

The Sixth Mile-Stone

by Daniel Steele

Daniel Steele's sermon reflects on the importance of continuous testimony and the richness of God's grace in the believer's life.

Scripture: Psalm 34:1, Psalm 96:2, Philippians 3:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, 1 Peter 1:8

Topics: "Christian Experience", "Gratitude To God"

Description

Daniel Steele preaches about the continuous need for testimonies and praises to the Lord Jesus, emphasizing the importance of ongoing gratitude and love for the Savior. He highlights the progression in Christian experience, the refinement of pleasures through Christ's love, and the constant thirst for a deeper relationship with God. Steele shares his personal journey of transformation, from being a servant to becoming the bride of Christ, and the joy found in proclaiming Jesus as mighty to save. He encourages believers to seek a life of faith, victory over sin, and complete devotion to Christ, while expressing sympathy for doubting souls and nominal Christians.

Transcript

ON this ever-memorable day, November 17th, 1876, I pass the sixth mile-stone in the highway of holiness. Should I refrain from the utterance of praise to the Lord Jesus, the King of Glory, to God the Father, and to the blessed Comforter, the stones beneath my feet would cry out. It may interest no one to listen to my thanksgiving anthem, yet I must pour it out into the ear of my adorable Saviour whether men will bear or whether they will forbear. The great Physician who hath wrought in me a perfect cure shall have my testimonial as long as I have a tongue to utter or a hand to write and rewrite the wondrous story. Why not be content with past testimonies? Where is the wife who is content with last year's avowals of love whispered into the ear of her husband? If she is to be found on the earth, you will hear no song as you near her threshold, you will be illumined with no smile when you come into her presence. For there is no joy where there is no love, and love begins to die when it becomes dumb. The wife who lives this year without renewed confessions of tender affection will be found next year in the court-house suing for a divorce. Six years ago my soul became the bride of Christ by an inexpressibly blissful union. Was I an enemy of Jesus up to that time? I was during twenty-eight years a servant, a friend, and a son. There is a gradation of amicable relations between an enemy and a spouse. Small Christian philosophers usually overlook this fact when they assert that there is no sharply defined transition in Christian experience after justification.

Another reason why continued testimonials to the mighty Healer of my soul are demanded is because each successive year demonstrates more and more clearly the completeness and permanency of the cure. Time magnifies the keeping power of Christ. Testimony on this point must be constant, lest silence be misinterpreted. If another apology for repeated testimony by the same witness is needed, let it be found in the sad fact that such testimonies to the perfect saving power of our Immanuel are relatively few. The vast mass of Christian professors, in the words of Bishop Thomson, "like the rivers emptying into the Arctic Sea, are frozen over at the mouth." These things ought not so to be.

Jesus is God!

If on the Earth

This, blessed faith decay,

More tender must our love become,

More plentiful our praise."

Finally, to all my friends disposed to criticise the publication to the heartless world of the sacred secrets of the heart's intercourse with Jesus, the celestial Bridegroom, let me say that I find the most exquisite delight in exalting the King of glory, and, with the Virgin Mother of my Lord, warbling my Magnificat in the ear of the universe. Luke i. 46-55. While some seek for joy in quest of gold, or fame, or lore, let me crave the boon I most desire on earth, the privilege of proclaiming trumpet-tongued, Jesus, mighty to save. For the benefit of all who are living where so many years of my own Christian experience were spent, in a dry and thirsty land, let me say that there is a "place of broad river; and streams," where

"Grace not in rills, but in cataracts, rolls."

From this goodly land I have no desire to return to the Sahara from which I have happily escaped; yet I will send to "my comrades in the wilderness" frequent reports of my explorations of this new continent. Everything here is on a magnificent scale: --

There's a wideness in God's mercy,

Like the wideness of the sea."

There is a constant sense of the immensity of God's love -- an ocean poured down upon the earth in the unspeakable gift of Jesus Christ, and in the boundless provisions of grace, culminating in the gift of the abiding Comforter and Sanctifier. Blessed Jesus!

"There's not a craving in the mind

Thou dost not meet and still;

There's not a wish the heart can have

Which Thou dost not fulfill."

This view of the riches of grace in Christ Jesus awakens the liveliest commiseration for the thirsty multitudes of worldlings, and the scarcely less pitiable host of nominal Christians, vainly digging in the sand for a few drops of brackish water, while whole Lake Superiors of sweet, cool and lively waters are

flashing in the sun all around as far as the eye can reach.

"Would that they knew what Jesus is,

And what untold abyss,

Lies in love's simple forwardness

Of more than earthly bliss!"

Thus the soul has its joyful and its sorrowful side; the side turned toward Jesus is a hemisphere of light and warmth; the side which looks out toward the countless procession of the unsaved, tramping ceaselessly down to death, is a hemisphere of shade. "Sorrowful yet always rejoicing."

