

Chapter 24. Holidays

"If the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into." – Luke 12:39

In a speech on Education Edward Thring said: "The mighty leisure hours are occupied with things that are all-powerful...The mighty question of leisure hours ought to be the most important question of all since it influences the character most...Leisure hours are the hinge on which true education turns." This great master in the science of education had seen that noble character, and the true being, come first, and then after that, in second place, the training of skill and strength. He had seen too, that while a teacher can do much in word and deed by faith and true work to stimulate and to guide, every student has to work out his own character. It is in the leisure hours, when free from constraint and observation, that the student shows what is really the most important to him. That is why Edward Thring spoke of the leisure hours as *all-important* and *all-powerful*, the hinge on which true education turns.

The same is intensely true in religion. Thousands of students have felt it, without knowing how to express or explain it. At college or school their morning watch had its place in their timetable. The whole mind is braced up to regular and systematic work, and the time for devotion is faithfully kept similar as that for a class or private study.

When the time of relaxation comes, and one is free to do exactly as one likes, many a student finds that the morning watch and its fellowship with God had not become so natural, such a necessity of the spiritual life, and such joy, that its observance could not interfere with our holiday pleasure. **The holiday becomes the test of character**, the proof of how far one could say with Job, *"I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food."* (**Job 23:12**). The question of leisure hours is very important. In them I freely and naturally turn to what I love most. In them I prove and increase the power to keep what I have gained.

A teacher in a large school in America is reported to have said, "the greatest difficulty with which we have to contend is the summer vacation. Just when we have brought up a boy to a good point of discipline, and he responds to the best ideals, we lose him, and when he comes back after the break, we have to start it all over. The summer holiday simply demoralises him." This statement, referring to ordinary study and duty, is powerful. Within certain limits it is also applicable to the religious life. The sudden relaxation of regular habits, and the subtle thought that perfect liberty to do as one likes means perfect happiness, causes many a student to fall

back in his/her Christian life. It is at this point those older and more experienced members of the Students Christian Associations should help and guard their younger members. The attainment of months of spiritual growth may be lost by the neglect of one week. We don't know in what hour the thief comes. The spirit of the morning watch means unceasing vigilance all day and every day.

There are various ways in which the danger, and the safety from it, can be explained to such Bible students. During the holiday we are freed from the demands of daily life, but there are other laws, such as moral laws and health laws, from which there is no relaxation. Let it be a warning to every Christian that **daily fellowship with God cannot be relaxed without consequences**. One still needs to eat and breathe during the holidays, and a Christian need to daily *eat the Bread* and *breathe the Air of Heaven*.

The morning watch is not only a duty, but an unspeakable privilege and pleasure. Fellowship with God, abiding in Christ, loving the Word, and meditating on it all day – these things are life and strength, health and happiness to the new nature. Look at it with new eyes; believe in the power of the new nature inside of you, and act upon it. Even if you do not feel the new nature, it will come true. Count it a joy, and it will become a joy to you.

Above all, realise that the world needs you and depends on you to be its light. Christ is waiting for you, a member of His Body, to day-by-day do His saving work through you. Neither He, nor the world, nor you, can afford to lose a single day. God has created and redeemed you, that through you He may, as unceasingly as He lightens the world through the sun, let His light and life and love shine upon people through you. Every day you need afresh to drink from the fountain of life. Do not think of asking for a holiday relief from this fellowship. Even less *take* it. Treasure the holiday for the special time it gives to study in the Bible what you normally don't have time for. Treasure your holiday for the special opportunity of more fellowship with the Father and the Son. Then, instead of it become a snare, instead of exhausting all your energy to just keep you from losing ground, treasure the holiday as a blessed time for grace and victory over self and the world. You will increase in grace and strength, be blessed and made to be a blessing.

Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, how many leisure hours did I waste during holidays and weekends. I consecrate myself again to You. I want to spend time with You. Help me to be conscious of You every moment of my life, even when I am relaxing. Help me to stay in You. "