

Chapter 1. THE MORNING HOUR

"My voice You shall hear in the morning, O LORD; In the morning I will direct it to You, And I will look up." - Psalm 5:3

"The Lord GOD awakens Me morning by morning; He awakens My ear to hear as the learned." - Isaiah 50:4

From the earliest times God's servants have thought of the morning as the time specially fitted for the worship of God. It is still regarded by all Christians both as a duty and privilege, to devote some portion of the beginning of the day to seeking solitude and fellowship with God. Many Christians, and specifically the Student's Christian Association, observe the *Morning Watch*; or speak of it as the *Quiet Hour*; others use the name of the *Still Hour* or the *Quiet Time*. All these, whether they think of a full hour or half an hour, or a quarter of an hour, unite with the Psalmist in what he says: *"My voice You shall hear in the morning, O Lord."*

In speaking of the extreme importance of this daily time of quiet for prayer and meditation on God's Word, Mr. Mott has said: "Next to receiving Christ as Saviour, and claiming the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, we know of no action that can do larger good to ourselves or others, than forming an undiscourageable resolution to keep the morning watch and spend the first half hour of the day alone with God." At first the statement appears too strong. The act of receiving Christ as Saviour is one of such infinite consequences for eternity, the act of claiming the Holy Spirit is one that works such a revolution in the Christian life, that such a simple thing as the firm determination to keep the morning watch hardly appears sufficiently important to place next to them. If, however, we think how impossible it is to live out our daily life in Christ as our Saviour from sin, or to maintain a walk in the leading and power of the Holy Spirit, without daily, close fellowship with God, we soon shall see the truth of the sentiment. Because it simply means the fixed determination that Christ shall have our whole life, that the Holy Spirit shall in everything be fully obeyed. The morning watch is the key to the position in which the surrender to Christ and the Holy Spirit can be unceasingly and fully maintained.

To realise this, let us look first at what ought to be **The Object** of the morning watch. The morning watch must not be regarded as an end in itself. It is not sufficient that

it gives us a blessed time for prayer and Bible study, and so brings us a certain measure of refreshment and help. It is to serve as a means to an end. And that end is – **to secure the presence of Christ for the whole day**. Personal devotion to a friend or a pursuit means that that friend or pursuit shall always hold their place in the heart, even when other engagements occupy the attention. Personal devotion to Jesus means that we allow nothing to separate us from Him for even a moment. To abide in Him and His love, to be kept by Him and His grace, to be doing His will and pleasing Him – this cannot possibly be an intermittent thing to one who is truly devoted to Him. "I need Thee every hour," "Moment by moment I am kept in His love." These hymns are the language of life and truth. "In Your name shall they rejoice all day," "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment" – these are words of Divine power. The believer cannot stand for one moment without Christ. The personal devotion to Him refuses to be content with anything less than to abide always in His love and His will. Nothing less is the true scriptural Christian life. And the importance and blessedness and true aim of the morning watch can only be seen as nothing less than this first object.

The clearer the object of our pursuit is, the better shall we be able to adapt the means to attain it. Consider the morning watch now as **the means** to this great end: I want to absolutely secure the presence of Christ all day, to do nothing that can interfere with it, I feel at once that my success for the day will depend upon the clearness and the strength of the faith that seeks and finds and holds **Him** in the prayer closet. Meditation and prayer and the word will all be used as subordinate and supplementary to this: the link for the day between Christ and me must be renewed and firmly fastened in the morning hour. At first it may appear as if the thought of the whole day, with all its possible cares, pleasures, temptations, may disturb the rest I have enjoyed in my quiet devotion. It is possible; but it will be no loss. True religion aims at having the character of Christ so formed in us, that in our most common actions His temper and disposition shall show themselves. The spirit and the will of Christ are meant to so possess us that in our intercourse with people, in our relaxation, in our business, it shall be a second nature to us to act according to them. All this can be because Christ Himself, as the Living One, lives in us. Be not disturbed if at first the aim appears too high or difficult and occupies too much of your time in the hour of private prayer. The time you give it will be richly rewarded. You will return to prayer and the scripture with new purpose and new faith. As the

morning watch begins to have its effect on the day, the day will react on its first half hour, and fellowship with Christ have a new meaning and a new power.

It will specially have its influence on **the spirit** in which you keep the morning watch. As the magnificence of the aim: unbroken fellowship with God in Christ through the day; and the true nature of the means to secure it: a definite conscious meeting with Christ and a securing of His presence for the day, possesses us, it will be seen that the one essential thing is, whole-hearted purpose: the fixed determination, whatever effort, or self-denial it may cost, to win the price. In study or on the sport field every student knows what need there is of vigorous will and determined purpose if we are to succeed. Religion needs, and indeed deserves, not less but more of intense devotion. If anything, surely the love of Christ needs the whole heart. It is this fixed determination before everything to secure Christ's presence, that will overcome every temptation to be unfaithful or superficial in the keeping of our pledges. It is this that will make the morning watch itself a mighty means of grace in strengthening character and give us the nerve to say NO to every call for self-indulgence. It is this that will enable us at once, when we enter the inner chamber and shut the door, to be there with our whole heart, ready at once for our intercourse with Christ. And it is this determination that, from the morning watch on, will become the keynote of our daily life.

In the world it is often said: Great things are possible to any man who knows what he will and wills it with all his heart. The student who has made personal devotion to Christ his watchword, will find in the morning hour the place where day by day, the insight into his holy calling is renewed: where his will is braced up to walk worthy of it; and his faith rewarded by the presence of Christ waiting to meet him, and take charge of him for the day. We are more than conquerors through Him who loves us. A living Christ waits to meet us.

Prayer: My Lord Jesus Christ, it is my sincere desire and determination, to set apart at least half an hour every morning, for the next 18 weeks, to meet with You, first thing in the morning. I know there will be interruptions, but I pray that You will give me the grace and the strength to make meeting with You my highest priority in my day. Guide me by your Spirit through this teaching on the Inner Chamber and the Inner Life. Come into the inner chamber of heart and dwell with me. Amen.