I wish to testify most emphatically that the love of Christ shed abroad in my heart by the abiding Comforter has wonderfully refined and intensified all lawful pleasures. Jesus drops unspeakable sweetness into every cup of earthly bliss. This unexpected heightening of innocent enjoyments was hidden from me for many years in the unappropriated promise that Christ would "do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." For six years there has been not only a new heaven above, but a new earth beneath, strewn with flowers, and filled with springs bubbling with the purest joys.

The Society here is very select. Faith, Hope, Peace, Quietude, Resignation, Victory, and Assurance here make their constant homes, while Joy, Gladness, Rejoicing, and Exultation have their summer residence here, and the summer lasts nearly all the year. The Italian atmosphere of this region is too transparent for Doubt to live in. Guilt and Fear and Worry and Discontent have never migrated to this cheerful clime. Temptation makes an occasional incursion, but he acts as if he feels that he is an outlaw.

There are old residents of this country who are by no means favorites with me, and I cut their acquaintance as much as possible, such as Ignorance, Forgetfulness, Misjudgment, Error, Inadvertence, Failure, and a large family by the name of Infirmary. In fact, I have repeatedly cast my vote for their exclusion, but they insist that they have a right to remain, since no statute lies against them. They say that they are grossly wronged when confounded with an odious foreigner called Sin, who slightly resembles them in external appearance, but is wholly different in moral character. I must confess that a close observation, extended through several years, demonstrates the justice of this plea. Hence I live in peace with these old citizens, but do not delight in their society.

But I hear some one inquire, "Have you perfect satisfaction? Is every craving of your soul filled?" Yes. No. My present capacity for the love of God is filled, but so precious is the treasure that I am coveting a vessel a thousand times larger. Hence with Charles Wesley I daily exclaim: --

"Insatiate to this spring I fly;

I drink, and yet am ever dry;

Ah! who against Thy charms is proof?

Ah! who that loves can love enough?"

Hence the paradoxical condition of satiety and hunger.

This must ever be the experience of a being capable of progress. In this respect I count myself as well off in my heaven below as I shall be in my heaven above. Dr. Doddridge had a clear insight into this subject when he wrote thus to a friend "To allow yourself deliberately to sit down satisfied with any imperfect attainments in religion, and to look upon a more confirmed and improved state of it as what you do not desire -- nay, as what you secretly resolve that you will not pursue -- is one of the most fatal signs we can well imagine, that you are an entire stranger to the first principles of it."

Almost daily Fletcher's prayer is on my lips, "Lord, enlarge the vessel.

"With gentle swiftness lead me on,

Dear Christ, to see Thy face;

And, meanwhile, in my narrow heart

O, make Thyself more space!"

With what wonderful delight do I preach the unsearchable riches of Christ! The stairs that lead to my pulpit are more inviting to my feet than the ivory steps of earth's mightiest throne. I am in full sympathy with Payson's declaration, that he had rather a man would eat his dinner for him than preach his sermon for him.

Especially am I drawn toward the members of the Church of God, multitudes of whom need some one to travail in birth again for them, until Christ be formed within them. Nominal Christians are the greatest obstacle to the advance of the kingdom of heaven. I long to show unto them the beauty of Christ in such a light that they will be drawn into entire devotion to Him. Doubting souls awaken the deepest sympathy in me, having myself long suffered from this cause, until Jesus wrought a complete cure. To such I have a special mission.

"I know not what it is to doubt

My heart is ever gay."

I have made the great discovery that all the foundations laid in the Bible are for faith. In that whole blessed volume there is not so much as one peg to hang a legitimate doubt upon. Legitimate, did I say? There is no such thing possible in the case of an honest man who owns a New Testament. By an honest man I mean one who is willing to follow wherever the truth leads. Doubt has its root in an unwilling heart.

"But what is your experience," says one, "respecting the possibility of living year after year without condemnation for sin?" To glorify Jesus, I must say that my soul a witness is, that the petition in the Te Deum Laudamus, "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin," is a prayer for a blessing attainable for three hundred and sixty-five days in the year, and in leap year three hundred and sixty-six. Why should it be deemed impossible for God to keep the fully trusting soul?

Is it strange that a soul all aglow with love to the Lawgiver should feel no inclination to violate the law? Perfect love is an infallible cure of sinning. Hence it is a synonym for entire sanctification. "But do you not have many evil thoughts come into your head?" A thousand thoughts of evil come in and go out again. "In all this Job sinned not." The mental conception of an evil act is not sinful. Sin is conceived in the voluntary nature. Rev. Joseph Cook, in one of his recent Monday lectures in Tremont Temple, asserted that sin is

known by intuition, that all intuitive ideas are self-evident, necessary, and universal, and that the voluntary element in sin, as an act, has these three characteristics. To this statement we must heartily subscribe. The will, the capital power of the soul, may be so energized and sanctified as to stand as a flint against sin. In this sublime attitude stood that strongest human will, the will of the Man of Nazareth. Thus victorious may all His followers stand, "kept by the power of God through faith." "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

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