

Andrew Murray:

My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up (Psalm 5:3)

From the earliest ages, God's servants have thought of the morning as the time especially suitable for worshiping Him. It is still regarded by Christians both as a duty and a privilege to devote some portion of the beginning of the day to seeking seclusion and fellowship with God. Many Christians call it the Morning Watch, or the Quiet Hour. Others use the name, the Still Hour, or the Quiet Time.

All these believers, whether they think of a whole hour or half an hour, or even a quarter of an hour, unite with the psalmist when he says, "My voice shalt Thou 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 Savior, and claiming the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we know of no act attended with larger good to ourselves or others, than the formation of an undiscourageable resolution to keep the morning watch, and spend the first half hour of the day alone with God."

At first sight, this statement appears too strong. The act of receiving Christ as Savior is of such infinite consequences for eternity, and the act of claiming the Holy Spirit works such a revolution in the Christian life, that a simple thing like the morning watch hardly appears sufficiently important to be placed next to them. If, however, we think how impossible it is to live out daily life in Christ, or to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, without daily, close fellowship with God, we shall soon see the truth of the sentiment. The morning watch is the key by which the surrender to Christ and the Holy Spirit can be unceasingly and fully maintained.

To realize 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 should 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 the friend or pursuit shall always hold that place in the heart, even when other activities occupy the attention. Personal devotion to Jesus means that we allow nothing to separate us from Him in 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 if we are 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. The believer cannot stand for one moment without Christ. If we are devoted to Him, we will refuse to be content with anything less than abiding always in His love and His will.

Consider the morning watch now as the means to this great end: I want to secure absolutely the presence of Christ for the entire day, to do nothing that can interfere with it. I feel 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 inner chamber.

The link for the day between Christ and me must be renewed and firmly fastened in the morning hour. True Christianity aims at having the character of Christ so formed in us, that in our most ordinary acts His personality and disposition shall show themselves. The spirit of Christ is meant to possess us so that in our association with others, in our relaxation, in our business, it shall be second nature to act according to His will. All this can be because Christ Himself, as the Living One, lives in us.

Your purpose will especially have its influence on the spirit in which you keep the morning watch. As the grandeur 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, securing His presence for the day) possess us, we will see that the one essential thing is the fixed determination, whatever effort or self-denial it may cost, to win the prize. When studying or on the sports field, a student knows the need for vigorous will and determined purpose if he is to succeed. Christianity needs, and indeed de-serves, not less but more intense devotion. If anything, surely the love of Christ needs the whole heart.

Above everything else, it is this fixed determination to secure Christ's presence that will overcome the temptation to be unfaithful or superficial in the keeping of our pledge. It is this determination which will make the morning watch itself a mighty means of grace in strengthening character, and enabling us to say "No" to every call for self-indulgence. It is this determination which will enable us, when we enter the inner chamber and shut the door, to be there with our whole heart, ready at once for our communication with Christ. And it is

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this determination that, from the morning watch on, will become the keynote of our daily life.

The Christian who makes personal devotion to Christ his watchword, will find in the morning hour that day by day insight into his holy calling is renewed. This is the time when his will is braced to walk worthy of Christ. His faith will be rewarded by the presence of Christ waiting to meet him, and take charge of him for the day.