

The Kingdom of God Is Within You

by James Blaine Chapman

True happiness and fulfillment come from within, and can be achieved by conquering our own minds and passions, and pursuing true riches and spiritual accomplishments.

Scripture: Proverbs 16:32, Matthew 6:19, Mark 8:36, Luke 12:15, Romans 14:17, 1 Timothy 6:10

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Kingdom Living"

Description

James Blaine Chapman preaches about the innate sense of insufficiency and incompleteness in man, highlighting the acquiring tendency to reach out to external things and the temptation to be consumed by material possessions, earthly glory, and fleshly pleasures. He emphasizes that man's instincts and cravings are not evil in themselves, but can lead to monstrosities when influenced by depravity and misdirection. Chapman stresses the importance of seeking 'true riches' that are measured by spiritual accomplishments, conquering and ruling over one's own heart and life, and finding true satisfaction in the peace that comes from serving God.

Transcript

The infant man seems to have an instinctive sense of insufficiency and incompleteness. He holds fast to any support upon which his hands chance to fall and gives the clearest evidence that he is moved by the sense of his own helplessness. And, indeed, how very dependent he is! How little he knows! His body is naked and his mind is blank, his hands are empty and his moral senses are dormant.

But the infant man is possessed of an "acquiring tendency." He reaches out to things outside of himself. And there are very few worth while things that come to him of their own volition; he must "fight if he would win" even in the battle of existence itself.

The infant man recognizes that he is a born king. He feels within his soul the creature's answer to the Creator's commandment to "subdue the earth and rule over it."

The material world is the first territory demanding conquest with which the infant man comes in contact, and here, also, is the basis for his first great temptation--the temptation to be chiefly concerned with the things of the time and sense world. Every one, must spend a great deal of his total time upon this earth in looking after the material needs. One third of our life is spent in sleep. Another third is spent in honest toil, if we really merit material existence. Then a considerable portion of the remaining third must be spent in eating, in dressing and in recreation.

It is said that a proud young lieutenant in the regular army spent the night with an old mountaineer in West Virginia. In the morning, the soldier arose, washed his face and hands, shaved himself and washed his teeth. The old mountaineer watched all this with increasing curiosity; and when the officer began to polish his shoes, the host could stand it no longer. "Young man," he inquired sympathetically, "are you this much trouble to yourself every day?" We are all a great deal of trouble to ourselves, even with the simplest life that we can live.

His relationship to the world of material possessions has always constituted one of man's greatest problems. Wealth has been seen to purchase many things that men need, so the rich man has been called "independent," and the child-man who inquires the way to the domains of his un-conquered empire is usually directed to the counting house and to the marts of trade. But either experience or observation teaches us all that servants of Mammon are debased slaves, and that in possessing the world of wealth men are possessed by the heartless god Mammon.

Earthly glory is another domain that is offered to the adventurer who has entered the ranks of mundane combatants. Power to make men obey and ability to cause men to bestow honor, are alike fascinating to the misdirected. The great military heroes, even the best and the worst of them, were not primarily thirsty for blood. Blood was incidental; their great moving cause was a passion for conquest.

Fleshly pleasure is another field that entices the "Wandering Ulysses." "The lust of the world, the lust of flesh and the pride of life" are sisters in the trio of formidable "flappers" who would become substitutes for man's higher fields of conquest.

But we can not blame the man for being what the Creator made him; and naturally man covets riches, desires kingship, pines for glory and demands a satisfaction that nature did not give him: therefore these instincts, tendencies and cravings are not evil within themselves. It is only when they are biased by inward depravity and encouraged by outer misdirection that they result in the monstrosities that are worthy of no defense.

And human regulation can not be trusted to correct evils which grow out of natural and universal endowments. Peace conferences and disarmament meetings may do good by encouraging men to think and reason, rather than to feel and fight; but men are fighters constitutionally, and legislation can not change human nature. The ancients had no modern armaments, but they killed more people, proportionally, in their wars than we kill in ours today.

Legislation may serve to curb the present impositions of the rich, but can not destroy the desire for accumulation. Materialistic socialism will never be successful or satisfactory. The reason is that man is conscious of his dependence, and he is convinced that this dependence will grow with the increase of his years, therefore, his heart is set on acquisitions.

Prohibition of the liquor traffic is useful in removing temptation; punishment of drug vendors is a means for saving many; and the censorship of motion pictures is demanded by the very laws of common decency; but man is set for pleasure, he will find some way to meet the cravings of his heart and mind. An actual demand can not be met by a negation.

