

Setting" the Mind On" Eternity - Part 2

by Robert Murray M'Cheyne

Robert Murray M'Cheyne's sermon encourages believers to focus on eternity to enrich their spiritual lives and foster revival within the community.

Scripture: Psalm 90:12, Matthew 6:19-21, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 4:18, Philippians 3:20-21, Colossians 3:2, Hebrews 12:1-2, James 4:14, 1 Peter 1:24-25, 1 John 2:15-17

Topics: "Eternal Perspective", "Personal Revival"

Description

Robert Murray M'Cheyne emphasizes the importance of setting our minds on eternity, reflecting on his personal journal entries that reveal a deep longing for spiritual revival and a closer relationship with Christ. He shares his experiences of prayer, the struggles with sin, and the joy found in communion with God, illustrating how these moments shape one's eternal perspective. M'Cheyne's reflections serve as a call to personal revival, urging believers to confess their sins, seek the Holy Spirit, and maintain a focus on the eternal rather than the temporal.

Transcript

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Chapter three

Journal Excerpts - Part 2

"You will never find Jesus so precious, as when the world is one vast howling wilderness. Then He is like a rose blooming in the midst of the desolation, or a rock rising above the storm!" - Robert Murray M'Cheyne

[These journal excerpts are taken from the Memoirs and Remains of Robert Murray M'Cheyne by Andrew Bonar. All comments past the quotes of the actual journal are made by Andrew Bonar a godly minister. This book had a significant impact on my walk with the Lord. His journal writings show his heart of an eternal perspective and mindset.]

"April 9, 1837, Evening.--A very pleasant quietness. Study of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Came to a more intelligent view of the first six chapters than ever before. Much refreshed by John Newton; instructed by Edwards. Help and freedom in prayer. Lord, what a happy season is a Sabbath evening! What will heaven be!"

"April 16, Sabbath evening.--Much prayer and peace. Reading the Bible only."

"June 2.--Much peace and rest to-night. Much broken under a sense of my exceeding wickedness, which no eye can see but thine. Much persuasion of the sufficiency of Christ, and of the constancy of his love. Oh how sweet to work all day for God, and then to lie down at night under his smiles!"

"June 17, 1838.--At Dumbarney communion. Much sin and coldness two days before. Lay low at his feet; found peace only in Jesus."

"Sept. 25.--Spent last week at Blairgowrie; I hope not in vain. Much sin, weakness, and uselessness; much delight in the word also, while opening it up at family prayer. May God make the word fire. Opened I Thessalonians, the whole; enriching to my own mind. How true is Psalm 1! yet observed in my heart a strange proneness to be entangled with the affairs of this life; not strange because I am good, but because I have been so often taught that bitterness is the end of it."

"Sept. 27.--Devoted chief part of Friday to fasting. Humbled and refreshed."

"Sept. 30, Sabbath.--Very happy in my work. Too little prayer in the morning. Must try to get early to bed on Saturday, that I may 'rise a great while before day.'" These early hours of prayer on Sabbath he endeavored to have all his life; not for study, but for prayer. He never labored at his sermons on a Sabbath. That day he kept for its original end, the refreshment of his soul. (Exodus 31:17.)

Ministry Begins "March 28, 1838, Thursday.--I think of making this more a journal of my people, and the success or otherwise of my ministry. The first success among my people was at the time of my first Sacrament: then it appeared. My first sermon, on Isa. 61:1, was blessed to ---- and some others. That on Ezek. 22:14, 'Can thine heart endure,' etc., was blessed to awaken M.L. That on Song 5:2, 'Open to me,' etc., the Sabbath after the Sacrament, was blessed to another. These were happy days.

M.D. was awakened by coming to the communicants' class. Another by the action sermon. At the words, 'I know thee, Judas,' she trembled, and would have risen from the table. These were glad days when one and another were awakened. The people looked very stirred and anxious, every day coming to hear the words of eternal life,--some inquiring in private every week. Now there is little of this. About fifteen cases came to my knowledge the first Sacrament, and two awakened who seem to have gone back.

About eleven last Sacrament,--four of these young men. Several Christians seemed quickened to greater joy, and greater love one to another. Now it appears to me there is much falling off,--few seem awakened; few weep as they used to do." "April 1, Sacrament day.--Sweet season we have had. Never was more straitened and unfurnished in myself, and yet much helped. Kept in perfect peace, my mind being stayed on Thee. Preached on 'My God, my God,' etc., Psalm 22:1. Not fully prepared, yet found some peace in it.

Fenced the tables from 'Christ's eyes of flame.' Little helped in serving the tables. Much peace in communion. Happy to be one with Christ! I, a vile worm; He, the Lord my righteousness. Mr. Cumming of Dumbarny served some tables; Mr. Somerville of Anderston served three, and preached in the evening on 'Thou art all fair, my love.' Very full and refreshing. All sweet, sweet services. Come, thou north wind, and blow, thou south, upon this garden! May this time be greatly blessed!

It is my third communion; it may be my last. My Lord may come, or I may be sitting at another table soon. Moody, Candlish, and Mellis, were a good preparation for this day; and the sweet word from Cumming yesterday, 'When the poor and needy seek water,' etc. Lord, grant some wakening this day,--to some bringing peace--comfort to mourners,--fulness to believers,--an advance in holiness in me and my children! Ill John 4. Lord, wean me from my sins, from my cares, and from this passing world.

May Christ be all in all to me." "Admitted about twenty-five young communicants; kept two back, and one or two stayed back. Some of them evidently brought to Christ. May the Lord be their God, their comforter, their all! May the morrow bring still richer things to us, that we may say as of to-night, 'Thou hast kept the good wine until now.'" Toward the close of this same year some of his notices are as follows:-- "Oct. 7, Evening.--In the Gaelic Chapel, on 'I know that my Redeemer liveth,' with more seeming power on the people than for a while.

