



*“Draughts of
the water of life
are just fresh
views of Christ.”*

“IF THOU KNEWEST
THE GIFT OF GOD...”
JOHN 4:10

Be still.

REAL CHRISTIANITY

Excerpts from the book by William Wilberforce

The name of William Wilberforce is closely linked in history with the prolonged and eventually successful campaign to abolish the slave-trade. It was a long and often disappointing campaign, which brought him a considerable amount of disapproval, especially from the cities like Liverpool, whose prosperity at the time was very dependent financially on the trade. The early Bills aimed at limiting the trade were thrown out by the House of Lords, however, history does not always record in such detail the deep Christian faith which inspired and sustained Wilberforce in his avowed pursuit. A member of the House of Commons, Wilberforce took every opportunity of exposing the evils and horrors of the slave-trade. By the time he died in 1883, a month before his Emancipation Bill was passed, Wilberforce had become the leading evangelical Christian of his day and was regarded by many as the ‘conscience of England’.

‘SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES’ JOHN 5:39

There are many who have indulged all their natural appetites, then are for some reason made aware of the infinite importance of religion. Sickness, perhaps, or the loss of a friend or loved one, or some adverse fortune, depresses them and makes them aware of the precariousness of human life. They start to look for some more stable foundation of happiness than is offered by this world. After only a little self-examination they become aware that they must have offended God. These people want to reform, but they are unaware of the



real nature of their disease or its proper treatment. They are aware that they must ‘cease to do evil, and learn to do well’, but being unaware of the severity of their disease, of the perfect cure provided by the Gospel, or of the way in which that cure is brought about:

*They do but skim and film
the ulcerous place,
While rank corruption,
mining all within,
Infects unseen.*

It happens all too easily with these people that where they do not at an early stage give up their attempt at reformation and relapse into their old sinful habits, they make a partial amendment and persuade themselves that it is a thorough change. Unable to bring their practice up to the right standard,

they lower their standard to the level of their practice. They are content with their present attainments, deluded by self-satisfaction and the favourable comments of their friends.

Others, perhaps, go farther than this. Dread of the wrath to come has sunk deeper into their hearts and for a time they strive with all their might against their evil propensities and to walk the path of duty without stumbling. Again and again they resolve, yet again and again they break their resolutions. Every endeavour is foiled, and they become increasingly convinced of their own moral weakness and of the corrupting power within. They are tempted in consequence to give up in despair and accept their wretched captivity, believing it impossible to break their chains. While this conflict rages, their daily life is sad and comfortless, they are depressed and tearful. These people are pursuing the right object, but they have missed the way to get there. The path they are now treading is not the one the Gospel provides to conduct them to true holiness. Under these circumstances people will often turn to religious instruction.

But the Scriptures call upon them to renew the foundation of their whole religion, to first of all give thanks and praise to the one who, though they are undeserving, has awakened them from the sleep of death; then to fall down before the cross of Christ in humble repentance and deep self-loathing, resolving solemnly to forsake all their sins and rely on God’s grace alone for power to keep their resolution. In

this way alone are they assured that all their sins will be blotted out and that they will receive from above a holy and spiritual life. This point cannot be overstressed. On this the whole of Christianity turns.

“Without holiness no one will see the Lord.” **The major distinction between a true Christian and a nominal one concerns the nature of this holiness, and the way in which it is to be obtained.** The latter believe that it is obtained by their own unassisted efforts. If they admit in a vague sort of way that it involves the assistance of the Holy Spirit, it is quite clear on talking to them that in practical terms that is not what they depend on. But the holiness to which the true Christian directs his desires is none other than the restoration of the image of God in his life. Far from obtaining it by his own strength, all his hopes of possessing it rest completely on God’s assurances of the working of the Holy Spirit in those who believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He knows therefore that his holiness is not to precede his reconciliation to God, and so be its cause, but to follow it, and be its effect. That, in short, it is by faith in Christ alone that he is to be justified in the sight of God, delivered from the condition of a child of wrath and a slave of Satan. He is adopted into God’s family and becomes an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ, entitled to all the privileges which belong to this high relationship. These involve in this life, by the spirit of grace, a partial renewal after the image of his Creator and, hereafter, the more perfect possession of the divine likeness and an eternal and glorious inheritance.

