

SFA Foreword

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STEPS TO CHRIST

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TO
CHRIST

BY
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CONSECRATION

God's promise is "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:13.

The whole heart must be yielded to God, or the change can never be wrought in us by which we are to be restored to his likeness. By nature we are alienated from God. The Holy Spirit describes our condition in such words as these: "Dead in trespasses and sins," "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint," "no soundness in it." We are held fast in the snare of Satan; "taken captive by him at his will." Ephesians 2:1; Isaiah 1:5, 6; 2 Timothy 2:26. God desires to heal us, to set us free. But since this requires an entire transformation, a renewing of our whole nature, we must yield ourselves wholly to him.

The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, requires a struggle; but the soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in holiness.

The government of God is not, as Satan would make it appear, founded upon a blind submission, an unreasoning control. It appeals to the intellect and the conscience. "Come now, and let us reason together," Isaiah 1:18, is the Creator's invitation to the beings he has made. God does not force the will of his creatures. He can not accept an homage that is not willingly and intelligently given. A mere forced submission would prevent all real development of mind or character; it would make man a mere automaton. Such is not the purpose of the Creator. He desires that man, the crowning work of his creative power, shall reach the highest possible development. He sets before us the height of blessing to which he desires to bring us, through his grace. He invites us to give ourselves to him, that he may work his will in us. It remains for us to choose whether we will be set free from the bondage of sin, to share the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

In giving ourselves to God, we must necessarily give up all that would separate us from him. Hence the Saviour says, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath he can not be my disciple." Luke 14:33. Whatever shall draw away the heart from God must be given up. Mammon is the idol of many. The love of money, the desire for wealth, is the golden chain that binds them to Satan. Reputation and worldly honor are worshipped by another class. The life of selfish ease and freedom from responsibility is the idol of others. But these slavish bands must be broken. We cannot be half the Lord's and half the world's. We are not God's children unless we are such entirely. There are those who profess to serve God, while they rely upon their own efforts to obey his law, to form a right character, and secure salvation. Their hearts are not moved by any deep sense of the love of Christ, but they seek to perform the duties of the Christian life as that which God requires of them in order to gain heaven. Such religion is worth nothing. When Christ dwells in the heart, the soul will be so filled with his love, with the joy of communion with him, that it will cleave to him; and in the contemplation of him, self will be forgotten. Love to Christ will be the spring of action.

Those who feel the constraining love of God do not ask how little may be given, to meet the requirements of God; they do not ask for the lowest standard, but aim at perfect conformity to the will of their Redeemer. With earnest desire they yield all, and manifest an interest proportionate to the value of the object which they seek. A profession of Christ without this deep love, is mere talk, dry formality, and heavy drudgery.

Do you feel that it is too great a sacrifice to yield all to Christ? Ask yourself the question, "What has Christ given for me?" The Son of God gave all--life and love and suffering--for our redemption. And can it be that we, the unworthy objects of so great love, will withhold our hearts from him? Every moment of our lives we have been partakers of the blessings of his grace, and for this very reason we can not fully realize the depths of ignorance and misery from which we have been saved. Can we look upon him whom our sins have pierced, and yet be willing to do despite to all his love and sacrifice? In view of the infinite humiliation of the Lord of glory, shall we murmur because we can enter into life only through conflict and self-abasement?

The inquiry of many a proud heart is, "Why need I go in penitence and humiliation before I can have the assurance of my acceptance with God?" I point you to Christ. He was sinless, and more than this, he was the Prince of heaven; but in man's behalf he became sin for the race. "He was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." Isaiah 53:12.

But what do we give up, when we give all? A sin-polluted heart for Jesus to purify, to cleanse by his own blood, and to save by his matchless love. And yet men think it is hard to give up all! I am ashamed to hear it spoken of, ashamed to write it.

God does not require us to give up anything that it is for our best interest to retain. In all that he does, he has the well-being of his children in view. Would that all who have not chosen Christ might realize that he has something vastly better to offer them than they are seeking for themselves. Man is doing the greatest injury and injustice to his own soul when he thinks and acts contrary to the will of God. No real joy can be found in the path forbidden by him who knows what is best, and who plans for the good of his creatures. The path of transgression is the path of misery and destruction.

It is a mistake to entertain the thought that God is pleased to see his children suffer. All heaven is interested in the happiness of man. Our Heavenly Father does not close the avenues of joy to any of his creatures. The divine requirements call upon us to shun those indulgences that would bring suffering and disappointment, that would close to us the door of happiness and heaven. The world's Redeemer accepts men as they are, with all their wants, imperfections, and weaknesses; and he will not only cleanse from sin and grant redemption through his blood, but will satisfy the heart-longing of all who consent to wear his yoke, to bear his burden. It is his purpose to impart peace and rest to all who come to him for the bread of life. He requires us to perform only those duties that will lead our steps to heights of bliss to which the disobedient can never attain. The true, joyous life of the soul is to have Christ formed within, the hope of glory.

Many are inquiring, "*How* am I to make the surrender of myself to God?" You

desire to give yourself to him, but you are weak in moral power, in slavery to doubt, and controlled by the habits of your life of sin. Your promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. You cannot control your thoughts, your impulses, your affections. The knowledge of your broken promises and forfeited pledges weakens your confidence in your own sincerity, and causes you to feel that God cannot accept you; but you need not despair. What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can *choose* to serve him. You can give him your will, he will then work in you to will and to do according to his good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon him, your thoughts will be in harmony with him.

Desires for goodness and holiness are right as far as they go; but if you stop here, they will avail nothing. Many will be lost while hoping and desiring to be Christians. They do not come to the point of yielding the will to God. They do not now *choose* to be Christians.

Through the right exercise of the will, an entire change may be made in your life. By yielding up your will to Christ, you ally yourself with the power that is above all principalities and powers. You will have strength from above to hold you steadfast, and thus through constant surrender to God you will be enabled to live the new life, even the life of faith.