I never remember of compelling souls to come in to Christ so much as in that discourse." "Oct. 8.--A person of the name of ---- came; I hope really awakened by last night's work; rather, by Thee. I do not know, however, whether grace is begun or not." "Oct. 14.--Preached on 'Forgiving injuries.' Afternoon--on the Second Coming: 'Let your loins be girded about,' etc. Felt its power myself more than ever before, how the sudden coming of the Saviour constrains to a holy walk, separate from sin.

Evening--Preached it over in the Ferry." "Oct. 21.--Met young communicants in the evening. Good hope of all but one." "Oct. 22.--A Jew preached in my church, Mr. Frey, to a crowded house. Felt much moved in hearing an Israelite after the flesh." "Oct. 23.--Preached to sailors aboard the 'Dr. Carey,' in the docks. About 200, very attentive and impressed like. On 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' May the seed sown on the waters be found after many days." "Nov. 1, Fast-day.--Afternoon--Mr.

C. on 'The thief on the Cross.' A most awakening and engaging sermon, enough to make sinners fly like a cloud, and as doves to their windows. The offers of Christ were let down very low so that those low of stature may take hold." "Nov. 5.--Mr. ---- died this morning at seven o'clock. Oh that I may take warning, lest, after preaching to others, I myself be a castaway! Love of popularity is said to have been his besetting sin." "Dec. 2.--Errol Communion. Heard Mr. Grierson preach on Christ's entry into Jerusalem.

Served two tables. Evening--Preached to a large congregation, on 'Unto you, O men, I call,' etc. The free invitation of the Saviour. May some find Him this day!" At the same time he saw backslidings, both among those whom believers had considered really converted, and among those who had been deeply convicted, though never reckoned among the really saved. He notes in his book: "Called to see ----. Poor lad, he seems to have gone back from Christ, led away by evil company. And yet I felt sure of him at one time.

What blind creatures ministers are! man looketh at the outward appearance." One morning he was visited by one of his flock, proposing "a concert for prayer on the following Monday, in behalf of those who had fallen back, that God's Spirit might re-awaken them,"--so observant were the believers as well as their pastor of declensions. Among those who were awakened, but never truly converted, he mentions one case. "Jan. 9, 1840.--Met with the case of one who had been frightened during the late work, so that her bodily health was injured.

She seems to have no care now about her soul. It has only filled her mouth with evil-speaking." That many, who promised fair, drew back and walked no more with Jesus, is true. Out of about 800 souls who, during the months of the Revival, conversed with different ministers in apparent anxiety, no wonder surely if many proved to have been impressed only for a time. President Edwards considered it likely that, in such cases, the proportion of real conversions might resemble the proportion of blossoms in spring, and fruit in autumn.

Nor can anything be more unreasonable than to doubt the truth of all, because of the deceit of some. The world itself does not so act in judging of its own. The world reckons upon the possibility of being mistaken in many cases, and yet does not cease to believe that there is honesty and truth to be found. One of themselves, a poet of their own, has said with no less justice than beauty-- "Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell; And though foul things put on the brows of grace, Yet grace must still look so."

"Nov. 27, 1839.--A pleasant meeting in the Cross Church on Wednesday last, for the seamen. All that spoke seemed to honor the Saviour. I had to move thanksgiving to God for his mercies. This has been a real blessing to Dundee. It should not be forgotten in our prayers and thanksgivings." "Nov. 28, Thursday evening.--Much comfort in speaking. There was often an awful stillness. Spoke on Jer. 6:14: 'They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly.'" etc. "Dec. 1.--This evening came a tender Christian, so far as I can see; an exposition of that text, 'I will go softly,' or of that other, 'Thou shall not open thy mouth any more.'

A child of shame made one of honor. Her sister was awakened under Mr. Baxter's words in St. Peter's, of whom he asked, 'Would you like to be holy?' She replied, 'Indeed, I often wish I were dead that I might sin no more.'" "Dec. 3.--Preached six times within these two days." "Dec. 8.--Saw J.T. in fever. She seems really in Christ now; tells me how deeply my words sank into her soul when I was away. A.M. stayed to tell me her joy. J.B. walked home with me, telling me what God had done for his soul, when one day I had stopped at the quarry on account of a shower of rain, and took shelter with my pony in the engine-house."

He had simply pointed to the fire of the furnace, and said, "What does that remind you of?" and the words had remained deep in the man's soul. "Dec. 11.--A woman awakened that night I preached in J.D.'s green, about two years ago, on Ezek. 20:43. For twenty years she had been out of church privileges, and now, for the first time, came trembling to ask restoration. Surely Immanuel is in this place, and even old sinners are flocking to Him. I have got an account of about twenty prayer-meetings connected with my flock.

Many open ones; many fellowship meetings; only one or two have anything like exhortation superadded to the word. These, I think, it must be our care to change, if possible, lest error and pride creep in. The only other difficulty is this. In two of the female meetings, originally fellowship meetings, anxious female inquirers have been admitted. They do not pray, but only hear. In one, M. and J. had felt the rising of pride to a great degree; in the other, M. could not be persuaded that there was any danger of pride.

This case will require prayerful deliberation. My mind at present is, that there is great danger from it, the praying members feeling themselves on a different level from the others, and anything like female teaching, as a public teacher, seems clearly condemned in the word of God." "Dec. 12.--Felt very feeble all day, and as if I could not do any more work in the vineyard. Evening.--Felt more of the reality of Immanuel's intercession. The people also were evidently subdued by more than a human testimony.

