

~Other Speakers M-R: Thomas Reade:

## 12. EARNEST DESIRES FOR CHRIST

"My soul yearns for you in the night; in the morning my spirit longs for you." Isaiah 26:9

Few people are insensible to the happiness of friendship, though few, comparatively, possess a real friend. Worldly friendships are often little better than "confederacies in vice, and leagues in pleasure." Amid refined society, where all the decencies of life are practiced, and the finer sensibilities of the heart encouraged, friendship may assume its native character in an unselfish affection. But still the lovely charm is lacking. Christian friendship alone is the true panacea for human woes. Its kindly influence seems to make an almost Paradise regained. Cemented by the love of Christ, Christians possess the elements of true felicity. They have been described as one soul in two bodies, actuated by the same principle, walking by the same rule, and directed to the same end.

Many requisites are needed to make a Christian friend. Selfishness is the bane of real friendship. It cannot live in such an atmosphere. Like tender plants, it thrives best in its native soil. A heart filled with the love of Christ, a mind clothed with humility, a spirit endued with that charity which seeks not her own, is peculiarly fitted for the growth of Christian friendship. Here it expands its lovely flowers, and bears its precious fruits.

In the midst of this ever-changing, faithless world, there is a Friend that loves at all times, a Brother that is born for adversity. Jesus is his precious name. Love is his endeared character. His faithfulness never fails. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. In the midst of disquietude, he can give rest. In the midst of sorrow, he can give comfort. In the midst of weakness, he can impart strength. In the midst of predicament, he can give counsel. Oh! what a friend is this! Wherever we are, he is a friend at hand to cheer and support. When we read his word, he speaks to us; when we pray, we speak to him. He is near to those who fear him, and he sheds his choicest gifts on those who love him. He dwells in them by his Spirit, and manifests himself to them, as he does not unto the world. Such a friend is Jesus to his redeemed people.

What a lovely instance of holy friendship is presented to us in the family at Bethany. "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus;" and the Savior was equally the object of their warmest love. Earthly friends are indeed blessed, when Jesus is the friend of both; when each, who loves the other, is the object of the Savior's love. A union such as this brings down a portion of heaven into the soul. A friendship such as this, like a calm and silent stream, meandering through some lonely glen, pursues its course in unobserved, but sweet retirement. The graces of the Spirit thrive like beautiful flowers in this delightful spot, until the happy souls, cemented by the love of Christ, exchange this earthly for a heavenly paradise.

There is no happiness but in Christ. He is the fountain of living water, the source from where our every blessing flows! O! my soul, never look for peace from the creature, nor expect it from yourself. Jesus is the Prince of Peace. He has made peace for us through the blood of his Cross. He alone, by his Spirit can speak peace to the troubled conscience. Through him, we have peace with God; and through him, we enjoy the peace of God which passes all understanding.

Blessed Savior! shed abroad your love in my heart; fill me with joy and peace in believing. Wash my heart from wickedness; allow no vain thoughts to lodge within me. Give me a single eye, a sincere love to you, a supreme regard to all your commandments. Preserve me, O Lord, from every false way, from false views of your Gospel, from false motives in my conduct. Enable me, O sin-bearing Savior, to cast the burden of my sins upon you; to confess them over you, as the appointed sacrifice for the transgressions of your people; and, oh! bear them away into the land of everlasting forgetfulness.

I feel more and more convinced of this important truth, that to be happy, I must be holy. "There is no peace, says my God to the wicked." "The wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Every page of the Bible proclaims this truth by precept and example. Universal experience attests the truth of this declaration, by the hourly miseries which sin produces. How can peace dwell in the heart, when the curse of God rests upon it? "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but he blesses the habitation of the just." When the Israelites were at peace with God, he blessed their basket and their store; when they rebelled, his curse consumed all that they had. The world may appear smiling and happy, but its appearances are deceitful. Many an aching heart is hid under a smiling face.