In obedience to the Gospel, the true Christian first comes to possess the new life which leads to growth in holiness. In order to grow in grace, he must continue to study, finding as he contemplates the teachings contained in the Gospel and also in the life, character and sufferings of our Saviour, the basis for all practical wisdom, with an inexhaustible store of instructions and motives.

With these mighty truths in view, the dwarfish morality of professed Christians would be put to shame. In no way would they be made to harmonise with their inadequate conceptions of the wretchedness and danger of their natural state, a state which moved God’s compassion so powerfully that He sent His only Son to rescue us. Where now their inadequate conceptions of the value of the soul, when means like these were taken to redeem it? Where their inadequate conceptions of the guilt of sin, for which in God’s wisdom it required an atonement no less costly than that of the blood of the only begotten Son of God? How can they reconcile their low standard of Christian practice with the representation of our being a ‘temple of the Holy Spirit’ (1 Cor. 6:19) and ‘rescued...from the dominion of darkness and brought...into the kingdom of the Son he loves’ (Col. 1:13).

To neglect these truths is unpardonable, because the whole superstructure of Christian morality is based on them. They are clearly and repeatedly represented in Scripture as furnishing Christians with a vigorous and ever-present principle of universal obedience, every Christian duty being traced to its proper source, warming the hearts of the people of God on earth with continual admiration, thankfulness, love and joy; as triumphing over the attack of the last great enemy, and as calling forth afresh in heaven the ardent effusions of their unexhausted gratitude.

If we would indeed be filled with ‘all spiritual wisdom and understanding’ (Col. 1:9), if we would ‘live a life worthy of the Lord and... please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing the in the knowledge of God’ (Col. 1:10), this is where we should be looking! ‘...let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God’ (Heb. 12:1-2).

FIX OUR EYES ON JESUS!

This is the best place to learn that an absolute and unconditional surrender of soul and body to the will and service of God is not only our duty but also is sensible. ‘You are not your own; you were bought at a price,’ and must therefore make it your chief concern to ‘honour God with your body’ (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Could we be so base as to make any reserves in our returns of service to such a gracious Saviour? If we have previously talked of condoning some actions which are wrong, can we now bear to mention such a thing, or serve to ourselves the right to practice ‘little’ sins? The very suggestion of such an idea fills us with indignation and shame.

FIX OUR EYES ON JESUS!

Here also we get a clear idea of the guilt of sin, and how hateful it must be to a God of perfect holiness. ‘Your eyes are too pure to look on evil’ (Hab. 1:13). When we see that, rather than let sin go unpunished, ‘He...did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all’ (Rom. 8:32). ‘Yet it was the Lord’s will to crush Him and cause Him to suffer’ (Isa. 53:10), for our sakes. Impenitent sinners have a vain hope of escaping heaven’s vengeance as they buoy themselves up with desperate dreams of a benign deity!

Rather than that we should undergo the suffering of hell, God’s Son Himself, who ‘did not consider equality with God something to be grasped’ (Phil. 2:6) consented to take upon himself our degraded nature, with all its physical weaknesses, He became ‘a man of sorrows’ (Isa. 53:3) who did not hide His face ‘from mocking and spitting’ (Isa. 50:6) and

was ‘pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities’ (Isa. 53:5). In the end He endured death’s sharpness, ‘even death on a cross!’ (Phil. 2:8) in order to rescue ‘us from the coming wrath’ (1 Thess. 1:10) and open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

FIX OUR EYES ON JESUS!