One soul waited, sobbing most piteously. She could give no more account of herself than that she was a sinner, and did not believe that God would be merciful to her. When I showed how I found mercy, her only answer was, "But you were not sic a sinner as me." "Dec. 18.--Went to Glasgow along with A.B. Preached in St. George's to a full audience, in the cause of the Jews. Felt real help in time of need." This was one of his many journeys from place to place in behalf of Israel, relating the things seen and heard among the Jews of Palestine and other lands.

"Dec. 22.--Preached in Anderston Church, with a good deal of inward peace and comfort." "Dec. 23.--Interesting meeting with the Jewish Committee. In the evening met a number of God's people. The horror of some good people in Glasgow at the millenarian views is very great, while at the same time their objections appear very weak." "Dec. 31.--Young communicants. Two have made application to be admitted under eleven years of age; four that are only fourteen; three who are fifteen or sixteen."

"Jan. 1, 1840.--Awoke early by the kind providence of God, and had uncommon freedom and fervency in keeping the concert for prayer this morning before light. Very touching interview with M.P., who still refuses to be comforted. Was enabled to cry after a glorious Immanuel along with her. How I wish I had her bitter convictions of sin! Another called this evening, who says she was awakened and brought to Christ during the sermon on the morning of December 1st, on the 'Covenant with death.'

Gave clear answers, but seems too unmoved for one really changed." "Jan. 2.--Visited six families. Was refreshed and solemnized at each of them. Spoke of the Word made flesh, and of all the paths of the Lord being mercy and truth. Visited in the evening by some interesting souls: one a believing little boy; another complaining she cannot come to Christ for the hardness of her heart; another once awakened under my ministry, again thoroughly awakened and brought to Christ under Horace Bonar's sermon at the Communion.

She is the only saved one in her family,--awfully persecuted by father and mother. Lord, stand up for thine own! Make known, by their constancy under suffering, the power and beauty of thy grace! Evening.--Mr. Miller preached delightfully on 'The love of Christ constraineth us.' His account of the Protestants of France was very interesting: the work of God at Nismes, where it is said they are no more fishing with line, but dragging with the nets. Read a letter from Mr. Cumming, describing the work at Perth, and entreating the prayers of God's children."

This last reference is to the awakening which took place in St. Leonard's Church, Perth, on the last night of the year, when Mr. Burns, along with their pastor, Mr. Milne, was preaching. Mr. B. had intended to return to Dundee for the Sabbath, but was detained by the plain indications of the Lord's presence. At one meeting the work was so glorious, that one night about 150 persons at one time seemed bowed down under a sense of their guilt, and above 200 came next day to the church in the forenoon to converse about their souls.

This awakening was the commencement of a solid work of grace, both in that town and its neighborhood, much fruit of which is to be found there at this day in souls that are walking in the fear of the Lord, and the

comfort of the Holy Ghost. And it was in the spring of this same year that in Collace, at our weekly prayer-meeting, when two brethren were ministering, we received a blessed shower from the Lord.

More Journal Entries "Jan. 3.--An inquirer came, awakened under my ministry two years and a half ago." "Jan. 5.--Two came; M.B. sorely wounded with the forenoon's discourse." "Jan. 12.--Intimated a concert for prayer, that unworthy communicants might be kept back, the Lord's children prepared for the feast, and ministers furnished from on high." "Jan. 13.--Kept concert of prayer this morning with my dear people. Did not find the same enlargement as usual." "March 5. Thursday evening.--Preached on Zech. 3.--Joshua.

Was led to speak searchingly about making Christ the minister of sin. One young woman cried aloud very bitterly. M.B. came to tell me that poor M. is like to have her life taken away by her parents. A young woman also, who is still concerned and persecuted by her father. A young man came to tell me that he had found Christ. Roll on, thou river of life! visit every dwelling! save a multitude of souls. Come, Holy Spirit! come quickly!" "March 25.--Last night at Forfar speaking for Israel to a small band of friends of the Jews.

Fearfully wicked place; the cry of it ascends up before God like that of Sodom." "March 31.--Met with young communicants on Wednesday and Friday. On the latter night especially, very deep feeling, manifested in sobbings. Visits of several. One clear child nine years old. Sick-bed." "April 1.--Presbytery day. Passed the constitution of two new churches,--blessed be God! may He raise up faithful pastors for them both,--Dudhope and Wallace-Feus. Proposal also for the Mariner's Church.

A fast-day fixed for the present state of the church." "April 5, Sabbath evening.--Spoke to twenty-four young persons, one by one; almost all affected about their souls." "April 6.--Lovely ride and meditation in a retired grove." "April 7.--Impressed to-night with the complete necessity of preaching to my people in their own lanes and closes; in no other way will God's word ever reach them. To-night spoke in St. Andrew's Church to a very crowded assembly in behalf of Israel.

Was helped to speak plainly to their own consciences. Lord, bless it! Shake this town!" "April 13.--Spoke in private to nearly thirty young communicants, all in one room, going round each, and advising for the benefit of all." "April 22.--Rode to Collessie (Fife) and Kirkcaldy. Sweet time alone in Collessie woods." "July 30.--One lad came to me in great distress, wishing to know if he should confess his little dishonesties to his master." About this time, he has noted down, "I was visiting the other day, and came to a locked door.

What did this mean? 'Torment me not, torment me not!' Ah, Satan is mighty still!"--referring to Mark 5:7. A few of his Communion seasons are recorded. We could have desired a record of them all. The first of which he has detailed any particulars, is the one he enjoyed soon after returning home. "Jan. 19, 1840.--Stormy morning, with gushing torrents of rain, but cleared up in answer to prayer. Sweet union in prayer with Mr. Cumming, and afterwards with A. Bonar, Found God in secret.

