

## Entering the Spirit Dimension

by John Whittle

One of our most mistaken notions as Christians is that we are supposed to “do God’s work.” Although it may sound like a spiritual attitude, in fact it stems from an inordinate sense of our own self-importance. The false belief in independent self is a carry-over from our unredeemed days, and the consequences are disastrous.

Man, through “the Fall,” has put himself in the foreground in his own thinking with the illusion that he has to work through his problems and develop himself in a lonely universe.

With this outlook, the Christian feels that he has to struggle to reach certain standards. This brings him almost to despair, as he is unable to really be like Christ, even though he constantly calls for divine aid. He cannot love himself because, despite all his efforts, he is unable to meet the standard. Conflict is created, as he loves God but rejects himself because of his inadequacy—the self whom God has loved and accepted! So God starts a period of education in which He weans man from his self-dependence through sometimes painful experiences. Self-dependence is really an illusion—a carry-over from the primal downfall of the human spirit.

What has to happen is that the Christian’s false concept of himself must drastically change. He has received life and love, but he can no longer make life work through self-effort—the keeping of laws and meeting of standards. The conflict does not result from a lack of desire for the ways of God, for the most earnest and consecrated are often the ones who suffer most until the newness of life and spirit permeates and reshapes their thinking.

There is no more superb account of God bringing a person into liberation from the illusion of self than that of Moses. Here is a devoted lover of God who, nevertheless, cannot find the way. The call, his commissioning and the undeniable surrender and renunciation of Moses’ world are all there in detail, and his dedication to God’s purposes is obvious. The fact that he valued the “reproach of Christ” more highly than the best in his world makes it all the more poignant when the weight of all this could not bring him a whit nearer the accomplishment of God’s will. When Moses tried his hand at correcting the wrongs perpetrated on his brethren, God had to let His man fall flat on his face, with no divine assistance and no whispered words of encouragement.

There might just as well have been no God for Moses to serve, so completely absent was He from this scene of His servant’s endeavor! For *what* exactly had he taken these giant strides away from worldly power and prestige into this new world of his brethren’s rejection of him? Was it only to be rejected by God also, when He had precipitated the whole thing? It would not be surprising if the seeds of an attempted atheism were in the heart of Moses at that dreadful moment when he had to flee in cloud of dust in direst defeat!

Being pressed into the service of God can be a devastating affair, as many can testify, if carried on from this viewpoint of “my work for God.” Has God gone out of business? Is He still not the Worker? Jesus said, “*My Father works, and I work,*” meaning that God is the Worker and we are His manifestations. Moses mistakenly looked upon himself as one independently carrying out God’s work. He had the training, ability, and gifts, along with the renunciation of his position and the consecration of his excellent manhood to the task! But a self, even of the stature of a Moses or a Paul, cannot do God’s work. Only God does God’s work. He does it by a person who has come into right relationship with Him—one who is fitted for God to use. So much for Moses’ mistake. Now for the correction.

While God affirms man, He does not affirm man’s self-dependence. This has to be changed, for Moses, this happened after a long period of inner training and enlightenment. When he

was ready for the call of God again, he was faced with an *extraordinary* bush. The bush, burning continuously without being consumed, was the picture of the true relationship of Moses to God. It was a *duality in unity*. Only God can chase and destroy the pharaohs of evil. The truth that Moses came vividly to see was that while he had given up everything, he had still depended on Moses. Now his vision is corrected; the way life works has been found. It is rest in the midst of the most intense activity, because it is God working *through* Moses, not Moses working *for* God.

In other words, Moses entered the dimension of Spirit in which God lives *in* man, not *assists* man from some remote region. The dreadful gap caused by the fall of man has been closed by the experience of redemption which reunites all by the Spirit of God. Unity is a fact, not an earnestly-desired objective. It is Another living through me. "*For me to live is Christ living,*" says Paul. Only God living in man is Christianity; anything else is less than the desired fulfillment.

But we must not be confused by the delay or the conflicts which arise as God puts us through this educational process. We finally learn who we are and how we function, but more often than not we must pass through a protracted and painful period of life. But the fruit in the case of Moses was so gloriously apparent that we cannot but ask God to hasten in us the destruction of the illusion of the self. Compare the guilty Moses fleeing for his life after killing a man to the Moses of forty years later: a mighty leader who delivers the entire Hebrew nation by parting the Red Sea and closing it back to bury the Egyptian army! And the Red Sea was by no means the final or even the greatest accomplishment of God through Moses. He became a great redemptive figure, offering himself to God in place of the rebellious people to whom he was committed.

The individual who has come to a clear realization of this new relationship will not easily move back into a life of self-effort. A new level has been gained, the focus of life in Christ achieved. However, a word must be said about the slips into self-trust, self-love, anger, resentment, and many other things that tend to bring us low and into the bondage of temporary remorse and guilt. Thank God, we do not live in these distortions of the true relationship. They are transitory because we are sensitized by the Spirit, so that we quickly recognize them, and come back to our true self. Here again there must be a closing of the gap between awareness of the sin and the recognition that it is finished and powerless through Christ. If the sin of unbelief is added to the one already on the conscience, who can get free? No, the gap must be closed immediately, giving no time to indulge in remorse for this independent and sinful action. Renewal is immediate upon recognition and acknowledgment of the wrong, whether thought, word or deed. The grace of God's acceptance is an immediate healing of the Spirit, and continuation in the light.

Should you find yourself going down a wrong street in an unguided and self-chosen detour, remember that God is not inactive in all this! He does not stand at the street corner where you departed and wave goodbye to you as if He could not go on the trip with you! He goes with you for the express purpose of knocking your foolish head against the wall at the end of that dead-end street, and the quicker the better, so as to get some spiritual sense into your outlook. God does not stand aloof and leave us to our own devices. He is the *involved* God, the "Hound of Heaven," as Francis Thompson depicts Him in his marvelous poem. Yes, He hurries you along to the end of your exploit, and you find that love is not soft! Live, therefore, unafraid of yourself, for God is well able to take care of your deviations. He will not and cannot gloss them over, but He is with you to bring you through, to your everlasting profit.

We are to live freely in the assurance that "*we are His workmanship*" and that "*He that has begun a good work in you will perform it.*" We can rest assured that it is He living in us. We do not have to "find Him" or invite Him to be with us. We *affirm* His presence—we do not wonder if He is there. As someone else has said, "I awake in the green light of His

assured presence and go in that, only stopping to consider what should be done when I see that the red light has appeared." We live in the green; the red is there in case we go off-beam at any point. But to live in constant apprehension of the red is a dreadful distraction and frustration. We are intended to live a full, spontaneous, and restful life, regarding the next step to be God's will, unless he checks us. Surely God is great enough to check you effectively!

A flood of light came to me from the words "*Work out your own salvation . . . for it is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure*" (Phil. 2:12,13). My working, therefore, is His working in me, both in the realm of willing and acting! There is nothing in life outside these two realms. Willing and doing is the *all* of life. Therefore, we can live boldly in this restful assurance. There will always be a willingness to recognize when we have gotten in the way with some attempt to help God out. But we do not live in constant fear that this self-dependency is going to express itself. This sort of self-consciousness comes from an overconcern with our own perfection. Let us instead believe in God's perfection, expressed through us.

So God's invitation to us is to rest in Him. As we do, the confusion of believing in a mixed self gives place to the clear understanding that it is He who works in us—living in and through us as wholly united persons.