

Chapter 33. Himself Alone

"Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone."

– John 6:15

The Gospels frequently mention Christ retreating into solitude for prayer. Luke mentions Jesus' praying eleven times. In his very first chapter, Mark tells us that after a busy evening with the whole city gathering at his door, and Jesus healing many, *"Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed."* (**Mark 1:35**). Before He chose His twelve apostles, *"He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God."* (**Luke 6:12**). This thought of complete retirement to be alone appears to have deeply impacted the disciples, prompting John's use of the significant expression, *"He departed to the mountain by Himself alone."* Matthew also wrote, *"He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there."* (**Matt.14:23**). The man Christ Jesus felt the need for perfect solitude. Let us humbly seek to find out what this means.

Himself alone. Entirely by Himself, alone with Himself. We know how much interaction with people draws us away from ourselves and exhausts our strength. The man Christ Jesus knew this too, and felt the need to come to Himself again, to gain His strength again, and renew the consciousness of Who He was and what He needed, fully realising His high calling, His human weakness, His entire dependence on the Father.

How much more does the child of God need this! Whether it be the distraction of worldly engagements or religious service, whether it be to maintain our own Christian life, or the renewal of our strength to influence people for God, there is always the urgent call to every believer to follow in the Master's steps, and find a place and time when he can indeed be by himself alone.

Himself alone, with spiritual realities. It is in the entire withdrawal from contact with visible and temporal things that we are free to yield ourselves fully to the powers of the unseen world, and allow them to master us. Jesus needed time and silence to anew realise what He came to contend with and conquer the power of the

kingdom of darkness. He had to be aware of the needs of the people He came to save, and the presence and the power of the Father Whose will He had come to do. In Christian service, nothing is more indispensable than that a person should at times set himself apart to intensely focus his thoughts on the spiritual realities which he knows of but is not familiar with, and which as yet had so little effect on his heart and life. The truths of eternity have infinite power, yet they are often so powerless because we do not give them time to be revealed in us. Himself alone – this is the only cure.

Himself alone, with God the Father. It is sometimes said that work is worship, and that service is fellowship. If there ever was a man who could dispense with special seasons for solitude and fellowship, it was our blessed Lord. But He could not do His work or maintain His fellowship with the Father without His quiet time. As a man, He felt the need of bringing all His work, past and future, putting it before the Father, renewing His sense of absolute dependence on the Father's power and absolute confidence in the Father's love in seasons of special fellowship. When He said, "*the Son can do nothing of Himself,*" (**John 5:19**), "*As I hear, I judge,*" (**John 5:30**), He was simply expressing the simple truth of His relationship to God. It was this relationship that made His being alone with God a necessity and an unspeakable joy.

O, that every servant of God would understand and practise this blessed art of withdrawal unto God, that the Church knew how to train Christians to get a sense of this high and holy privilege, and that every believer may and must have a time when he is indeed by himself alone with God. O, the thought to have God all alone to myself! And to know that God has me to Himself all alone!

Himself alone, with the Word. As a man our Lord had to learn God's Word as a child; during the long years of His life in Nazareth, He fed on that Word and made it His own. In His solitude He conferred with the Father on all that that Word spoke of Him, on the will of God it revealed for Him to do.

It is one of the deepest lesson a Christian must learn in his spiritual life, that the Word without the living God avails little; that the blessing of the Word comes when it brings us to the living God; that the Word that we get from the mouth of God

brings the power to know it and to do it. Let us learn the lesson: **personal fellowship with God in secret** alone can make the Word to be life and power.

Himself alone, in prayer. What an unspeakable privilege prayer is as it allows a person to lay his whole life open to God, and to ask for His teaching and His strength. Try to think for a moment what prayer meant to Jesus, what adoring worship, what humble love, what childlike pleading for everything He needed. As little as we can correctly perceive this, can we realise what blessedness awaits the person who knows to follow in Christ's steps, and to prove what the utmost is that God can do to someone who makes this his or her chief joy – to be with Him, Himself alone.

Himself alone. How deep these words reveal to us the life of Christ on earth, and of the life that He now lives in us. This is one of the most blessed elements of the life He lives in us by His Holy Spirit – He reveals and imparts to us everything that the Word means – He Himself alone.

Prayer: Father, what a privilege that I can come to You in the morning watch. That I may have You to myself alone. I pray that the time I spend with You every day, will be blessed and fruitful. That both You and I will enjoy it, and that You will daily nourish me with Yourself. Amen.