Jesus Christ was a prohibitionist. He said, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth"; "Beware of covetousness"; "Labor not for the meat that perisheth"; "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven"; and "Woe unto you that are rich." But He did

not leave His commandments in the negative form. He said, "Labor for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." And he talked to His people about the "true riches." He announced to them that the "Kingdom of God cometh not with outward show"; but He did not stop until He had said, "The kingdom of God is within you."

Man must and should possess, but his acquisitions, must be "true riches," which are meted in the measure of his own spiritual accomplishments, and not the sordid gold and chattels of the material life. Man must conquer and rule, but his own heart and life constitute the true domains of his kingdom. Man should, nay he must have pleasure, but the peace that pardon brings, and the joy of a worthwhile life and service are the pleasures that he will find truly satisfying.

It is a mistake for a man to think of, and reach for conquests that are afar, and for riches that are not really a part of himself. Even the secular moralists say, "Half the music is in the ear of the listener, half the beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and half the goodness is in the heart." The most classical music is but a jumble of conflicting sounds to the untutored ear, the finest painting is but cheap canvas and daubs of color to the inartistic eye, the beauty of the landscape and the gorgeousness of the sunset are lost upon the soul in which the poetic instinct is dead. The grandeur of the mountains, and the splendor of the wild flowers are nothing to the worldling who thinks only of deeds and chattels. The plastic arts have no meaning to the man who estimates treasures by the yard and pound. Friendship and love are but myths to the sordid profligate and to the mechanical intellectual. But "Unto the pure all things are pure."

Solomon declared that a man who rules his own spirit is better than the one who takes a city. That is, the conquest of one's own mind and passions and heart is a greater victory than to overcome everything that is outside of one's self. Alexander conquered the world without and made all kings pay him tribute and acknowledge his authority; but he failed to overcome the world within, and died from the effects of liquor and debauchery. His passion for conquest might have been spent on the world within and he could have been another Socrates or, with divine illumination, another Paul. If he had sought God with the indomitable will with which he sought worldly glory, what a conqueror he might have been! If he had been as thirsty for the "new wine of the Kingdom" as he was for the liquors of Babylon, what an Apostle of Pentecost he would have been! Julius Caesar read the story of Alexander and shamed himself by saying, "Why, he died before he was as old as I am, and yet I have scarcely made a beginning." He picked out one of the meanest towns in Gaul and said he would rather be the first man in that town than to be the second man in Rome. How he would have gone from "glory to glory" if his passion had only been directed toward the conquest of the Christian's Canaan! Ulysses S. Grant was the hero of many a campaign, but when he was old and dying of cancer he acknowledged that he had never had the courage to come out definitely for Christ, as he had felt all along that he should have done.

Money is valuable only in terms of what it will buy. The miser stood guard over his gold until he starved to death. Most people want money because it will purchase what they want, and will, therefore, promote their independence. But the average man's desires keep the same proportionate distance ahead of his ability all through his life. He is as near contented when his income is five hundred dollars per year as he is when it has grown to five thousand; for the things that would have delighted him at first no longer satisfy him at all. If this difficulty is really overcome by the actual super-abundance of wealth, then, right away, the man wants something that money will not buy at all. Ahab pouted and wished to die because Naboth allowed a moral cause to keep him from selling his vineyard for money.

Still, we would not kill out man's desire for possessions: for this would make the man worthless and still would not make him happy. Diogenes, the wise old Greek, observed that "A man's happiness is not promoted by the increase of his income, but by the decrease of his wants." And he set in to reduce his wants. He moved from his house into a tub to get rid of the trouble of having to care for the house; he threw away his dishes to save the trouble of washing them. At last he had only a cup for drinking and a spoon for eating. Then he saw a boy drink out of his hand and eat with his fingers and he threw away his cup and spoon. Alexander visited him as he sat in his tub and asked what he could do for him. The only request that Diogenes would make of the world conqueror was that he would stand aside out of his sunlight. Diogenes has been offered as an example of poverty without indigence. Others sought independence by possessing wealth, he sought the same goal in the opposite direction; he would be independent of wealth by ceasing to need what it would buy. But he could not stop with material things. The same indolence which he exercised toward the possession of wealth was manifested toward learning and religion; so that in the end his philosophy led back to the Buddhaistic notion of cessation as a means of happiness and rest. The practical results were seen in the slothfulness and uselessness of those who tried to follow him. No, .man must retain his passion for possessions and have it directed toward things that are holy and true.

