

Not as though I had already attained

by William MacDonald

Transcript

“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.” (Phil. 3:12)

In yesterday’s study we saw that our conduct should correspond to our creed. But in order to balance the subject we must add two postscripts.

First, we have to acknowledge that we will never fully and completely live out the truth of God as long as we are in this world. After we have done our best, we still have to say that we are unprofitable servants. But we must not use this fact to excuse failure or even mediocrity: our obligation is to continually try to close the gap between our lips and our lives.

The second consideration is this. The message is always greater than the messenger, no matter who he is. Andrew Murray said, “We who are the Lord’s servants will sooner or later have to preach words which we ourselves are unable to fulfil.” Thirty-five years after he wrote the book *Abide in Christ*, he wrote, “I would like you to understand that a minister or Christian author may often be led to say more than he has experienced. I had not then (when he wrote *Abide in Christ*) experienced all that I wrote of. I cannot say that I have experienced it all yet.”

The truth of God is superlative and sublime. It is so supernal that, as Guy King wrote, it “causes one to fear lest one should in any wise spoil it by touching it.” But must it go forever unheralded simply because we do not reach its loftiest summits? On the contrary we will proclaim it, even if in so doing we condemn ourselves. To whatever extent we fail to experience it ourselves, we will make it the aspiration of our hearts.

Once again we emphasize that these considerations must never be used to excuse behavior that is unworthy of the Savior. But they should keep us from unwarranted condemnation of a true man of God just because his message sometimes leaps to heights which he himself has not attained. And it should not keep us ourselves from holding back the full counsels of God, even if we have not experienced them in full. God knows our hearts. He knows whether we are practicing hypocrites or passionate aspirants.

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