

Andrew Murray:

"Behold, Now is the accepted time; behold, Now is the day of salvation." 2 Cor 6:2

THE thought of living moment by moment is of such central importance looking at the abiding in Christ from our side-that we want once more to speak of it. And to all who desire to learn the blessed art of living only a moment at a time, we want to say: The way to learn it is to exercise yourself in living in the present moment. Each time your attention is free to occupy itself with the thought of Jesus-whether it be with time to think and pray, or only for a few passing seconds-let your first thought be to say: Now, at this moment, I do abide in Jesus. Use such time, not in vain regrets that you have not been abiding fully, or still more hurtful fears that you will not be able to abide, but just at once take the position the Father has given you: "I am in Christ; this is the place God has given me. I accept it; here I rest; I do now abide in Jesus." This is the way to learn to abide continually. You may be yet so feeble as to fear to say of each day, "I am abiding in Jesus"; but the feeblest can, each single moment, say, as he consents to occupy his place as a branch in the vine, "Yes, I do abide in Christ." It is not a matter of feeling-it is not a question of growth or strength in the Christian life-it is the simple question whether the will at the present moment desires and consents to recognise the place you have in your Lord, and to accept it. If you are a believer, you are in Christ. If you are in Christ, and wish to stay there it is your duty to say, though it be but for a moment, "Blessed Saviour, I abide in Thee now; Thou keepest me now."

It has been well said that in that little word one of the deepest secrets of the life of faith. At the close of a conference on the spiritual life, a minister of experience rose and spoke. He did not know that he had learnt any truth he did not know before, but he had learnt how to use aright what he had known. He had learnt that it was his privilege at each moment, whatever surrounding circumstances might be, to say, "Jesus saves me now." This is indeed the secret of rest and victory. If I can say, "Jesus is to me at this moment all that God gave Him to be-life, and strength, peace"-I have but as I say it to hold still, and rest, and realize it, and for that moment I have what I need. As my faith sees how of God I am in Christ, and take the place in Him my Father has provided, my soul can peacefully settle down: Now I abide in Christ.

Believer! when striving to find the way to abide in Christ from moment to moment, remember that the gateway is: Abide in Him at this present moment. Instead of wasting effort in trying to get into a state that will last, just remember that it is Christ Himself the living, loving Lord, who alone can keep you, and is waiting to do so. Begin at once and act faith in Him for the present moment: this is the only way to be kept the next. To attain the life of permanent and perfect abiding is not ordinarily given at once as a possession for the future: it comes mostly step by step. Avail yourself, therefore, of every opportunity of exercising the trust of the present moment. Each time you bow in prayer, let there first be an act of simple devotion: "Father, I am in Christ; I now abide in Him." Each time you have, amidst the bustle of duty, the opportunity of self-recollection, let its first involuntary act be "I am still in Christ, abiding in Him now." Even when overtaken by sin, and the heart within is all disturbed and excited, O let your first look upwards be with the words: "Father, I have sinned; and yet I come---though I blush to say it-as one who is in Christ. Father! here I am; I can take no other place; of God I am in Christ; I now abide in Christ." Yes, Christian in every possible circumstance, every moment of the day, the voice is calling: Abide in me, do it now. And even now, as you are reading this, O come at once and enter upon the blessed life of always abiding,, by doing it at once: do it now.

In the life of David there is a beautiful passage which may help to make this thought clearer (2 Sam.3:17,18) David had been anointed king in Judah. The other tribes still followed Ish-bosheth, Saul's son. Abner, Saul's chief captain, resolves to lead the tribes of Israel to submit to David, the God-appointed king of the whole nation. He speaks to the elders of Israel: "Ye sought for David in times past to be king over you now, then, do it, for Jehovah hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of my servant David will I save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies." And they did it, and anointed David a second time to be king, now over all Israel, as at first only over Judah (2 Sam.5:3)-a most instructive type of the way in which a soul is led to the life of entire surrender and undivided allegiance, to the full abiding.

First you have the divided kingdom: Judah faithful to the king of God's appointment; Israel still clinging to the king of its own choosing. As a consequence, the nation divided against itself, and no power to conquer the enemies. Picture of the divided heart. Jesus accepted as King in Judah, the place of the holy mount, in the inner chamber of the soul; but the surrounding territory, the every-day life, not yet brought to subjection; more than half the life still ruled by self-will and its hosts. And so no real peace within and no power over the enemies.

Then there is the longing desire for a better state: "Ye sought for David in times past to be king over you." There was a time, when David had conquered the Philistines, that Israel believed in him; but they had been led

astray. Abner appeals to their own knowledge of God's will, that David must rule over all. So the believer, when first brought to Jesus, did indeed want Him to be Lord over all, had hoped that He alone would be King. But, alas! unbelief and selfwill had come in, and Jesus could not assert His power over the whole life. And yet the Christian is not content. How he longs sometimes without daring to hope that it can be-for a better time.

Then follows God's promise. Abner says: "The Lord hath spoken, By the hand of David I will save my people from the hand of all their enemies." He appeals to God's promise: as David had conquered the Philistines, the nearest enemy in time past, so he alone could conquer those farther off. He should save Israel from the hand of all their enemies. Beautiful type of the promise by which the soul is now invited to trust Jesus for the victory over every enemy, and a life of undisturbed fellowship. "The Lord hath spoken"-this is our only hope. On that word rests the sure expectation (Luke 1:70-75): "As He spake, That we should be saved from the hand of all that hate us, to perform the oath which He sware, that He would grant unto us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, should serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life." David reigning over every corner of the land, and leading a united and obedient people on from victory to victory: this is the promise of what Jesus can do for us, as soon as in faith in God's promise all is surrendered to Him, and the whole life given up to be kept abiding in Him.

"Ye sought for David in times past to be king over you," spake Abner, and added, "Then do it now." Do it now is the message that this story brings to each one of us who longs to give Jesus unreserved supremacy. Whatever the present moment be, however unprepared the message finds you, however sad the divided and hopeless state of the life may be, still I come and urge Christ's claim to an immediate surrender-this very moment. I know well that it will take time for the blessed Lord to assert His power, and order all within you according to His will-to conquer the enemies and train all your powers for His service. This is not the work of a moment. But there are things which are the work of a moment-of this moment. The one is your surrender of all to Jesus; your surrender of yourself entirely to live only in Him. As time goes on, and exercise has made faith stronger and brighter, that surrender may become clearer and more intelligent. But for this no one may wait. The only way ever to attain to it is to begin at once. Do it now. Surrender yourself this very moment to abide wholly, only, always in Jesus. It is the work of a moment. And just so, Christ's renewed acceptance of you is the work of a moment. Be assured that He has you and holds you as His own, and that each new "Jesus, I do abide in Thee," meets with an immediate and most hearty response from the Unseen One. No act of faith can be in vain. He does indeed anew take hold on us and draw us close to Himself. Therefore, as often as the message comes, or the thought of it comes, Jesus says: Abide in me, do it at once. Each moment there is the whisper: Do it now.

Let any Christian begin, then, and he will speedily experience how the blessing of the present moment is passed on to the next. It is the unchanging Jesus towhom he links himself; it is the power of a divine life, in its unbroken continuity, that takes possession of him. The do it now of the present moment-a little thing though it seems-is nothing less than the beginning of the ever-present now, which is the mystery and the glory of eternity. Therefore, Christian, abide in Christ: do it now.