Asked especially that the very sight of the broken bread and poured-out wine might be blessed to some souls, then pride will be hidden from man. Church well filled--many standing. Preached the action sermon on John 17:24, 'Father, I will,' etc. Had considerable nearness to God in prayer--more than usual,--and also freedom in preaching, although I was ashamed of such poor views of Christ's glory. The people were in a very desirable frame of attention--hanging on the word. Felt great help in fencing the tables from Acts 5:3, 'Lying to the Holy Ghost.'

Came down and served the first table with much more calmness and collectedness than ever I remember to have enjoyed. Enjoyed a sweet season while A.B. served the next table. He dwelt chiefly on believing the words of Christ about his fulness, and the promise of the Father. There were six tables altogether. The people more and more moved to the end. At the last table, every head seemed bent like a bulrush while A.B. spoke of the ascension of Christ. Helped a little in the address.

'Now to Him who is able to keep you,' etc., and in the concluding prayer. One little boy, in retiring, said, 'This has been another bonnie day.' Many of the little ones seemed deeply attentive. Mr. Cumming and Mr. Burns preached in the school the most of the day. In the evening Mr. C. preached on the Pillar Cloud on every dwelling, Isaiah 4:5 some very sweet powerful words. Mr. Burns preached in the schoolroom. When the church emptied a congregation formed in the lower school, and began to sing.

Sang several psalms with them, and spoke on 'Behold I stand at the door.' Going home, A.L. said 'Pray for me; I am quite happy, and so is H.' Altogether a day of the revelation of Christ,--a sweet day to myself, and, I am persuaded, to many souls. Lord, make us meet for the table above." Another of these Communion seasons recorded, is April 1840. "Sabbath 19.--Sweet and precious day. Preached action sermon on Zech. 12:10, 13:1. A good deal assisted. Also in fencing the tables, on Ps. 139., 'Search me, O God.'

Less at serving the tables on 'I will betroth thee,' and 'To him that overcometh;' though the thanksgiving was sweet. Communicated with calm joy. Old Mr. Burns served two tables; H. Bonar five. There was a very melting frame visible among the people. Helped a good deal in the address on 'My sheep hear my voice.' After seven before all was over. Met before eight. Old Mr. Burns preached on 'A word in season.' Gave three parting texts, and so concluded this blessed day. Many were filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

"Monday, 20.--Mr. Grierson preached on 'Ye are come to Mount Zion,'--an instructive word. Pleasant walk with H.B. Evening sermon from him to the little children on the 'new heart,'--truly delightful. Prayer-meeting after. I began; then old Mr. Burns, then Horace, in a very lively manner, on the 'woman of Samaria.' The people were brought into a very tender frame. After the blessing, a multitude remained. One (A.N.) was like a person struck through with a dart, she could neither stand nor go.

Many were looking on her with faces of horror. Others were comforting her in a very kind manner, bidding her look to Jesus. Mr. Burns went to the desk, and told them of Kilsyth. Still they would not go away. Spoke a few words more to those around me, telling them of the loveliness of Christ, and the hardness of their hearts, that they could be so unmoved when one was so deeply wounded. The sobbing soon spread, till many heads were bent down, and the church was filled with sobbing.

Many whom I did not know were now affected. After prayer, we dismissed, near midnight. Many followed us. One, in great agony, prayed that she might find Christ that very night. So ends this blessed season." The prayer-meeting on the Monday evening following the Communion was generally enjoyed by all the Lord's people, and by the ministers who assisted, in a peculiar manner. Often all felt the last day of the feast to be the great day. Souls that had been enjoying the feast were then, at its conclusion, taking hold on the arm of the Beloved in the prospect of going up through the wilderness.

The only notice of his last Communion, January 1, 1843, is the following:--"Sabbath.--A happy communion season. Mr. W. Burns preached on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings--the first and last very solemn. Mr. Baxter (of Hilltown Church) on the Friday. A. Bonar on Saturday, on Rom. 8:--The spirit of

adoption. I fainted on the Sabbath morning, but revived, and got grace and strength to preach on I Tim. 1:16--Paul's conversion a pattern. There were five tables. Many godly strangers, and a very desirable frame observable in the people.

'While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth out the smell thereof.' Much sin was covered. He restoreth my soul. Monday, 2.--Mr. Milne (of Perth) preached on 'Hold fast that thou hast;' and in the evening, to the children, on Josh. 24.--'Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.' Andrew and I concluded with Rev. 5--'Thou hast redeemed us,' etc., and I Cor. 15.--'Be stedfast,' etc." His preaching became more and more to him a work of faith. Often I find him writing at the close or beginning of a sermon: "Master, help!"

"Help, Lord, help!" "Send showers;" "Pardon, give the Spirit, and take the glory;" "May the opening of my lips he right things!" The piercing effects of the word preached on souls at this season may be judged of from what one of the awakened, with whom he was conversing, said to him, "I think hell would be some relief from an angry God." His delight in preaching was very great. He himself used to say that he could scarcely ever resist an invitation to preach. And this did not arise from the natural excitement there is in commanding the attention of thousands; for he was equally ready to proclaim Christ to small country flocks.

Nay, he was ready to travel far to visit and comfort even one soul. There was an occasion this year on which he rode far to give a cup of cold water to a disciple, and his remark was, "I observe how often Jesus went a long way for one soul, as for example the maniac, and the woman of Canaan." In February 1841, he visited Kelso and Jedburgh at the Communion season; and gladly complied with an invitation to Ancrum also, that he might witness the hand of the Lord. "Sweet are the spots," he wrote, "where Immanuel has ever shown his glorious power in the conviction and conversion of sinners.

