

ANDREW BONAR

A LIFE DEVOTED TO JESUS CHRIST

"It was in the year 1830 that I found the Saviour, or rather, that He found me and laid me on His shoulders rejoicing, and I have never parted company with Him all these sixty-two years."

—Andrew Bonar in 1892

Prayer Makes History

by David Smithers

Truly great men seldom recognise their own worth. Such a great man was Andrew Bonar. His diary is a virtual textbook on the qualities of brokenness and humility. Almost every page seems to be filled with expressions of his transparency and sense of unworthiness apart from Christ. For the true saint, the path of brokenness leads straight to the throne of grace. Andrew Bonar was no exception to this divine rule. Majory Bonar, Mr. Bonar's daughter, describes his diary as a "revelation of one who prayed always and who prayed everywhere." John J. Murray wrote of Andrew Bonar, "He did not believe in any shortcut to holiness and usefulness in the work of God. He knew that the one and only way to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus



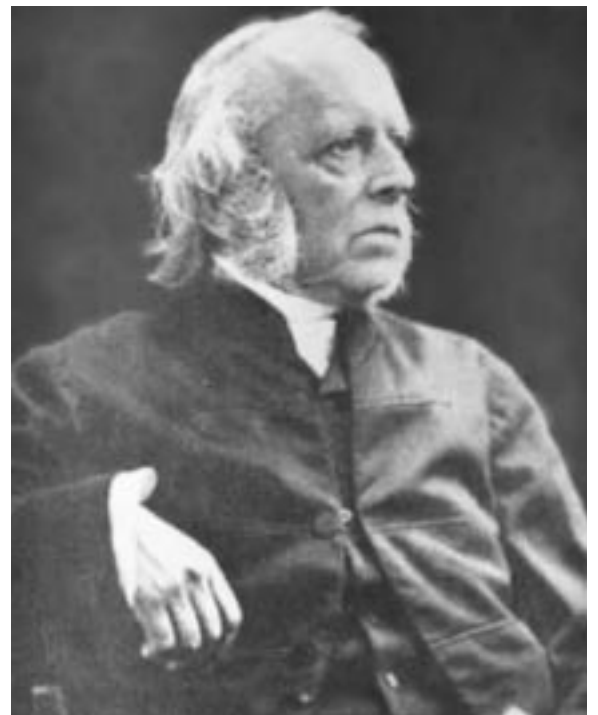
Be Still.

THOUGHTS AND READINGS FOR MEDITATION

Christ was daily and hourly communion with the Father and the Son". Andrew Bonar himself wrote, "There is too much time taken up with active work for the Kingdom. Surely if God's servants are to speak and preach in the power of the Holy Spirit they must again give themselves continually to prayer..."

Mr. Bonar was able to accomplish much with men in public because he spent much time with Jesus Christ in private.

Andrew Bonar was just one of many Scottish ministers used of God during the Kilsyth Revival of 1839-1840. The ministers most honoured by Christ's presence during this time of refreshing were W. C. Burns, Robert Murray McCheyne, Alexander Moody Stuart and Andrew Bonar. All of these men were close friends who encouraged one another in the practice of constant prayer. Soon after the decline of the Kilsyth Revival, Andrew Bonar said, "I have learned by experience that it is not much labour but much prayer that is the only means to success." Mr. Bonar was able to accomplish much with men in public because he spent much time with Jesus Christ in private. The daily entries of Bonar's diary testify of this fact. He wrote on January 3rd, 1856, "I have been endeavouring to keep up prayer at this season every hour of the day,



"Nothing makes assurance so sure as knowing that God gets honour by accepting a sinner"

"WHOSOEVER THEREFORE SHALL CONFESS ME BEFORE MEN, HIM WILL I CONFESS ALSO BEFORE MY FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN." MATT. 10:32

stopping my occupation, whatever it is, to pray a little. I seek to keep my soul within the shadow of the throne of grace and Him that sits thereon." Sabbath, March 8th—"I feel afraid of myself on the ground that I am less prayerful than I used to be, although often more helped in preaching than ever..." Wednesday, 24th, "Oh my God, never let me walk even in the green pastures, without thee! I feel glad to live as a pilgrim and stranger, and more, far more than before, I seek by prayer and strong crying in secret to see God glorified in the salvation of souls."

In a letter to a close friend Andrew Bonar wrote, "Oh brother, pray; in spite of Satan, pray; spend hours in prayer, rather neglect

friends than not pray, rather fast, and lose breakfast, dinner, supper and sleep too—than not pray. And we must not talk about prayer—we must pray in right earnest. The Lord is near. He comes softly while the virgins slumber."

