

Fourth Letter

by Brother Lawrence

Brother Lawrence encourages believers to deepen their practice of God's presence for spiritual fulfillment and readiness for eternity.

Scripture: Psalm 16:11, Psalm 119:2, 2 Corinthians 4:18, Philippians 4:8, James 4:8

Topics: "Practicing Presence", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

Brother Lawrence, in writing of himself as a third person, encourages his correspondent to press on to a fuller practicing of the Presence of God. He shares how he has spent over forty years in religion, always striving to be with God in all thoughts and actions out of pure love and reverence for Him. Brother Lawrence describes the continual joys and divine assistance he receives from being in God's presence, even in the midst of his daily activities. He emphasizes the importance of maintaining a constant awareness of God's presence, allowing His graces to flow abundantly into the soul.

Transcript

Writes of himself as of a third person, and encourages his correspondent to press on to fuller practising of the Presence of God.

I HAVE taken this opportunity to communicate to you the sentiments of one of our society concerning the admirable effects and continual assistances which he receives from the presence of GOD. Let you and me both profit by them. You must know, his continual care has been, for above forty years past that he has spent in religion, to be always with GOD; and to do nothing, say nothing, and think nothing which may displease Him; and this without any other view than purely for the love of Him, and because He deserves infinitely more.

He is now so accustomed to that Divine presence, that he receives from it continual succours upon all occasions. For about thirty years, his soul has been filled with joys so continual, and sometimes so great, that he is forced to use means to moderate them, and to hinder their appearing outwardly. If sometimes he is a little too much absent from that Divine presence, GOD presently makes Himself to be felt in his soul to recall him; which often happens when he is most engaged in his outward business: he answers with exact fidelity to these inward drawings, either by an elevation of his heart towards GOD, or by a meek and fond regard to Him, or by such words as love forms upon these occasions; as for instance, My GOD, here I am all devoted to Thee: LORD, make me according to Thy heart.

And then it seems to him (as in effect he feels it) that this GOD of love, satisfied with such few words, reposes again, and rests in the depth and centre of his soul. The experience of these things gives him such an assurance that GOD is always in the depth or bottom of his soul, and renders him incapable of doubting it, upon any account whatever. Judge by this what content and satisfaction he enjoys, while he continually finds in himself so great a treasure: he is no longer in an anxious search after it, but has it open before him, and may take what he pleases of it.

He complains much of our blindness; and cries often that we are to be pitied who content ourselves with so little. GOD, saith he, has infinite treasure to bestow, and we take up with a little sensible devotion which passes in a moment. Blind as we are, we hinder GOD, and stop the current of His graces. But when He finds a soul penetrated with a lively faith, He pours into it His graces and favours plentifully; there they flow like a torrent, which, after being forcibly stopped against its ordinary course, when it has found a passage, spreads itself with impetuosity and abundance.

Yes, we often stop this torrent, by the little value we set upon it. But let us stop it no more: let us enter into ourselves and break down the bank which hinders it. Let us make way for grace; let us redeem the lost time, for perhaps we have but little left; death follows us close, let us be well prepared for it; for we die but once, and a miscarriage there is irretrievable. I say again, let us enter into ourselves. The time presses: there is no room for delay; our souls are at stake.

I believe you have taken such effectual measures, that you will not be surprised. I commend you for it, it is the one thing necessary: we must, nevertheless, always work at it, because not to advance, in the spiritual life, is to go back. But those who have the gale of the HOLY SPIRIT go forward even in sleep. If the vessel of our soul is still tossed with winds and storms, let us awake the LORD, who reposes in it, and He will quickly calm the sea. I have taken the liberty to impart to you these good sentiments, that you may compare them with your own: they will serve again to kindle and inflame them, if by misfortune (which GOD forbid, for it would be indeed a great misfortune) they should be, though never so little, cooled.

Let us then both recall our first fervours. Let us profit by the example and the sentiments of this brother, who is little known of the world, but known of GOD, and extremely caressed by Him. I will pray for you; do you pray instantly for me, who am yours in our LORD.

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