The world loves to muse on the scenes where battles were fought and victories won. Should not we love the spots where our great Captain has won his amazing victories? Is not the conversion of a soul more worthy to be spoken of than the taking of Acre?" At Kelso, some will long remember his remarks in visiting a little girl, to whom he said, "Christ gives last knocks. When your heart becomes hard and careless, then fear lest Christ may have given a last knock." At Jedburgh, the impression left was chiefly that there had been among them a man of peculiar holiness.

Some felt, not so much his words, as his presence and holy solemnity, as if one spoke to them who was standing in the presence of God; and to others his prayers appeared like the breathings of one already within the veil.

An Awakening When this work was finished, the Lord had other employment ready for him in his own parish. His diary has this entry: "May 22.--I have seen some very evident awakenings of late. J.G. awakened partly through the word preached, and partly through the faithful warnings of her fellow-servant. A.R., who has been for about a year in the deepest distress, seeking rest, but finding none. B.M. converted last winter at the Tuesday meeting in Annfield. She was brought very rapidly to peace with God, and to a calm, sedate, prayerful state of mind.

I was surprised at the quickness of the work in this case, and pleased with the clear tokens of grace; and now I see God's gracious end in it. She was to be admitted at last communion, but caught fever before the Sabbath. On Tuesday last, she died in great peace and joy. When she felt death coming on, she said, 'Oh death, death, come! let us sing!' Many that knew her have been a good deal moved homeward by this

solemn providence. This evening, I invited those to come who are leaving the parish at this term.

About twenty came, to whom I gave tracts and words of warning. I feel persuaded that if I could follow the Lord more fully myself, my ministry would be used to make a deeper impression than it has yet done." On Sabbath, when one expressed a wish that he had been able to go forth as usual to preach, he replied, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord;" and added, "I am preaching the sermon that God would have me to do." On Tuesday (the 21st) his sister repeated to him several hymns.

The last words he heard, and the last he seemed to understand, were those of Cowper's hymn, Sometimes the light surprises the Christian as he sings. And then the delirium came on. At one time, during the delirium, he said to his attendant, "Mind the text, I Cor. 15:58--'Be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,'" dwelling with much emphasis on the last clause, "forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." At another time he seemed to feel himself among his brethren, and said, "I don't think much of policy in church courts; no, I hate it; but I'll tell you what I like, faithfulness to God, and a holy walk."

His voice, which had been weak before, became very strong now; and often was he heard speaking to or praying for his people. "You must be awakened in time, or you will be awakened in everlasting torment, to your eternal confusion." "You may soon get me away, but that will not save your souls." Then he prayed, "This parish, Lord, this people, this whole place!" At another time, "Do it thyself, Lord, for thy weak servant." And again, as if praying for the saints, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom Thou hast given me."

Thus he continued most generally engaged, while the delirium lasted, either in prayer or in preaching to his people, and always apparently in happy frame, till the morning of Saturday the 25th. On that morning, while his kind medical attendant, Dr. Gibson, stood by, he lifted up his hands as if in the attitude of pronouncing the blessing, and then sank down. Not a groan or a sigh, but only a quiver of the lip, and his soul was at rest. As he was subject to frequent sickness, it was not till within some days of his death that serious alarm was generally felt, and hence the stroke came with awful suddenness upon us all.

That same afternoon, while preparing for Sabbath duties, the tidings reached me. I hastened down, though scarce knowing why I went. His people were that evening met together in the church, and such a scene of sorrow has not often been witnessed in Scotland. It was like the weeping for King Josiah. Hundreds were there; the lower part of the church was full: and none among them seemed able to contain their sorrow. Every heart seemed bursting with grief, so that the weeping and the cries could be heard afar off.

The Lord had most severely wounded the people whom He had before so peculiarly favored; and now, by this awful stroke of his hand, was fixing deeper in their souls all that his servant had spoken in the days of his peculiar ministry. "Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord, awake as in the ancient days," till every one of thy pastors be willing to impart to the flock, over which the Holy Ghost has made him overseer, not the gospel of God only, but also his own soul. And oh that each one were able, as he stands in the pastures feeding thy sheep and lambs, to look up and appeal to Thee: "Lord, Thou knowest all things! Thou knowest that I love Thee!"

Chapter four

Steps To Personal Revival

"What a man is on his knees before God, that he is, and nothing more." - Robert Murray M'Cheyne

"It is the duty of ministers in this day to begin the reformation of religion and manners with themselves, families, etc., with confession of past sin, earnest prayer for direction, grace, and full purpose of heart. Mal. 3:3--"He shall purify the sons of Levi." Ministers are probably laid aside for a time for this very purpose.

"I am persuaded that I shall obtain the highest amount of present happiness, I shall do most for God's glory and the good of man, and I shall have the fullest reward in eternity, by maintaining a conscience always washed in Christ's blood, by being filled with the Holy Spirit at all times, and by attaining the most entire likeness to Christ in mind, will, and heart, that is possible for a redeemed sinner to attain to in this world.

"I am persuaded that whenever any one from without, or my own heart from within, at any moment, or in any circumstances, contradicts this,--if any one shall insinuate that it is not for my present and eternal happiness, and for God's glory and my usefulness, to maintain a blood-washed conscience, to be entirely filled with the Spirit, and to be fully conformed to the image of Christ in all things,--that is the voice of the devil, God's enemy, the enemy of my soul and of all good--the most foolish, wicked, and miserable of all the creatures. See Prov. 9:17--'Stolen waters are sweet.'

