

OCCUPIED WITH THE LORD HIMSELF: ADDENDUM

by H.H. Snell

*A collection of articles and writings by H.H. Snell from Occupied With the Lord Himself:
Addendum, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.*

2 Chapters

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John 20:19-23

Allusion has been made to the great importance of our having clear knowledge of what the Lord's mind is concerning us in these closing days; and I have read this Scripture, in connection with the latter part of the epistle to the assembly in Laodicea, which has already been brought before us, to call attention to the fact that during the whole period of the Lord's absence, His own ministry is characterized by the presentation of Himself. We see here that Christ began His ministry to His disciples after His resurrection by presenting Himself, and we know also that he opened to them the Scriptures concerning Himself; and in His last address, which was to the Laodiceans, He knocks and calls to any faithful one to open the door to Himself, for He wants to feast with any who will open the door to Him. During the whole of the time of His absence we know that the Holy Ghost is here to testify of Christ to our souls, to take of His things and show unto us. So one thing is perfectly certain that it is the Lord's mind that our hearts should be occupied with Himself.

A precious thought here for our souls is that the Lord looks after us, cares for us, and seeks to make us happy in Himself. It is not our looking up to Him, important and blessed as it is, but He opens His heart to us, and would have us know what His thoughts about us are, and that we are constant objects of His active ministry while He is in heaven and we are still in the world. We must not forget that there is such a thing as being interested in truth without being taken up with Christ, who is the truth; but it is assuredly His will that we should "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Through these precious Scriptures we are able to look a little into our Lord's heart. It was only a short time before this precious scene we have just read that he had died upon the cross. Men hated Him without a cause. They perseveringly cried out "Away with Him," "Crucify Him," so that when He was taken down from the cross, and laid in a sepulcher, the world seemed to have got rid of Him, and all appeared to be over. Not so, however, for He rose from among the dead. He came out of the sepulcher in the power of resurrection. He was on new ground, outside the world, the other side of death. Now, what does Christ do? Whose company does He seek? Who on earth are the objects of His solicitude? Who? His heart turns to the few poor disciples He had left behind. He seeks not the rich, the noble, nor the mighty; but he seeks out the timid, faltering disciples. They were the objects of His affection and care. He found them sad and terrified, or shut into a room for fear of the Jews, yet He did not leave them until they were full of joy and gladness; and the way He effected it was by revealing Himself, and expounding unto to them the Scriptures concerning Himself.

The blessed Lord having found His distressed disciples, first of all establishes them on the true ground of peace—His own accomplished work on the cross — He said,

peace be unto you; and when He had so said He shewed unto them His hands and His side.

We have here the assurance of peace based upon His own work on the cross, as His hands and side show, and brought to us by His own infallible word, "Peace be unto you." Having Himself made peace, He does not tell them to look at themselves, their feelings, or doings, but at Himself — "His hands and His side" — and to rest on His word, "Peace be unto you."

Thus they were drawn away from themselves, their fears, and their circumstances, to Himself — the One who had loved them and given Himself for them. And while they were thus contemplating Him, and all the wondrous love He had manifested toward them in having suffered for their sins, the Just for the unjust, while they gazed upon Him as the mighty Conqueror of death and Satan, in rising from among the dead, while they were thus engaged with Him what was the result ? We are told,

Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.

They were made very happy in Him. Thus, while we see that the work of Christ is the ground of peace, We also learn that the person of Christ is the true source of joy.

Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.

This is a precious secret for our hearts. Some of the Lord's people imagine that they cannot be "glad" as long as they are in circumstances of sorrow, but this is not true. The Lord did not alter the circumstances of those disciples who were "shut in for fear of the Jews;" but He showed them Himself, and this raised them above their circumstances, so that. they were "glad when they saw the Lord." Again, in the first chapter of Peter's first epistle, you see saints in great trial, and through persecution scattered abroad, homeless, and it may be houseless, friendless, and in other sorrowful experiences, but looking to Him whom having not seen they loved, they "rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory," without any part of their sorrowful circumstances having been altered.

Well, indeed, it is to be so taken up with the Lord Himself as shall enable us to "Rejoice in the Lord always!"

Then, observe, when these disciples were thus established by our blessed Lord on the true ground of peace, and made happy in Himself' He then sends them out into service

As the Father, has sent me, even so send I you.

Thus we see that every believer has a mission. The Lord keeps us here for His service. He gives us each our work If any believer wants to know what his line of service is, he can only have it from the Lord Himself. Thus happy in the Lord, he goes forth as sent by the Lord. In this way, true service connects us with the Lord Himself, and we prove that His yoke is easy and His burden light.

Then we are told that Christ

breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.

The Lord being now alive again from the dead, in resurrection life and power, communicated to His disciples what could not have been given before, risen life — life in the Spirit, — by breathing on {into} them. I need not say this is not the coming of the Holy Ghost, the other Comforter, because

after this they were told by our Lord, in the first of Acts, that they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

There is another point of great interest in this Scripture, it is Christ assuring His disciples (not apostles) that He will be so with us here, that,

Whosoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain they are retained.

The Lord said something like it in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew. Speaking of church discipline, He said,

If he neglect to hear the assembly, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven . . . For whosoever two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them {Matt. 18:18, 20}

Now what seems so sweet in these statements is that the blessed Lord so identifies Himself with us in our service to His name, that He will confirm and put His seal on acts of discipline; and in this way so binding or loosing, remitting or retaining sins, as to ratify in heaven what we, as gathered in {gathered together unto} His name and by the power of His Spirit, may do on earth for His name's sake. It is very solemn, but it surely brings the Lord in His great love very near to us, and in matters often very sorrowful to our hearts. I need not say there is no idea here of priestly absolution, nor of any absolution as to justification and eternal life.

The more we know of the Lord Himself, and His love and care for His own, the more will He become the satisfying object of our hearts. And this true enjoyment of Christ, who is the holy and the true, can alone keep us, I believe, from drifting into Laodicea. We are enjoined elsewhere to look away from other objects unto Jesus, to consider Him, to abide in Him, for surely Christ Himself is the true object of faith. To the most failing He knocks, and faith opens the door to Him; and observe, Christ takes the initiative, and desires our fellowship. He says,

I will come into him and sup with him, and he with Me.

Blessed be His name, this is His desire toward us even in the worst state of things ecclesiastically. What love, yea, what patient, matchless grace !

Is it not clear, then, beloved brethren, that it is our Lord's mind that however failing be the state of things spiritually round about us, that we should be individually taken up with the Lord Himself, and be learning increasingly of Him? And is it not also clear, that, however important other matters may appear to be, we cannot be according to His mind if we not living by faith upon the Lord , and drawing our help and blessing from Him? We may be assured that nothing will make up for lack of personal intercourse with Christ. May our hearts, then, be more and more entering into His perfections and love which not only save us from ten thousand snares, but keep us happy under the most trying circumstances, and make the Lord's coming our bright and blessed hope!

The Bible Herald, 1877, pp. 101-106.

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