Andrew Bonar lived in a time of revival and yet he was always praying for more of God's revival power. His diary again makes this clear. Wednesday, 21st—"Enabled to spend nearly the whole day in prayer, praise and confession. I was led to deep humiliation for our church, and prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on my people. I spread out several promises before the Lord, and my heart was sore with desire and yet glad with expectation of what this

day may obtain for me. But I find true what Samuel Rutherford wrote: 'A bed watered with tears, a throat dry with praying, eyes a fountain of tears for the sins of the land are rarely to be found among us.'"

Andrew Bonar was a man who was intimately acquainted with Jesus Christ. As a result he saw what Jesus saw and therefore cared, wept and prayed like Jesus. Far too often our own eyes are dry because our eyes are blind to the needs around us. Many of us have become blinded by the temporal, till we can no longer see the eternal reality of the holiness of heaven and horrors of hell. Lord draw us back to the prayer closet where blind eyes see and hardened hearts are broken. Lord, have mercy and bring us to brokenness!

Excerpts from

HEAVENLY SPRINGS

by Andrew Bonar

The Lord Our Righteousness

July 26, 1862

"Last night went to sleep repeating 'the Lord my righteousness,' feeling as if with this upon my forehead I could go into the New Jerusalem and to the just."

"Are you more weary than ever of your own righteousness—of self, which is truly a hydra—of your fellow-men and corruption? Are you not '*looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God*'? You and I shall then stand in our Redeemer's beauty, all fair, no spot, without blemish, without wrinkle, white and clean, in fine linen, in garments of needlework, *like Jesus*. Will you know me in that day? *Will you know yourself?*"

"A sinner must begin with righteousness, not with love. God gives no peace but by righteousness."

"Christ's obedience was His taking up our undone work. His life of obedience—you know what it was? A walk from Bethlehem to Calvary without a stumble."

"Christ came to provide us with righteousness undefiled. He obeyed for us perfectly. In that robe He walked through our world every day, and when He had finished His walk, as Elijah left his mantle to Elisha, the Saviour left His robe for us to wear."

"Righteousness and love constitute grace."

"You can remember when you thought you were to get into heaven in spite of God's holiness. Now you know that it is because of His holiness that you get there, for none

but the all-holy God would have sent His Son to die for us, or would have known that only a perfectly holy heaven could make us happy to all eternity. Once you dreaded holy ground—but now holy ground is become to you as the very floor of heaven."

"Christ's holy human nature did not know how *not* to obey and how *not* to suffer when the Father required it of Him."

"The man who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ keeps all the ten commandments."

"Until you can build your hope for eternity on the two tables of the law unbroken, you can have no solid peace."

Riches of Grace

July 11, 1866

"Some glimpses of free grace, seeing the Lord to be giving, giving all around from year to year, in things spiritual and temporal, seeing that we do nothing but take, take, take."

July 20, 1872

"No man is a disciple till he has a heart experience of what *grace* means."

"Judge of God's love only by His unspeakable gift—a gift irrevocably given and given to you—never by frames and states and feelings and your own thoughts."

"The promises are streams coming down from the heart of Christ. Christ never seems to be able to keep to Himself what He gets. He always gives it away."

"God is always able to love us without a cause, though we hated Him without a cause. You must have misunderstood God or

you would have been drawn to Him long ago."

"God longs for your company. '*Return unto Me, for I have redeemed thee.*'"

"*'The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble.'* The Lord might say to us, 'Ah, when there was no storm you went your own way. Now in the tempest you cry to Me.' It is a beautiful thing about the Lord that He knows our selfishness, but never upbraids us for it, if we come to Him."

"Christ met His disciples on a mountain in Galilee, and what did He say to them, 'I will never trust you again'? To those very men who had so ungratefully forsaken Him and fled, he said, '*Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.* I will trust even you with My message to the sinner.' Herein is Christ's love."

"*'Go tell My brethren.'* He is not ashamed to call them brethren though they were ashamed to call Him Lord a few days ago!"

The Garment of Praise

December 16, 1886

"This morning felt powerfully that if the Lord were to show us 'all His benefits,' the sight would be too much for us to bear, for the contrast of our forgetfulness, ingratitude, selfishness, would rush upon us with awful power."

January 1, 1884

Christ had a delight in praise, possibly because it was a kind of echo from heaven. It reminded Him of the scenes He had left."

"Paul and Silas spread the Gospel over the whole city by their prayers and praises, and

they thought it was to be by their preaching!"

"There is one ear that listens to every note of praise from every one of His people. God's heart is so quick and so tender that He can hear the hosanna of a little child. Never say, 'I need not praise Him. he will never miss me from the choir.'

"The Lord wishes us never to forget His past dealings. We should have a memory for them. In the kingdom we shall oftentimes remember the past. It will be a stream of joy to us to go back to the wilderness trials, and understand God's dealings with us, and how He led us by the pillar-cloud all the way. 'He that sitteth on the throne shall tabernacle among them,' as if going over the desert scene again."