This is where we learn to grow in the love of God! The certainty of His pity and love towards repenting sinners, undisputedly demonstrated, chases away all fear and lays the foundation in us for a reciprocal feeling. And while we contemplate steadily this wonderful transaction and with all its different aspects, the amazing truth, that God ‘did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all’ (Rom. 8:32), if we are not completely insensitive then feelings of admiration, preference, hope, trust and joy must spring up within us. These will be tempered by reverential fear, and softened and quickened by overflowing gratitude. An abiding desire will fill us to try to please our mighty Saviour. Whenever we are conscious that we have offended our gracious Lord, one thought of the great work of redemption will suffice to stir our consciences. We shall feel deep concern, grief mingled with shame, for having behaved so unworthily towards one who has been infinite in kindness to us. We shall not rest till we have reason to hope that He is reconciled to us again. We shall watch our hearts and future conduct with increased care lest we should offend Him again. The feelings and dispositions which have been enumerated are the infallible indicators and the constituents of love. The frequent consideration of the great Gospel doctrines must tend to produce and nurture in our minds the principle of the love of Christ.

The love of our fellows is the Christian’s indispensable and characteristic duty. **This grace can be cultivated nowhere with greater benefit than at the foot of the cross.** Nowhere can we reflect with more effect our Saviour’s dying injunction to exercise this virtue: ‘A new commandment I give you: Love one another, as I have loved you’ (John 13:34). Nowhere can the apostle’s admonition affect us more powerfully: ‘Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you’ (Eph. 4:32). Just the picture of man as involved in one common ruin and the offer of deliverance held out to all by God’s son giving of Himself to pay the price of our reconciliation, produces a sympathy towards our fellow creatures. Pity for an unthinking world adds to this feeling so that our enmities soften and melt away. We are ashamed of dwelling over petty injuries which we may have suffered, when we consider what the Son of God who ‘committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth’ (1 Pet. 2:22) patiently underwent. Our hearts become tender while we contemplate this signal act of loving kindness and we long to imitate

what we can only admire. A lively principle of increased and active charity takes hold of us and we set off speedily, desiring to tread in our Master's steps and to show our gratitude for His unmerited goodness, by bearing each other's burdens, and abounding in good works.

FIX OUR EYES ON JESUS!

He was meek and lowly, and the study of His character is the best way to learn the lessons of humility. **As we contemplate the work of redemption, we become more and more aware of our state of natural darkness, helplessness and misery, from which at such a price, it was necessary to ransom us.** We become increasingly conscious that we are utterly unworthy of all the amazing condescension and love which have been shown us. The callousness of our tenderest feelings shames us as do the poor results of our most active services. Such considerations abate our pride, reduce our opinion of ourselves, and naturally temper our demands upon others. We are less disposed to insist on respect for our persons and authority, which we naturally covet. We are less sensitive to slight and resent it less hotly. Less irritable and prone to be dissatisfied, we are more gentle and courteous. We are not required literally to behave in the same humiliating way as our saviour Himself. 'Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet' (John 13:14), but the spirit of His remark applies to us 'no servant is greater than his master' (John 13:16). We should bear this truth in mind especially when called upon to discharge some duty, or patiently to bear some ill treatment which will wound our pride and we are likely to fall in the world's estimation. At the same time sacred Scripture assures us that it is to the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit, purchased for us by the death of Christ, that we must be indebted for the success of all our endeavours to improve in virtue. An appreciation of these truths will keep us from any vanity. It is Scripture's characteristic that by its application all tendency to exalt ourselves is excluded, so that if we really grow in grace, we shall also grow in humility.

FIX OUR EYES ON JESUS!

