

The Leisure of Faith

by George H. Morrison

True faith leads to a life of tranquility, trust, and patience, and frees us from the sin of hasty judgments and the pressure of modern life.

Scripture: Psalm 46:10, Isaiah 28:16, John 21:15, Galatians 6:9, 2 Peter 3:8

Topics: "Faith And Trust", "Christian Living"

Description

George H. Morrison preaches about the connection between the modern city's haste and the decline of faith, emphasizing that the lack of restfulness is rooted in the lack of trust. He highlights the importance of distinguishing between strenuous speed and the spirit of haste, encouraging Christians to be 'unhasting but unresting' in their pursuits. Morrison also discusses the dangers of hasty judgments, the temptation to hurry to enjoy life's pleasures, the need to wait patiently for results, and the slowness of God's dealings with humanity due to His belief in mankind's potential.

Transcript

I THINK WE SHALL ALL agree that in the life of our modern cities there is recognizable the note of haste. One has only to watch one of our crowded streets to detect the pressure at the back of life. Life is more urgent than it used to be, the tranquility of an older day is passing. The stream had still and shadowed reaches in it once, but today it hurries forward very swiftly.

Now it is notable that with that greater haste there is found, without any question, a lesser faith. There is a certain shrinking of the faculty of faith in the organism of our complex life. I am no pessimist, and I trust that none of you are. Life, for all its sorrow, is too real, too deep, too rich, to write that name of failure on its brow. But the most cheerful optimist cannot be blind to this, that faith, and reverence which is the child of faith, are not conspicuous on our modern cities; and the singular thing is, that with that decline of faith we should have witnessed the increase of hurry. Did you ever think that these features were connected? The Bible affirms it in the clearest manner. You say that the absence of restfulness in modern life springs from the fierce struggle for existence. But the Bible goes a great deal deeper than that: the want of rest is rooted in want of trust. Depend upon it, he that believeth not is always in danger of feverish impatience. Depend upon it, that to the end of time, he that believeth shall not make haste.

Of course, it is very necessary for clear thinking to distinguish the haste of our text from strenuous speed. Every one who is at all in earnest about things feels the push and the pull to get his life-work done; but a strenuous and resolute forwardness such as that is very different from the spirit of haste. "Unhasting but

unresting" should be the motto on every Christian's coat of arms. It is impossible that a true Christian should be a sluggard. Such new conceptions of life have dawned on him. Duty, service, and the building up of character are so expanded when God has touched the soul, that as with the stirring music of the trumpet we are called to redeem the time because the days are evil. But the man who hastes never redeems the time. You never redeem anything by hurrying. And it is of that impatience, so closely akin to fickleness--and an age of hurry is extraordinarily fickle--it is of that impatience which knows no inward quietude, and which robs life of its music and its march, that the prophet is speaking here. He that believeth shall run and not be weary. He that believeth shall press toward the mark. He that believeth God to his tardy feet has promised to lend the swiftness of the roe. But in spite of that--no, because of that--he that believeth shall not make haste.

Hasty Judgments

I like to apply our text to hasty judgments. He that believeth shall not make haste to judge. It is amazing how rashly and how recklessly we pass severe judgments on each other. There is nothing harder than suspense of judgment in our daily intercourse with men and women. Even the kindest are in danger of prejudging, and those who are not kindly do so constantly. Now do you see how we are to escape that sin? Do you observe the secret of suspended judgment? It is not a matter of caution after all, for he that believeth shall not make haste to judge. In all disparagement there is a lack of faith. In every hasty summing up of character what is really revealed is our own want of trust. If we only believed in our brother a little more, if we only credited the divine within him; if we only realized that under the outward man there is a hidden man of the heart striving and struggling, we should be readier to think more kindly than we do. I want you to believe that under all disguise there is a spark of the divine fire in every heart. I want you to believe that God is not far away even from the life that you and I call godless. He that believeth in the love and patience of Heaven, and in the image of God, defaced but not destroyed, will not make haste to judge.

Enjoy Life's Pleasures

Again, I think our text is full of meaning for those who are in a great hurry to enjoy, and perhaps the haste to be rich and taste life's pleasures was never so markedly felt as it is now. It is always a difficult thing to wait. David was never more saintly in his life than just when he waited patiently for God. But today, when the means of enjoyment are so multiplied and the music of the world is doubly sweet, the monotony of duty has become doubly irksome. It is very hard to be bound to that desk all day, while the golden hours of youth are flying so quickly. It is very hard from morning till weary night to be standing behind the counter in the store, when life might be so rich and many-colored if only there were a little liberty and leisure.

