoken it, AND I WILL DO IT.”