He 'endured the cross, scorning its shame' (Heb. 12:2). While we steadily contemplate this solemn scene, a spirit of soberness comes over us, which best befits the Christian fighting here on earth. We become aware of the shortness and uncertainty of time, and that it is incumbent upon us to be diligent and make provision for eternity. In such a frame of mind, life's pomps and vanities are put behind us like children's playthings. We lose our relish for a life of gaiety and ambition's race. In the case even of those objects which might more justly claim our attention such as our family arrangements, our plans for life or our business schemes, we become, though dutiful, more moderate in

pursuit and more indifferent about the outcome. Here also we learn to correct the world's false estimate of things, to venerate the truly excellent and noble and to cultivate that true magnanimity so that we can rise above the smiles or frowns of this world with a dignified composure which no earthly happenings can destroy or ruffle.

Instead of enduring the little inconveniences we may meet from time to time, we are almost ashamed of our many comforts and enjoyments, when we think of Him, who though 'the Lord of glory' (1 Cor. 2:8) had 'nowhere to lay His head' (Matt. 8:20). And if evils of more than ordinary magnitude befall us, we are borne up by reflecting that hereby we are more conformed to the example of our Master. But we must always remember one important difference, that Christ's sufferings were voluntarily borne for our benefit and were probably far more exquisitely agonising than any which we are called upon to experience. Besides, it is a great support to us to know that troubles do not happen to us by chance. They are not even merely the punishment of sin, but the dispensations of a kindly Providence.

FIX OUR EYES ON JESUS!

'The author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God' (Heb. 12:2). From the scene of our Saviour's weakness and degradation, we follow Him, in our imagination, into the realms of glory, where He is on the right hand of God; angels, and principalities, and powers being made subject to Him. But though in a different place, he still has the same nature, full of sympathy and love and having died to save 'His people from their sins' (Matt. 1:21), 'He always lives to intercede for them' (Heb. 7:25). Cheered by this inspiring view, the Christian's fainting spirits revive. Under the heaviest burdens he feels reinvigorated and when all around is dark and stormy he can look up to heaven, radiant with hope and gratitude. At such a time dangers cannot alarm, opposition move, or provocations irritate. He may note as the language of his sober process what in the philosopher would be idle ranting. Since it is only his mortal body which is subject to the darts of fortune, while his spirit, cheered by divine support, remains secure and unassailable, he can sometimes almost triumph at the stake.

But rarely is the Christian elevated with this 'inexpressible and glorious joy' (1 Pet. 1:8). Sadly, emotions of another kind often fill him with grief and confusion and he is conscious of having acted in a manner unworthy of his high calling. Perhaps he has exposed himself to the just censure of a world ready enough to spy out his weakness. However, let him remember that his chief business on earth is not to meditate, but to act. The seeds of moral corruption are prone to spring up within him so that he must watch over his

heart with incessant care. He must faithfully fulfil his particular duties and behave himself by following the example of his Master, whose meat and drink it was to do the work of His heavenly Father. He should diligently cultivate the talents which God has entrusted to him and employ them assiduously in doing justice and showing mercy, while he guards against the assaults of the enemy within.

In short, he is to behave in all the common affairs of life like someone who is accountable and whose actions correspond with descriptions in Scripture of Christians who 'eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed' (1 Cor. 1:7). He will often ask himself, 'Am I using my time, my fortune, my bodily and mental powers, so as to be able to give a good account of myself?' Am I making 'the teaching about God our Saviour attractive' (Titus 2:10)? Am I demonstrating that Christ's servants inspired by the love of their Father, which makes their work for Him a service of perfect freedom, are as capable of active and persevering exertion as are the seekers of fame, or the slaves of ambition, or greed?