"God gave His only-begotten Son.' He gave up the half of His own joy for a time for us."

The Day of Sorrow

October 14, 1876

"My heart's desire is that the sweetness of Divine communion may to me be such that it will make all other wants forgotten."

October 15, 1882

"This season has been sending me back to eighteen years ago, a never-to-be-forgotten time. I thought then that life could never again be lightsome, but I find that the more of Christ we enjoy the more we are able to bear."

October 15, 1886

"I have learned in some measure that the Lord can fill the soul with Himself, where He takes away what seemed indispensable to our happiness."

October 14, 1888

"Himself with me has been quiet consolation in the day of sorrow."

"When we have truly found Christ, we can go through the world alone."

"When God has wiped away every tear from our eyes we shall see His providences very clearly."

"If you are a child of God there is nothing in the world you cannot do without, and have in heaven in the want of it."

"The joy of the Lord is your strength.' Whatever is burdening you, get back to that joy of the Lord, and you are above the trouble. When harassed with a multitude of cares you have perhaps got from the Lord such a time of joy that for that time you were above all care. So in a time of affliction, when you retreat to the fortress, O how you will triumph!"

The Sinfulness of Sin

May 29, 1869

"I got a very awful view of my long life's sinfulness this evening. I seemed to myself

to be one standing amid mercies of every kind, but specially Divine grace. The Spirit has been, since my conversion forty years ago, nearly continually putting to my lips full cups of blessing, and I have done little else than just take a few drops and then set the cup by! The Bible day by day; precious sermons; great books of truth; the lives of holy and happy saints; events of providence; all, all these, and my own preaching and the ordinances in which I take part; these, these have been each a full cup of blessing put to my lips; but scarcely ever have I done more than merely take a sip. Oh, what I have lost! My heart sinks within me. I can only again put my hand upon the head of the slain Lamb, and look up. The words of Joel 2:25 have been before now a comfort; for in some way the Lord will add that to all His other acts of grace. "I will restore to you the years that the locusts have eaten."

May 4, 1883

"This morning awoke from a dream, in which I thought I got an amazing view of the greatness of one sin against such a God. How it made the atonement appear wonderfully great!"

"God's grace is all against sin. The Gospel that brings a sinner to God exposes the sinner's sin and gives him the remedy, 'Go, and sin no more.'"

"I think Jesus will weep over the lost as He did over Jerusalem. It will be something to be said for ever in heaven, 'Jesus wept as He said, "Depart ye cursed,"' But then it was absolutely necessary to say it."

"I think that the shower of fire and brimstone was wet with the tears of God as it fell, for God hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth."

"God is a sin-hater, but a soul-lover"

"No one ever honestly confesses before God the sin he has done, till that sin is taken away. It is a full pardon that makes a man guileless."

"Sorrow wells out of sin just as blood wells out of a wound."

"Independence of God is bondage to Satan."

"It is a real sense of sin that in a moment explains to us the richest figures [symbols] in the Bible."

"Sorrow can never put away sin; sacrifice alone can do that. So they not only wept at Bochim, but 'they sacrificed there unto the Lord.'"

"A cloak of profession will make an awful blaze in that day when He burns the stubble."

"There is no man that sinneth not.' This truth is the hypocrite's pillow, but the believer's bed of thorns."

Fellow Helpers

April 24, 1847

"I learned one thing over again, that while the Lord seems to use evangelists to awaken souls, He keeps a place for older labourers, in the instruction and leading of the saved. We must all know our place, and be satisfied. We are while here, like roots underground with all the principles of life, struggling upward, and soon to shoot forth above many a leaf of beauty, and many a branch bearing fruit worthy of Him in whom our root is fastened. The clods of earth interrupt our upward growth for a time. What a burst of sunshine and glorious liberty awaits us!"

"I have been led to notice one interesting feature in Paul. Though the greatest and wisest—best-stored of all—he never seems to like to stand alone. It is always Paul and Timothy—Paul and Barnabas—Paul and Sosthenes. Now this is not from want of firmness, needing the sympathy of others to decide him, but from deep wisdom. He sees that this is God's way of keeping the workers humble. He does not employ one only at a building, but several, and so no one can say, 'The success is owing to me.' It may be your fellow-labourer that is the secret of the blessing; perhaps he is more prayerful than you, more single-minded."

"It is a rule in the family of God that every one that loveth Him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of Him. We are to work together."

"When grace comes into the heart of a man the instinct for sympathy grows stronger, and, on the other hand, it prompts him to give more sympathy."

"In holiness we must go on together, not alone. You will not get on by separating yourself to read and pray. It must be along 'with them that call on the Lord.'"

"God loves unity, and so He loves a united cry, a petition signed by more than one."

"Christ liked to come to the Feast when He was going to give the blessing. He like to come to the upper room, when they were all assembled there."

