

# The Human Means

by Octavius Winslow

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*The Christian must be diligent and active in using the means appointed by God, lest they expect no Divine blessing.*

**Scripture:** 2 Kings 3:16

**Topics:** "Faith and Works", "Prayer and Divine Blessing"

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## Description

Octavius Winslow emphasizes the necessity of human effort in conjunction with divine blessing, illustrating that while God provides the power, we must actively engage in the means He has ordained. He uses the metaphor of digging ditches to represent our spiritual preparation through prayer, study of the Word, and participation in the community of faith. Winslow encourages believers to recognize their role in seeking God's grace, particularly through trials and afflictions, which can deepen our reliance on Him. The sermon highlights that our spiritual vitality is directly linked to our active pursuit of God and His means of grace. Ultimately, the message is one of hope, urging believers to expect and ask for God's abundant blessings.

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## Transcript

"Thus says the Lord, make this valley full of ditches...That valley shall be filled with water, that you may drink."--2 Kings 3:16, 17

The Christian requires no little spiritual intelligence and skill in accurately balancing the means and the blessing--the part which belongs to him, and the part which belongs to God. The Word of God nowhere encourages a spirit of inactivity and indolence in us. We are not to fold our arms, sit down, and do nothing. Hence, the varied means the Lord has graciously appointed for our use. We must not forget that the means are as much ordained as the end; and that, if these means are carelessly and willfully neglected, we have no right to expect the Divine blessing. The power of the divine does not preclude or dispense with the employment of the human.

You will generally find that, in the performance of His wondrous miracles, Christ, as it were, stood at one end, and man at the other. See this thought illustrated in the raising of Lazarus from the dead--"Jesus said, Take away the stone." Man was to have some share in this marvelous resurrection; he was to remove the stone that lay upon the dead, as this formed an impediment to the working of the miracle. While, then, we are instructed that the POWER is His, we are at the same time taught that the MEANS are ours. It is man's to dig the well and prepare the ditches; it is God's to fill both with the living water of His Spirit. "Thus says the Lord, make this valley full of ditches...That valley shall be filled with water, that you

may drink." What, O my soul, are these "ditches," and how are they made?

In the forefront must be placed the eye, simply and only fixed upon Jesus. We may sink the well, and dig the trench, and plough the soil, but all will be in vain if we do not this from a sense and conviction of our present spiritual standing in Christ. Thus we shall work from life, and not for life! Oh, with what celerity we run the way of the Lord's commandments, with what zeal do we His work, and how we prize the means of grace, with a sweet sense of pardon--of acceptance--of a present salvation in all its completeness, fullness, and certainty, in our souls!

We dig the "ditch" in the valley of prayer. Communion with God, while it is the most elevating, is at the same time the most humbling employment of the soul. When thus we lie the lowest, then are we the most exalted. When, in the confession of sin, and the abasement of self, we come before God, "looking unto Jesus," oh! what a channel we have prepared for the rain of God's grace, far down in the deep valley of our conscious need and nothingness. Be much in secret, closet prayer, O my soul, and God will rain down abundantly His quickening, fertilizing grace. Pray--pray--PRAY--and your fleece shall never be dry, your soul shall never lack the dew of God's Spirit. Dig deep, dig wide, dig constantly the channel of PRAYER--earnest, persevering, believing prayer--and He who has promised to be the "Dew unto Israel," and to "come down as rain upon the mown grass," as with "showers of blessing," will fill that channel to overflowing with His grace.

In a few words--such, too, is the diligent study of God's word--such a devout and frequent meditation thereon--such the public means of grace--such the appointed ordinances of Christ's house, and the "communion of saints." Omit not, O my soul, the valley of affliction, of trial, of temptation, in some of which your deepest ditches are often dug, and the richest blessings often flow. "I will open fountains in the midst of the valleys," says the Lord; and to this end He sends bereavement, and sickness, and suffering, and adversity--all of which are but designed to open channels through which His tender love, and soothing sympathy, and increasing grace, and quickening Spirit, might fully and freely flow. "Blessed is the man who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also fills the pools." Oh, seek large supplies of this living water! Make the trench deep and broad, for in proportion to your large requests will be your blessing. Ask much, believe much, expect much, and it shall be unto you according to your faith. "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it."

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