To maintain a conscience void of offence I am persuaded that I ought to confess my sins more. I think I ought to confess sin the moment I see it to be sin; whether I am in company, or in study, or even preaching, the soul ought to cast a glance of abhorrence at the sin. If I go on with the duty, leaving the sin unconfessed, I go on with a burdened conscience, and add sin to sin. I think I ought at certain times of the day--my best times,--say, after breakfast and after tea,--to confess solemnly the sins of the previous hours, and to seek their complete remission.

"I find that the devil often makes use of the confession of sin to stir up again the very sin confessed into new exercise, so that I am afraid to dwell upon the confession. I must ask experienced Christians about this. For the present, I think I should strive against this awful abuse of confession, whereby the devil seeks to frighten me away from confessing. I ought to take all methods for seeing the vileness of my sins. I ought to regard myself as a condemned branch of Adam,--as partaker of a nature opposite to God from the womb (Ps. 51.),--as having a heart full of all wickedness, which pollutes every thought, word, and action, during my whole life, from birth to death.

I ought to confess often the sins of my youth, like David and Paul,--my sins before conversion, my sins since conversion,--sins against light and knowledge, against love and grace, against each person of the Godhead. I ought to look at my sins in the light of the holy law, in the light of God's countenance, in the light of the cross, in the light of the judgment-seat, in the light of hell, in the light of eternity. I ought to examine my dreams--my floating thoughts--my predilections--my often recurring actions--my habits of thought, feeling, speech, and action--the slanders of my enemies and the reproofs, and even banterings, of my friends--to find out traces of my prevailing sin, matter for confession.

I ought to have a stated day of confession, with fasting--say, once a month. I ought to have a number of scriptures marked, to bring sin to remembrance. I ought to make use of all bodily affliction, domestic trial, frowns of providence on myself, house, parish, church, or country, as calls from God to confess sin. The

sins and afflictions of other men should call me to the same. I ought, on Sabbath evenings, and on Communion Sabbath evenings, to be especially careful to confess the sins of holy things.

I ought to confess the sins of my confessions,--their imperfections, sinful aims, self-righteous tendency, etc.,--and to look to Christ as having confessed my sins perfectly over his own sacrifice. "I ought to go to Christ for the forgiveness of each sin. In washing my body, I go over every spot, and wash it out. Should I be less careful in washing my soul? I ought to see the stripe that was made on the back of Jesus by each of my sins. I ought to see the infinite pang thrill through the soul of Jesus equal to an eternity of my hell for my sins, and for all of them.

I ought to see that in Christ's bloodshedding there is an infinite over-payment for all my sins. Although Christ did not suffer more than infinite justice demanded, yet He could not suffer at all without laying down an infinite ransom. "I feel, when I have sinned, an immediate reluctance to go to Christ. I am ashamed to go. I feel as if it would do no good to go,--as if it were making Christ a minister of sin, to go straight from the swine-trough to the best robe,--and a thousand other excuses; but I am persuaded they are all lies, direct from hell.

John argues the opposite way: 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father;' Jer. 3:1 and a thousand other scriptures are against it. I am sure there is neither peace nor safety from deeper sin, but in going directly to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is God's way of peace and holiness. It is folly to the world and the beclouded heart, but it is the way. "I must never think a sin too small to need immediate application to the blood of Christ. If I put away a good conscience, concerning faith I make shipwreck.

I must never think my sins too great, too aggravated, too presumptuous,--as when done on my knees, or in preaching, or by a dying bed, or during dangerous illness,--to hinder me from fleeing to Christ. The weight of my sins should act like the weight of a clock: the heavier it is, it makes it go the faster. "I must not only wash in Christ's blood, but clothe me in Christ's obedience. For every sin of omission in self, I may find a divinely perfect obedience ready for me in Christ.

For every sin of commission in self, I may find not only a stripe or a wound in Christ, but also a perfect rendering of the opposite obedience in my place, so that the law is magnified, its curse more than carried, its demand more than answered. "Often the doctrine of Christ for me appears common, well known, having nothing new in it; and I am tempted to pass it by and go to some scripture more taking. This is the devil again,--a red-hot lie. Christ for us is ever new, ever glorious.

'Unsearchable riches of Christ,'--an infinite object, and the only one for a guilty soul. I ought to have a number of scriptures ready, which lead my blind soul directly to Christ, such as Isaiah 45, Rom. 3.

To be filled with the Holy Spirit I am persuaded that I ought to study more my own weakness. I ought to have a number of scriptures ready to be meditated on, such as Rom. 7, John 15, to convince me that I am a helpless worm. "I am tempted to think that I am now an established Christian,--that I have overcome this or that lust so long,--that I have got into the habit of the opposite grace,--so that there is no fear; I may venture very near the temptation--nearer than other men.

This is a lie of Satan. I might as well speak of gunpowder getting by habit a power of resisting fire, so as not to catch the spark. As long as powder is wet, it resists the spark; but when it becomes dry, it is ready to explode at the first touch. As long as the Spirit dwells in my heart He deadens me to sin, so that, if lawfully called through temptation, I may reckon upon God carrying me through. But when the Spirit leaves me, I

am like dry gunpowder. Oh for a sense of this!

"I am tempted to think that there are some sins for which I have no natural taste, such as strong drink, profane language, etc., so that I need not fear temptation to such sins. This is a lie,--a proud, presumptuous lie. The seeds of all sins, are in my heart, and perhaps all the more dangerously that I do not see them. "I ought to pray and labor for the deepest sense of my utter weakness and helplessness that ever a sinner was brought to feel. I am helpless in respect of every lust that ever was, or ever will be, in the human heart.