True peace descends from above. It is the celestial fruit of Paradise. The Holy Spirit alone can produce this

blessedness in the soul; therefore, none can possess it, but the faithful in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit, in his sanctifying, comforting influences in the hearts of sinners, is the purchase of the Redeemer's blood. "Except I go away," said Jesus, "the Comforter cannot come." The blessed Savior went to his eternal glory by the way of the Cross; and thus satisfying the claims of Justice, he made a way for the exercise of mercy. Oh how wonderfully does mercy shine forth in this dark world. Like the physical sun, it gives light, warmth, and fruitfulness to the soul. O divine Spirit, dispel the mists of ignorance from my mind; inflame my heart with holy love, and cause the fruits of righteousness to abound in me. Hear my inward breathings after you. Satisfy my longing desires after your presence. Manifest yourself to my waiting soul, that I may be joyful in you. "Remember me, too, Lord, when you show favor to your people; come to me with your salvation. Let me share in the prosperity of your chosen ones. Let me rejoice in the joy of your people; let me praise you with those who are your heritage."

The eye is delighted, while ascending some lofty eminence, with the ever-varying beauties which are spread beneath it. What bounded the range of vision at the foot of the mountain is now lost in the vast expanse. So it is with the Christian traveler, when he leaves this narrow sphere of earth, and soars, by faith, into the world of glory. How wonderful is the power of faith. As the astronomer, by his telescope, discovers new worlds unseen by the natural eye: so the Christian, by faith, beholds a scene of glory which the natural man cannot discern.

The book of God unfolds to his admiring sight these bright displays of glory, when viewed, by faith, through the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit. No wonder that his heart is filled with longing desires after immortality; with a daily thirsting after Christ. The midnight hour, and the early dawn, find him often engaged in this search after Christ. "My soul yearns for you in the night; in the morning my spirit longs for you." Present attainments are forgotten, while his eye is fixed on what still remains to be possessed. With the Apostle he can say: "I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us up to heaven."

I long to be altogether conformed to the will of God; to be transformed into the lovely image of my Redeemer. I feel a constant uneasiness and restlessness of mind. Why should I grovel here below when Jesus calls me to him? Why rest in this valley of tears, when invited to ascend the Mount of God? I desire a greater elevation of soul, a higher standard of excellence. My soul cleaves unto the dust, when it should be soaring into the skies.

Man was originally created with expansive powers; with faculties capable of knowing, and of holding converse with the Deity. He was formed for immortality. Though now fallen, his children still retain some broken fragments of the once noble structure. The heart resembles a triangle which this round globe of earth can never fill; why else that restless discontent, those disappointed expectations so visible among the votaries of the world? They pant after the possession of ideal pleasures, and when possessed their zest is gone. New delights are panted after, which, when obtained, are equally evanescent. The enjoyments of earth, like the Aurora-Borealis, are ephemeral and deceptive.

O deliver me, blessed Jesus, from unbelief and discontent, from pride and selfishness, from fleshly lusts and carnal desires, from covetousness and an earthly mind, from formality and hypocrisy, from sinful compliances and the fear of man. Save me from myself, from the power of Satan, from an evil world.

Oh! impart unto me the unspeakably precious gift of your ever-blessed Spirit, to be the Witness of my adoption, the Seal of my acceptance, the Pledge of future glory. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Hasten your chariot wheels. Come in all your salvation. Come in all the fullness of your grace and power. Oh! delay not, blessed Savior, to make my soul your dwelling-place. I long, I look for you. With you is the fullness of joy, and in your presence are pleasures for evermore. When I awake with your likeness I shall be satisfied with it. When standing before your throne, with robes made white through your cleansing blood, none, yes, none will praise you with a louder song than I.

Jesus, to You my soul aspires,  
Dear Object of my best desires;  
With you is life, and joy, and peace,  
Without you, all is bitterness.  
Reveal your glory to my soul,  
O speak- and make a sinner whole;  
Restore me to your image, Lord,  
Renew me through your powerful word.  
Come, blessed Savior, to my heart,

**Earnest Desires for Christ**

**Your saving mercies there impart;  
Preserve me from impending ill,  
And let me ever do your will.  
If called to pass through swelling waves,  
By furnace fierce, or yawning graves;  
If duty's path lies through this way,  
O from it, let me never stray.  
Give me a holy courage, Lord,  
A firm reliance on your word;  
Beneath your banner I will fight,  
When clad with your all-conquering might.  
Then, when the work of life is done,  
The battle fought- the victory won,  
Your grace will give the victor's crown;  
But all the glory is your own!**