"When believers can work together, overlooking each other's faults and failings, then the blessing comes. The dew does not fall on a windy night; it is when all is still."

"If we are true disciples we are always learning. Every disciple we meet with has something for us, if we could only get it. We are wrong if we are not trying to draw out of others what God has given them. Never think you can be of no use to another disciple. God does not give everything to one. Aquila and Priscilla could do a great deal even for Apollos."

"Exhort one another daily.' If the two Emmaus disciples had been silent, would Jesus have come between?" ♦

Gentle Instruction

by Ian Hamilton Cambridge Presbyterian Church

The spirit in which we comfort, counsel and rebuke one another is of paramount importance.

Our Lord Jesus' teaching is always deeply searching, sometimes almost unbearably so. Few statements of our Lord are more calculated to search our hearts than what he says about 'specks' and 'planks' (Matthew 7:1-5). The picture conveyed by our Lord is almost comical. A man with a huge plank of wood sticking out of his eye, says to another man who is troubled by a speck of wood in his eye, "Let me take the speck out of your eye." There is no doubt the man with the speck in his eye needs help. The speck needs to be removed before it causes him greater problems. It is a little problem, but it is a real problem, and needs removing. But who is to remove the speck? Certainly not the man with the plank sticking out of his eye! Of all people, he is least suited and fitted to do the job. Why? Because, while he sees that the man with the speck has a problem, he is blind to the even greater problems in his own life. His 'plank' has blinded him, made him insensible to his own great need. In trying to take the speck out of the other man's eye (if his plank would even allow him to know what and where the speck was!), the man with the plank would do great damage.

Jesus is not saying that 'specks' don't matter. Everything in our lives matters to God. If there are things wrong in our lives, they need to be dealt with, removed. When Jesus says in Matthew 7:1 "do not judge, or you too will be judged," his words have often been misunderstood. Our Lord is not saying absolutely that we are not to judge. Indeed, in verse 6, Jesus encourages us to make judgements: "do not give dogs what is sacred: do not throw your pearls to pigs!" What, then, does Jesus mean? His illustration is surely obvious: the man with the plank sticking out of his eye is the man who only too clearly sees sins in others, but is acutely blind to recognising the sin in his own life. Indeed, he is blind to the fact that the sin in his life is greater than anything he sees in the lives of others. He is a 'censorious man.' This was one of the

sins of the Pharisees.

This spirit of censoriousness is only too common. We can all, only too easily, slip into this sin, for sin it is. What is often missed here, is the fact that the censor usually has a point. There are specks, lots of them, and they need pointing out and removing—but not by those who are 'holier-than-thou.' In pastoral ministry, and all Christians are pastors to one another, the application of truth is not the only objective. We are told of our Lord Jesus, "A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out." He knows our frame, but he remembers we are dust! The spirit in which we comfort, counsel and rebuke one another is of paramount importance.

Paul urges Timothy to "gently instruct" those who oppose him, and reminds the censorious Corinthians, "Love is patient, love is kind... it is not self-seeking... Love rejoices with the truth."

In pointing out the sins of others, boldness is usually needed, and many of us shrink from that. But no less is tenderness needed, the tenderness of the One who was so extraordinarily patient and forbearing with his errant and slow-to-learn disciples.

It's not hard to see 'specks'—they are everywhere. It's also not hard to see 'planks,' except when it's your own plank. May the Lord preserve us all from 'holier-than-thou' spirituality. It has at least one distinguishing feature—it prizes the 'head' more than the 'heart.' Of course, they belong together, the former nourishing the latter. But only too easily, as we see in Scripture and in the history of the Church, they can be separated, and our spirituality becomes metallic and clinical.

The most effective antidote to such censoriousness is conformity to our Lord Jesus. None were holier than he, none were gentler than he. So Paul could write, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children..."

Quotes from The Mark of the Christian

Francis A. Schaeffer

"Organisational unity is not the answer [to oneness]."

"The world must have the proper answers to their honest questions, but at the same time, there must be a oneness in love between all true Christians. This is what is needed if men are to know that Jesus was sent by the Father and that Christianity is true."

"Because a man is a man, he is to be loved at all costs."

"Our sharp tongues, the lack of love between us—not the necessary statements of differences that may exist between true Christians—these are what properly trouble the world."

"Anywhere what is wrong is wrong, and we have a responsibility in that situation to say that what is wrong is wrong. But the observable love must be there regardless of the cost."

"You may judge whether or not an individual is a Christian on the basis of the love he shows to all Christians."

"Holiness without God's love is only harshness. Love without God's holiness is only compromise."

"Love—and the unity it attests to—is the mark Christ gave Christians to wear before the world. Only with this mark may the world know that Christians are indeed Christians and that Jesus was sent by the Father."