I am a worm--a beast--before God. I often tremble to think that this is true. I feel as if it would not be safe for me to renounce all indwelling strength, as if it would be dangerous for me to feel (what is the truth) that there is nothing in me keeping me back from the grossest and vilest sin. This is a delusion of the devil. My only safety is to know, feel, and confess my helplessness, that I may hang upon the arm of Omnipotence ... I daily wish that sin had been rooted out of my heart.

I say, 'Why did God leave the root of lasciviousness, pride, anger, etc., in my bosom? He hates sin, and I hate it; why did He not take it clean away?' I know many answers to this which completely satisfy my judgment, but still I do not feel satisfied. This is wrong. It is right to be weary of the being of sin, but not right to quarrel with my present 'good fight of faith.' ... The falls of professors into sin make me tremble. I have been driven away from prayer, and burdened in a fearful manner by hearing or seeing their sin.

This is wrong. It is right to tremble, and to make every sin of every professor a lesson of my own helplessness; but it should lead me the more to Christ ... If I were more deeply convinced of my utter helplessness, I think I would not be so alarmed when I hear of the falls of other men ... I should study those sins in which I am most helpless, in which passion becomes like a whirlwind and I like a straw. No figure of speech can represent my utter want of power to resist the torrent of sin ...

I ought to study Christ's omnipotence more: Heb. 7:25, I Thess. 5:23, Rom. 6:14, Rom. 5:9, 10, and such scriptures, should be ever before me ... Paul's thorn, II Cor. 12, is the experience of the greater part of my life. It should be ever before me ... There are many subsidiary methods of seeking deliverance from sins, which must not be neglected,--thus, marriage, I Cor. 7:2; fleeing, I Tim. 6:11, I Cor. 6:18; watch and pray, Matt. 26:41; the word, 'It is written, It is written.'

So Christ defended himself; Matt. 4. ... But the main defence is casting myself into the arms of Christ like a helpless child, and beseeching Him to fill me with the Holy Spirit. 'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith,' I John 5:4, 5,--a wonderful passage. "I ought to study Christ as a living Saviour more,--as a Shepherd, carrying the sheep He finds,--as a King, reigning in and over the souls He has redeemed,--as a Captain, fighting with those who fight with me, Ps. 35.,--as one who has engaged to bring me through all temptations and trials, however impossible to flesh and blood.

"I am often tempted to say, How can this Man save us? How can Christ in heaven deliver me from lusts which I feel raging in me, and nets I feel enclosing me? This is the father of lies again! 'He is able to save unto the uttermost.' "I ought to study Christ as an Intercessor. He prayed most for Peter, who was to be most tempted. I am on his breastplate. If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million of enemies. Yet the distance makes no difference; He is praying for me.

"I ought to study the Comforter more,--his Godhead, his love, his almightiness. I have found by experience that nothing sanctifies me so much as meditating on the Comforter, as John 14:16. And yet how seldom I

do this! Satan keeps me from it. I am often like those men who said, They knew not if there be any Holy Ghost ... I ought never to forget that my body is dwelt in by the third Person of the Godhead. The very thought of this should make me tremble to sin; I Cor. 6 ... I ought never to forget that sin grieves the Holy Spirit,--vexes and quenches Him ... If I would be filled with the Spirit, I feel I must read the Bible more, pray more, and watch more.

To gain entire likeness to Christ I ought to get a high esteem of the happiness of it. I am persuaded that God's happiness is inseparably linked in with his holiness. Holiness and happiness are like light and heat. God never tasted one of the pleasures of sin. "Christ had a body such as I have, yet He never tasted one of the pleasures of sin. The redeemed, through all eternity, will never taste one of the pleasures of sin; yet their happiness is complete. It would be my greatest happiness to be from this moment entirely like them.

Every sin is something away from my greatest enjoyment ... The devil strives night and day to make me forget this or disbelieve it. He says, Why should you not enjoy this pleasure as much as Solomon or David? You may go to heaven also. I am persuaded that this is a lie,--that my true happiness is to go and sin no more. "I ought not to delay parting with sins. Now is God's time. 'I made haste and delayed not.' ... I ought not to spare sins because I have long allowed them as infirmities, and others would think it odd if I were to change all at once.

What a wretched delusion of Satan that is! "Whatever I see to be sin, I ought from this hour to set my whole soul against it, using all scriptural methods to mortify it, as the Scriptures, special prayer for the Spirit, fasting, watching. "I ought to mark strictly the occasions when I have fallen, and avoid the occasion as much as the sin itself. "Satan often tempts me to go as near to temptations as possible without committing the sin. This is fearful,--tempting God and grieving the Holy Ghost.

It is a deep-laid plot of Satan. "I ought to flee all temptation, according to Prov. 4:15--Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.' ... I ought constantly to pour out my heart to God, praying for entire conformity to Christ--for the whole law to be written on my heart ... I ought stately and solemnly to give my heart to God--to surrender my all into his everlasting arms, according to the prayer, Ps. 31., 'Into thine hand I commit my spirit,'--beseeching Him not to let any iniquity, secret or presumptuous, have dominion over me, and to fill me with every grace that is in Christ, in the highest degree that it is possible for redeemed sinner to receive it, and at all times, till death.

"I ought to meditate often on heaven as a world of holiness,--where all are holy, where the joy is holy joy, the work holy work; so that, without personal holiness, I never can be there ... I ought to avoid the appearance of evil. God commands me; and I find that Satan has a singular art in linking the appearance and reality together. "I find that speaking of some sins defiles my mind and leads me into temptation; and I find that God forbids even saints to speak of the things that are done of them in secret.