Without interrupting his work, a Christian may from time to time switch his thoughts to spiritual things and look towards his heavenly advocate, who is always pleading on behalf of His people and supplying them with grace and consolation. If he can gain spiritual refreshment from these glimpses which are 'but a poor reflection' (1 Cor. 13:12), what will it be like on the resurrection morning when he awakes to the unclouded vision of celestial glory? So let us not forget that the main distinction between real and nominal Christianity consists chiefly in the importance assigned to the special teachings found in the Gospel. For nominal Christians, if they admit such teachings they are regarded like the stars in the sky as seen by the naked eye. They occasionally draw forth a transient expression of admiration, when we see their beauty, or hear their distances, magnitudes, or properties described. We may muse sometimes on their possible uses, but however curious as subjects of speculation except in the minds of astrologers, they have no influence on human happiness, or any concern with the course and order of the world. **For the real Christian, on the other hand, these teachings constitute his true centre of gravity;** the very sun of his system! They are the source of light, life, motion and growth. Even the Old Testament itself, though divinely revealed, shines less brightly when seen on its own. But the truths of the Gospel have now been unveiled for us to see and we are invited to look upon and enjoy 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ' (2 Cor. 4:6). The words of inspiration best express our highly favoured state: 'And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit' (2 Cor. 3:18). ❖

Reservoir of Love

from SECRET POWER by Dwight L. Moody

We read that the fruit of the Spirit is love. God is love, Christ is love, and we should not be surprised to read about the love of the Spirit. What a blessed attribute is this. May I call it **the dome of the temple of the graces**. Better still, it is the crown of crowns worn by the Triune God. Human love is a natural emotion which flows forth towards the object of our affections. But Divine love is as high above human love as the heaven is above the earth. The natural man is of the earth, earthy, and however pure his love may be, it is weak and imperfect at best. But the love of God is perfect and entire, wanting nothing. It is as a mighty ocean in its greatness, dwelling with and flowing from the Eternal Spirit.

In Romans 5:5, we read: "*And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us.*"

Now if we are co-workers with God, there is one thing we must possess, and that is love. A man may be a very successful lawyer and have no love for his clients, and yet get on very well. A man may be a very successful physician and have no love for his patients, and yet be a very good physician; a man may be a very successful merchant and have no love for his customers, and yet he may do a good business and succeed; but no man can be a co-worker with God without love. If our service is mere profession on our part, the quicker we renounce it the better. If a man takes up God's work as he would take up any profession, the sooner he gets out of it the better.

We cannot work for God without love. It is the only tree that can produce fruit on this sin-cursed earth, that is acceptable to God. If I have no love for God nor for my fellow man, then I cannot work acceptably. I am like sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. We are told that the "*love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.*" Now, if we have had that love shed abroad in our hearts, we are ready for God's service; if we have not, we are not ready. It is so easy to reach a man when you love him; all barriers are broken down and swept away.

Paul when writing to Titus (2:1), tells him to be sound in faith, in charity, and in patience. Now in this age, ever since I can remember, the Church has been very jealous about men being unsound in the faith. If a man becomes unsound in the faith, they draw their ecclesiastical sword and cut at him; but he may be ever so unsound in love, and they don't say anything. He may be

ever so defective in patience; he may be irritable and fretful all the time, but they never deal with him. Now the Bible teaches us that **we are not only to be sound in the faith, but in charity and in patience.** I believe God cannot use many of His servants, because they are full of irritability and impatience; they are fretting all the time, from morning until night. God cannot use them; their mouths are sealed; they cannot speak for Jesus Christ, and if they have not love, they cannot work for God. I do not mean love for those that love me; it doesn't take grace to do that; the vilest man that ever walked the earth can do that. It doesn't take any grace at all. I did that before I ever became a Christian. Love begets love; hatred begets hatred. If I know a man loves me first, I know my love will be going out towards him. It takes the grace of God to love the man that lies about me, the man that slanders me, the man that is trying to tear down my character; it takes the grace of God to love that man. You may hate the sin he has committed; there is a difference between the sin and the sinner; you may hate the one with a perfect hatred, but you must love the sinner. I cannot otherwise do him any good. Now you know the first impulse of a young convert is to love. Do you remember the day you were converted? Was not your heart full of sweet peace and love?