Has not one of our own poets, himself a minister of the gospel, sung, "Gather the rosebuds while ye may, old time is still a-flying?" Hence springs a certain rebellion at our lot, a craving for immediate satisfaction; a bitter willingness to forget the morrow if only we can snatch some pleasure now; and to all men and women who are tempted so--and multitudes are tempted so today-- comes the stern word of the eternal God, "He that believeth shall not make haste." The modern catechism asks, "What is man's chief end?" and the answer it gives is "Man's chief end is to enjoy life." But the older catechism was wiser when it answered, "Man's chief end is to enjoy God," and God can only be enjoyed, be sure of it, in the sphere of duty and along the line of work. Outside of that, the presence of God is lost, and the cup is always bitter when that is lost. Life has not been given us to enjoy, life has been given us to use; and I fancy you can use it better where you are, than if you had your own sweet will tomorrow. However grey and cheerless duty is, a man must trample down his moods and do it. Then, in God's time, far sooner than we dream the

richest joys will reach us unexpectedly, and life will unfold itself, out of the mists, into a thing of beauty and a joy forever. He that believeth can say, "Get thee behind me, Satan." He that believeth will not make haste.

Wait to See Results

Again, I keep whispering this text within my heart, when I observe our common haste to see results. The man who believes in himself and in his message is never in a hurry to see results. It is always a mark of inferior capacity to be in a feverish hurry to be recognized. No genius ever goes to sleep with the wild hope that tomorrow he may wake up famous. Genius is sublimely confident and easy; with the touch of God-given power comes sweet assurance. What I feel is that if the church of Christ really believes in her mission and her message, she must not be feverish about results. I think it is more often faithlessness than faith that clamors for immediate statistics. The purposes of Heaven are very long, and God fulfills Himself in many ways. The soul of man is infinitely delicate, and you can never tabulate the powers that touch it. Be not weary in well-doing. You see no fruit? So be it. Remember that with your Lord a thousand years are as a single day. He that believeth is strong to sow in tears, but he shall not make haste to reap in joy.

God Never Hurries

Now when we turn to the dealings of God with men there is one thing that impresses us very deeply. It is the slowness of all God's procedure in guiding and blessing our humanity. God never hurries; He moves with infinite ease. He takes an age to perfect one of His thoughts within us. What I might call the leisureliness of providence is written large on human history. Think of the weary discipline of Israel till they had grasped the mighty truth that God is one. Remember how men had to wait for centuries before the world was ready for Christ Jesus. Reflect that nineteen centuries have gone, and we seem only to be touching the hem of Christ's garment yet, and you will apprehend the leisureliness of heaven. In all God's dealings with the human race, and in all God's dealings with the human soul, there is purpose, urgency, infinite persistence; but I think no man will detect hurry there.

Now take our text and let it illuminate that thought. It is because God believes in man that He refuses to hurry his development. If there were no potentiality in human nature, no promise of a divine ideal at its core, a single season might be enough to ripen it, as it ripens the corn that rustles in the field. There are creatures that dance and die all in one summer's evening; and a summer's evening is long enough for them. But a thousand evenings are not enough for man, there is such promise in the sorriest life. When I think how long a little child is helpless, absolutely dependent on another's love; when I think of the slow stages of our growth up the steep slope to moral and spiritual manhood; when I remember that every vision that beckons us, and every hope that fires us, and every truth that illuminates and saves us, was won out of the riches of God, through the discipline and the chastisement of ages, I feel that the belief of God in man is wonderful: He hath believed in us, and therefore hath made no haste. We speak a great deal about our faith in God. Never forget God's glorious faith in us.

And when I pass to the earthly life of Jesus, I am arrested by the same procedure there. He was leisurely, just because He trusted men. He did not despair of them when they were backward; He did not reject them because they were slow to learn. When He had chosen a heart, He trained it with infinite patience, and just because He believed in it, He would not hurry. Compare His treatment of Judas with that of Peter. Christ did not believe in the sincerity of Judas. He knew him to be a hypocrite, and a traitor, and "what

thou doest do quickly"--haste, get done with it! But Peter! Christ thoroughly believed in Peter. He saw the possibilities in Peter. He knew that underneath the sand, driven by the wind, there was bed-rock upon which to build a church. So Peter was allowed to go out into the night and to weep bitter tears under the look of Christ. There was no hurry. Let him weep his eyes out. Jesus believed in Peter, and let him alone. And Jesus was scourged and hung upon the cross, and lay in the grave, and rose on the third day, and the hours seemed endless to the fallen disciple, yet no word of comfort came from his Lord.

Then at long last, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." The wheels of the chariot of Christ had tarried, just because He trusted that great heart of Peter.

Thus we come back to where we started from--the freedom from feverishness that is a mark of faith. Do you believe? Then the peace that passes understanding shall keep your heart and mind through Jesus Christ. Do you believe? Let me use a little illustration that may help to make clearer what I mean.

I notice that in these flimsy apartments which are being built in various quarters of the city, there is a great hurry to get all finished by the scheduled time. There is a feverish eagerness apparent to have everything ready and complete by Pentecost Sunday. But the old cathedrals were not build that way. The old cathedrals took hundreds of years to build. Men lived and died, and handed on the work, and there was plenty of time, for was not the work God's? And every finial and turret was perfected, for the builders said the "eyes of God were there." Are you not temples of the living God? Shall not the work go on through all eternity? Be zealous, strenuous! Give thy whole heart to things! "But he that believeth shall not make haste."

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