I ought to avoid this. "Eve, Achan, David, all fell through the lust of the eye. I should make a covenant with mine, and pray, 'Turn away mine eyes from viewing vanity.' ... Satan makes unconverted men like the deaf adder to the sound of the gospel. I should pray to be made deaf by the Holy Spirit to all that would tempt me to sin. "One of my most frequent occasions of being led into temptation is this,--I say it is needful to my office that I listen to this, or look into this, or speak of this.

So far this is true; yet I am sure Satan has his part in this argument. I should seek divine direction to settle how far it will be good for my ministry, and how far evil for my soul, that I may avoid the latter. "I am persuaded that nothing is thriving in my soul unless it is growing. 'Grow in grace.' 'Lord, increase our faith.'

'Forgetting the things that are behind.' ... I am persuaded that I ought to be inquiring at God and man what grace I want, and how I may become more like Christ ... I ought to strive for more purity, humility, meekness, patience under suffering, love. 'Make me Christ-like in all things,' should be my constant prayer. 'Fill me with the Holy Spirit.'

Reformation in Secret Prayer "I ought not to omit any of the parts of prayer--confession, adoration, thanksgiving, petition, and intercession. "There is a fearful tendency to omit confession, proceeding from low views of God and his law, slight views of my heart and the sins of my past life. This must be resisted. There is a constant tendency to omit adoration, when I forget to whom I am speaking--when I rush heedlessly into the presence of Jehovah, without remembering his awful name and character--when I have little eyesight for his glory, and little admiration of his wonders.

'Where are the wise?' I have the native tendency of the heart to omit giving thanks. And yet it is specially commanded, Phil. 4:6. Often when the heart is selfish, dead to the salvation of others, I omit intercession. And yet it especially is the spirit of the great Advocate, who has the name of Israel always on his heart. "Perhaps every prayer need not have all these; but surely a day should not pass without some space being devoted to each. "I ought to pray before seeing any one.

Often when I sleep long, or meet with others early, and then have family prayer, and breakfast, and forenoon callers, often it is eleven or twelve o'clock before I begin secret prayer. This is a wretched system. It is unscriptural. Christ rose before day, and went into a solitary place. David says, 'Early will I seek Thee; Thou shalt early hear my voice.' Mary Magdalene came to the sepulchre while it was yet dark. Family prayer loses much of its power and sweetness; and I can do no good to those who come to seek from me.

The conscience feels guilty, the soul unfed, the lamp not trimmed. Then, when secret prayer comes, the soul is often out of tune. I feel it is far better to begin with God--to see his face first--to get my soul near Him before it is near another. 'When I awake I am still with Thee.' 'If I have slept too long, or am going an early journey, or my time is any way shortened, it is best to dress hurriedly, and have a few minutes alone with God, than to give it up for lost. "But in general, it is best to have at least one hour alone with God, before engaging in anything else.

At the same time, I must be careful not to reckon communion with God by minutes or hours, or by solitude. I have pored over my Bible, and on my knees for hours, with little or no communion; and my times of solitude have been often times of greatest temptation. "As to intercession, I ought daily to intercede for my own family, connections, relatives, and friends; also for my flock,--the believers, the awakened, the careless; the sick, the bereaved; the poor, the rich; my elders, Sabbath-school teachers, day-school teachers, children, tract-distributors, that all means may be blessed--Sabbath-day preaching and teaching; visiting of the sick, visiting from house to house; providences, sacraments.

I ought daily to intercede briefly for the whole town, the Church of Scotland, all faithful ministers; for vacant congregations, students of divinity, etc.; for dear brethren by name; for missionaries to Jews and Gentiles, and for this end I must read missionary intelligence regularly, and get acquainted with all that is doing throughout the world. It would stir me up to pray with the map before me. I must have a scheme of prayer, also the names of missionaries marked on the map.

I ought to intercede at large for the above on Saturday morning and evening from seven to eight. Perhaps also I might take different parts for different days; only I ought daily to plead for my family and flock. I ought

to pray in everything. 'Be careful for nothing, but in everything ... by prayer and supplication, make your requests known unto God.' Often I receive a letter asking to preach, or some such request. I find myself answering before having asked counsel of God. Still oftener a person calls and asks me something, and I do not ask direction.

Often I go out to visit a sick person in a hurry, without asking his blessing, which alone can make the visit of any use. I am persuaded that I ought never to do anything without prayer, and, if possible, special, secret prayer. "In reading the history of the Church of Scotland, I see how much her troubles and trials have been connected with the salvation of souls and the glory of Christ. I ought to pray far more for our church, for our leading ministers by name, and for my own clear guidance in the right way, that I may not be led aside, or driven aside, from following Christ.

Many difficult questions may be forced on us for which I am not fully prepared, such as the lawfulness of covenants. I should pray much more in peaceful days, that I may be guided rightly when days of trial come. "I ought to spend the best hours of the day in communion with God. It is my noblest and most fruitful employment, and is not to be thrust into any corner. The morning hours, from six to eight, are the most uninterrupted, and should be thus employed, if I can prevent drowsiness.

A little time after breakfast might be given to intercession. After tea is my best hour, and that should be solemnly dedicated to God, if possible. "I ought not to give up the good old habit of prayer before going to bed; but guard must be kept against sleep: planning what things I am to ask is the best remedy. When I awake in the night, I ought to rise and pray, as David and as John Welsh did. "I ought to read three chapters of the Bible in secret every day, at least. "I ought on Sabbath morning to look over all the chapters read through the week, and especially the verses marked. I ought to read in three different places; I ought also to read according to subjects, lives," etc.

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