I remember the morning I came out of my room after I had first trusted Christ, and I thought the old sun shone a good deal brighter than it ever had before; I thought that the sun was just smiling upon me, and I walked out upon Boston Common, and I heard the birds in the trees, and I thought that they were all singing a song for me. I never cared for them before; it seemed to me that I was in love with all creation. I had not a bitter feeling against any man, and I was ready to take all men to my heart. If a man has not the love of God shed abroad in his heart, he has never been regenerated. If you hear a person get up in a prayer meeting, and he begins to speak and find fault with everybody, you may know that his is not a genuine conversion; that it is counterfeit; it has not the right ring, because the impulse of a converted soul is to love, and not to be getting up and complaining of every one else, and finding fault.

But it is hard for us to live in the right atmosphere all the time. Someone comes along and treats us wrongly, perhaps we hate him; we have not attended to the means of grace and kept feeding on the Word of God as we ought; a root of bitterness springs up in our hearts, and perhaps we are not aware of it, but it has come up in our hearts; then we are not qualified to work for God. The love of God is not shed abroad in our hearts as it ought to be by the Holy Ghost. But the work of the Holy Ghost is to impart love. Paul could say, "*The love of Christ constraineth me.*" He could not help going from town to town and preaching the Gospel. Jeremiah at one time said: "I will speak no more

in the Lord's name; I have suffered enough; these people don't like God's Word." They lived in a wicked day, as we do now. Infidels were creeping up all around him, who said the Word of God was not true; Jeremiah had stood like a wall of fire, confronting them, and he boldly proclaimed that the Word of God was true. At last they put him in prison, and he said: "I will keep still; it has cost me too much." But a little while after, you know, he could not keep still. His bones caught fire; he had to speak. And **when we are so full of the Love of God, we are compelled to work for God**, then God blesses us. If our work is sought to be accomplished by the lash, without any true motive power, it will come to nought.

Now the question comes up, have we the love of God shed abroad in our hearts and are we holding the truth in love? Some people hold the truth, but in such a cold stern way that it will do no good. Other people want to love everything, and so they give up much of the truth; but we are to hold the truth in love; we are to hold the truth even if we lose all, but we are to hold it in love, and if we do that, the Lord will bless us.

There are a good many people trying to get this love; and they are trying to produce it of themselves. But therein all fail. The love implanted deep in our new nature will be spontaneous. I don't have to learn to love my children. I cannot help loving them. I said to a young woman some time ago who said that she could not love God, that it was very hard for her to love Him, "Is it hard for you to love your Mother? Do you have to learn to love your Mother? And she looked up through her tears, and said, "No; I can't help it; that is spontaneous." "Well," I said, "when the Holy Spirit kindles love in your heart, you cannot help loving God; it will be spontaneous." When the Spirit of God comes into your heart and mine, it will be easy to serve God.

The fruit of the Spirit, as you find it in Galatians, begins with love. Of the nine different graces spoken of, Paul puts love at the head of the list; love is the first thing—the first in that precious cluster of fruit. Someone has put it in this way: that all the other eight can be put in the word love. Joy is love exulting; peace is love in repose; long suffering is love on trial; gentleness is love in society; goodness is love in action; faith is love on the battlefield; meekness is love at school; and temperance is love in training. So it is love all the way; love at the top; love at the bottom, and all the way along down these graces; and if we only just brought forth the fruit of the Spirit, what a world we would have; there would be no need of any policemen; men would not have any desire to do evil. A man who is full of the Spirit doesn't need to be put under law; doesn't need any policemen to watch him. We could dismiss all our policemen; the lawyers would have to give up practicing law, and the courts would not have any business. Says Paul, "*Against such there is no law.*" *

As the sun in the heavens exercises a mighty and unceasing attractive energy on the planets which circle round it, so did the Sun of Righteousness, which had indeed arisen on Paul with a brightness above that of noon-day, exercise on his mind a continual and an almighty energy, *constraining* him to live henceforth not unto himself, but to him that died for him and rose again. —M'CHEYNE