Jesus said of Himself, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." No one can think of Jesus as wishing for riches, yet no one can think of His followers becoming indolent and filled with low, selfish ease. "My Father worketh, hitherto, and I work." "I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day, I shall be perfected." "And he arose a great while before day and went out into a mountain to pray." "And being weary with the journey, he sat upon the well." "He found no leisure, even so much as to eat." These are the sayings and doings of Jesus. He was not poor in order that He might not bear the responsibility; He was poor that He might be free to give His life to higher interests than the riches of this world.

Following on after Christ, Paul said, "Labor not to be rich;" and, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Still he urged that "Our people profess honest trades that they may have to give to them that have need." He exhorted, "Be not slothful in business." He testified, "I have labored more abundantly than they all." At the close of his life he witnessed "I have fought a good fight." He commanded his preachers to "Be instant in season and out of season." There is every indication that Paul would not allow any seeker after earthly gold to be more zealous in the pursuit of his object than he himself would be in his quest for the "gold that is tried in the fire." The happiest man is, indeed, the man who needs the least of this world; provided he needs it not, because he possesses something so much better. Diogenes was poor within as well as poor without, but while the follower of Jesus Christ may be poor without, he is never poor within.

Health is a great personal possession--a fortune within itself. And any one who has even a small legacy to begin with can be conqueror of physical handicaps. It is said that the father of Theodore Roosevelt provided a private gymnasium for the delicate lad and said, "Your mind is all right, but you will have to build you a body." The lad looked at the apparatus designed to be used for physical development, set his jaw in determination and said, "All right, I will build a body." How well he succeeded is indicated by the amount of work that he turned off in a rather short life-time. But physical health and strength is not the only need--it is not even the principal requirement; for the men, and races of men, who possess the greatest physical perfection are commonly the least sufficient within themselves.

The intellect presents another great empire waiting to be subdued and ruled over. The capabilities and capacities of the mind of man are wonderful indeed; and the educated man has the advantage always. Laying aside earning capacity, which is the usual consideration when education is being mentioned, a man with a trained mind gets a great deal more out of life than he would get with an untutored intellect. It is only the educated man who finds, " Books in running brooks and sermons in stones." The astronomer possesses the heavens in a much more real sense than the untaught observer of the stars. The botanist sees in the structure of the humble nettle beauty that is hidden to the eyes of the barbarian. But the intellect is not all--it is not even the principal thing. Those who, like Plato, have held that speculation is the highest occupation of man, have come to a sad and unsatisfying end. Darwin, in his old age, bewailed the fact that he had become a mere machine for discovering facts and classifying them for the convenience of other men. He declared that his own life was empty and unsatisfactory. He complained that he had lost his love for music, poetry and the plastic arts, and that love and all pleasant sentiments had no place in his life.

The heart must be included in the domain of personal empire, or all else is vain and incomplete. A sound heart is the center around which all the facts of the good life are mustered. Jesus always arranged the setting in this way. Evil thoughts, and all the things that defile the man, He said, came out of the heart--that is, out of the affections. He commended care in tithing the mint, anise and cummin, minor details, but especially commanded attention to goodness and judgment and the weightier matters of the law. He allowed for the profit in keeping the commandments from one's youth up, but uncovered the heart sin of avariciousness as the hidden bar in the harbor entrance into the Kingdom. The cleansing of the outside of the cup and of the platter, He counted secondary to inward holiness. And, while He always rejoiced in human accomplishments, He emphasized the indispensability of the bestowals of Divine grace. He accepted the gratitude of the Samaritan leper, but told the accomplished Jewish teacher that he must experience the new birth. He doubted the human profession of full fidelity on the part of unsanctified Peter but received the true confession of the dying thief. The stately courtesy of Simon the Pharisee meant less to Him than the tears of the penitent woman from the streets. He never envied the rich or wise or great but rejoiced that the Father made known His principal secrets to believing babes. He taught His disciples to give rather than to get; He denied any position as a divider of worldly heritages but promised that the meek should inherit the earth which others were striving so hard to acquire. Though His true followers were to turn the other cheek to the smiter give the inner garment to the one pressing his legal claim for the outer one, and go the second mile with the representative of the emperor who could legally compel him to go only one; yet He forbade self-pity, and comforted His disciples with the words, "Fear not, little flock for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom" for which others are compelled to fight. The Christ life is the best life.

The biography, or autobiography of a man usually gives just the outside facts concerning his life: the place and date of his birth, the extent of his academic training and the things he did, or tried to do. But this is no more the actual story of a man's life than a rehearsal of its wars is a history of the American nation. There is a little of a man's life that may be called his public life, there is a little that may be called his social and domestic life; but by far the greatest part of every life must be lived within the walls of one's own mind and heart. In public, social and domestic life a man may be able to get others to do his way, he may find it possible to do as others desire, or he may find a compromise where both he and the others give some ground and keep some. But a man is, himself, the greatest factor in his own happiness or disappointment; for he must take himself as he is.

