

Thoughts on Ministry of Healing

(43) A Higher Experience (pages 503-516)

Summary:

We need daily a fresh revelation of Christ and continual progress in knowledge and virtue. The purpose of spiritual development is to more and more clearly express the character of God in the life, and to be more and more effective in service to others.

Thoughts:

This is one of many chapters in *Ministry of Healing* that has a very singular focus by design. Such chapters should not be absorbed in isolation, but need to be read within the larger context of surrounding chapters. Read in isolation, this chapter promotes a pietistic, experience-based approach to the spiritual life. Unless one feels the presence of God, one hasn't truly connected or perhaps even been redeemed. But this needs to be balanced with other statements. The reality is, spiritual life in most cases is quite mundane, learning to see God in the ordinary tasks of every day life, learning to see Jesus in the neighbor, the stranger or the difficult child. In contrast, many programs of spiritual training emphasize the seeking of a "high" that is achievable during retreats, but rarely lasts long during the work week. The following should be read with the above in mind.

The Holy Spirit works with those who are willing to be molded. If we are teachable and changeable, we can have a higher and deeper experience than we now know. (503)

In a real sense the last chapter of *Ministry of Healing* reads like a meditation on John 15 in particular, but also on Philippians 2 and the seven churches of Revelation.

A great motivation toward a higher experience is to meditate on the visions of future glory in books like Revelation. Another motivation is the "mountain-top experience" illustrated in the lives of Moses and the disciples of Jesus. (506-509)

We can have that mountain-top experience when we are diligent and persevering in prayer. Christ sends messages to those who are willing to listen for His voice. The key to our defense against Satan's wiles is the continual exercise of prayer and faith combined with action. God's peace in the heart is what gives our words persuasive power. (509-512)

When we are humble, contrite and trust deeply in God, He can and will manifest Himself to us. Bible reading and the hearing of sermons will only help us if we put it to use in our practical everyday experience. (512-514)

Given the important place this chapter fills at the close of *Ministry of Healing*, it is interesting that so many Adventists today are leery of spiritual formation (the right kind, as the seminary has taught for decades). The earliest Adventists, including Ellen White, were quite charismatic when it came to conversion and spiritual life. Although Ellen White became more formal by the 1860s, most Adventists remained very experiential in their faith right up to about 1900. Then reaction to the "holy flesh" movement and the intellectual concerns of the Fundamentalism/Modernism controversy seem to have diminished the focus on experiential faith that is so central to this chapter.

For Ellen White in this chapter, the "higher experience" is more about character development and effectiveness in service than it is doctrinal accuracy (though she would not want to leave the latter undone).

Quotable Quotes:

“We need constantly a fresh revelation of Christ, a daily experience that harmonizes with His teachings. High and holy attainments are within our reach. Continual progress in knowledge and virtue is God's purpose for us. . . . Every day we may advance in perfection of Christian character.” (503)

“Those who are engaged in service for the Master need an experience much higher, deeper, broader, than many have yet thought of having. . . . Let these cherish every desire of the soul after God. The Holy Spirit works with those who will be worked, molds those who will be molded, fashions those who will be fashioned.” (503)

“We need to keep ever before us this vision of things unseen. It is thus that we shall be able to set a right value on the things of eternity and the things of time. It is this that will give us power to influence others for the higher life.” (508)

“Prayer and faith will do what no power on earth can accomplish. We are seldom, in all respects, placed in the same position twice. We continually have new scenes and new trials to pass through, where past experience cannot be a sufficient guide. We must have the continual light that comes from God.” (509)

“When we permit our communion with God to be broken, our defense is departed from us. Not all your good purposes and good intentions will enable you to withstand evil. . . . It is not always necessary to bow upon your knees in order to pray. Cultivate the habit of talking with the Saviour when you are alone, when you are walking, and when you are busy with your daily labor. Let the heart be continually uplifted in silent petition for help, for light, for strength, for knowledge. Let every breath be a prayer.” (510-511)

“Nothing is more needed in our work than the practical results of communion with God. We should show by our daily lives that we have peace and rest in the Saviour. His peace in the heart will shine forth in the countenance. It will give to the voice a persuasive power. . . . This will impart to the worker a power that nothing else can give. Of this power he must not allow himself to be deprived.” (512)

“If you had the greatest intellect ever given to man, it would not be sufficient for your work. . . . The result of all we do rests in the hands of God.” (513)

“When we are humble and contrite we stand where God can and will manifest Himself to us. He is well pleased when we urge past mercies and blessings as a reason why He should bestow on us greater blessings. He will more than fulfill the expectations of those who trust fully in Him. The Lord Jesus . . . bestows upon us all that we will employ in blessing others and ennobling our own souls.” (513)

“We must have less trust in what we ourselves can do, and more trust in what the Lord can do for and through us. You are not engaged in your own work; you are doing the work of God. Surrender your will and way to Him. Make not a single reserve, not a single compromise with self. Know what it is to be free in Christ.” (513-514)

“The mere hearing of sermons Sabbath after Sabbath, the reading of the Bible through and through, or the explanation of it verse by verse, will not benefit us or those who hear us, unless we bring the truths of the Bible into our individual experience. The understanding, the will, the affections, must be yielded to the control of the word of God. Then through the work of the Holy Spirit the precepts of the word will become the principles of the life.” (514)

“Walk continually in the light of God. Meditate day and night upon His character. Then

you will see His beauty and rejoice in His goodness. Your heart will glow with a sense of His love. You will be uplifted as if borne by everlasting arms. With the power and light that God imparts, you can comprehend more and accomplish more than you ever before deemed possible.” (514)

Tweets of Healing:

Continual progress in knowledge and virtue is God’s purpose for us. (503)

Prayer and faith will do what no power on earth can accomplish. (509)

(510) When we permit our communion with God to be broken, our defense is departed from us.

Let every breath be a prayer. (511)

(512) Nothing is more needed in our work than the practical results of communion with God.

We must live a two-fold life—a life of thought and action, of silent prayer and earnest work. (512)

If you had the greatest intellect ever given to man, it would not be sufficient for your work. (513)

When we are humble and contrite we stand where God can and will manifest Himself to us. (513)

We must have less trust in what we ourselves can do, and more trust in what the Lord can do for and through us. (513)

Walk continually in the light of God. (514)