Some time ago I read what might be called the "spiritual biography" of Mark Twain. Of course, there was more or less of the "physical" biography in it, but it was the inside life's story that startled me. Mark Twain was the son of an ambitious mother who was married to a man she did not love, and Mark himself was an unwelcome child. He came into the world with prenatal impressions of inferiority and unwelcomeness. How strong his mother's feelings were may be gathered from a conversation between herself and her son, after he had become famous as a writer. She said, "Mark, you were a delicate child and you gave me more anxiety than any of my other children." Becoming interested, the famous son asked, "Why, were you afraid I would die?" "No," replied the mother, "I was afraid you would not die." Though spoken in something of a light vein at the time, it, nevertheless represented the feelings which affected the domestic atmosphere in which Mark Twain grew up. Along with this, the mother was something of a puritan and impressed the demands of duty and the call for righteousness strongly upon the mind and conscience of the child. As a result the child was tossed between the billows of conscious debasement and the roaring breakers of lawful restraint. He learned to despise himself, and then he interpreted others by his own feelings and despised them. He was so miserable because of his self-hatred that he frequently considered suicide; but when the test came he did not have the courage to take his own life, and then he despised himself doubly for being a coward. He despised others because he thought they were like himself, but because he could not and would not correct himself, he did not attempt to correct others. He was not good enough to be a reformer, he was not hateful enough to be a satirist, so he compromised on humor; but he did not laugh at his own humor. He used to say there will be no humor in heaven. He hated whatever he was and despised whatever he did. He wrote and lectured to make a living, but he thought writing and lecturing were the meanest, least-satisfying endeavors to which one could possibly give his time. We have been amused by Mark Twain's humor, but his was the hollowest, darkest, hardest, most desolate, most unsatisfactory life that he himself knew. He pictured his own misery in the waifs, wharf rats and blunderers of his fiction. To himself, he was grotesque, deformed and absurd. All his successes were mere conquests of the outward world: he remained a prisoner in the presence of liberty; he starved in the midst of plenty; he was blind, though in a garden of beauty; he was a deaf man in a music hall; an illiterate man in a library of books; a sick man at a feast; an unclothed guest at a wedding; a sinner in heaven.

A man is happiest who needs the least, provided his satiety is real and not imaginary. An atrophied appetite is ghastly, but desire that is properly and legitimately met is the fulfillment of one of the principal beatitudes. Rich and worldly, powerful Pharisees inquired for the kingdom that cometh with outward show, and died amidst the tyranny of Roman sway. Humble followers of "The way" rejoiced in a liberty that stripes and dungeons could not destroy. With the King the crowned head of the empire of heart and life, there is peace amidst turmoil, glory amidst shame, freedom in bonds, riches in poverty, comfort in bereavement, joy in persecution, friendship in isolation, and life in death.

We will never be able to change our circumstances very much, but God can make us victors over our circumstances. Prayer often changes us more than it changes the source of our trials. Grace to be sick is sometimes a greater blessing than faith for healing. When the wine runs short at the marriage, then Christ works a miracle. It is easy for one to charge up his failures to his friends and associates, but the test of one's real worth is his ability to "make good," not his aptness in making excuses.

Manhood is better than money, character is of greater account than reputation, and personal success is better than written credentials. Your real triumphs are the victories of your own soul. The grace of God that is within you is the only grace of which you have a right to boast. His ability to do "exceeding abundantly, above all we ask or think" is measured by "the power which worketh within us." It is not a very deep

religion that sings exclusively of the future millennial when contests are all past, or of heaven where no temptations and sorrows can come. It is a better religion that can testify to the present incarnation of Christ within your own body and of a faith that overcometh the world. The boat can ride triumphant on the water so long as it keeps all the water on the outside; and the Christian is proof against the world without so long as he is clean from the world within. Every reformation, every organization that has the human element in it--in fact ? every thing that "cometh with observation" will be more or less disappointing; but that heart kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, depending upon no material substance or fickle creature outside of yourself, should be your everlasting inheritance in the Everlasting Father.

I would estimate your possessions, not by the size of your tax receipts, not by the breadth of your fertile acreage, not by the location of your city blocks, not by the fullness of your bank deposits, not by the texture of the coat you wear, not even by the rank of social clan to which you belong, but by the grace of your spirit and the measure of your mind; for "the kingdom of God is within you."

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