

The Power of Silence

"Be still and know that I am God" (Ps 46:10)

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You Have Only to be Still

There is a beautiful incident where God's people are being besieged by the Egyptians and are in utter fear. Moses said to them, "Do not be afraid. You will see the salvation that the Lord will accomplish for you today. You have only to be still ... the Lord will fight for you while you keep silent." And that is exactly what happened. God allowed Moses to split the Red Sea, the Israelites march across on dry land, and then the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the *midst of the Red Sea* (Gen 14:27).

Three Points of View

There was a point of view active in the early Church and still prevalent today that God helps those who help themselves. This heresy called Pelagianism has been condemned by the Church. It is the view point that we are to stay in control and God will help us; that we save ourselves by our own bootstraps. There is another point of view that is not as radical. It admits that there is but little that man can do. He must do his utmost, and only then can he expect to do God's part. This point of view has also been condemned as semi-Pelagianism.

The correct point of view is that *all is grace*, and even our response to grace is God's gift. God wants us to rest in Him and wait upon Him so that He can work in us and through us with His wisdom, His love and His power. Mother Teresa said it so well, "It is not possible to engage in the Christian life unless we become a soul of prayer. We must be aware of oneness with Christ as He was aware of oneness with His Father. Our activity is truly Christian insofar as we allow Christ to work in us and through us with His wisdom, His love and His power." In short, it is all God's doing.

Abiding in Christ

The most important lesson to be learned by the followers of Christ is the blessed art of abiding in Him and that there is nothing more profitable than *stillness of soul*. In the quiet of our own hearts, the Spirit can cultivate that teachableness in which the Lord will reveal His secrets and that meekness to which He shows His ways.

Example of the Three Marys

Our Blessed Virgin's response to the most wonderful revelation ever made to a human being was, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy word." After thousands of words of men and women doing their own thing, even their own religious thing, Mary came empty and still before the Lord and allowed God to be completely in control. And suddenly, she who was virgin, became mother. She who was empty became full of grace.

The second Mary was the sister of Martha and Lazarus who chose the better part by sitting in stillness of soul at the feet of the Lord. The third Mary was Mary Magdalene, who sought the Lord in the house of the Pharisee and, in the stillness of her soul, allowed her tears to speak more powerfully than words.

We learn from all three of them that if we really seek to understand the blessed mystery of abiding in Christ, let this be your most prevalent thought: "My soul, only be silent unto God; for my expectation is from Him" (Ps 62:5).

If you really want to understand the wondrous union with the heavenly vine, know that flesh and blood cannot reveal it to you but only the Father in heaven. You have to learn to bow in the confession of your own ignorance and impotence so that the Father can delight to give you the teachings of the Holy Spirit and the power contained therein. One of the first secrets is a deeper insight into the truth that as you sink low before Him in nothingness and helplessness, in the silence and a stillness of soul that seeks to catch the faintest whisper of His love, teachings will come to you which you have never heard before for the rush of noise from your own efforts.

The Story of Elijah

Remember that Elijah came to the cave and the word of the Lord came to him not in the great and strong wind that was rending the mountains and breaking into pieces the rocks; not in the earthquake, but only in the still small and gentle wind (*cf 1 Kings 19:11-12*).

***"Be Silent Unto the Lord and Wait Patiently for Him"* (Isa 32:7)**

In the silence of soul, we learn how great a work it is to listen, to discern and to obey the promptings of the Lord. God speaks to us all the time from without, yes, but primarily from within. That is, through the inspirations that the Spirit puts into our minds and hearts. God speaks to us most often through our thoughts, and we have to come apart and rest in Him and give Him adequate time to speak to us - to wait upon Him in faith and in worship and then to yield to His inspirations in humble obedience.

***"The Son does only what He sees the Father doing"* (Jn 5:19)**

This is the way that Jesus lived while He was here on earth. In and of Himself He did nothing. He had learned to listen to, discern and to obey the voice of His Father. For Him, all life and holiness flowed forth from the Father. Jesus always listened to, discerned and obeyed the Father's voice. He was totally dependent upon His Father and perfectly obedient to His will.

Not in Dissipation of Soul

For so many of us, however, there is a dissipation of soul which comes from staying in control and from entering needless and too deeply into the worries, cares and interests of this world. *God has a call upon each one of our lives.* In order to fulfill this call, we need a certain temperance with regard to the things of this world. If we really are to wait upon the Lord and abide in Him, *let us be deeply afraid of our own ego.* Let us be ever watchful that our soul is so preoccupied that there remains but little power for frequent fellowship with God. Everyday, we must seek quiet fellowship with Him who reveals everything we need to know and gives us all the graces to accomplish His will. The heart occupied with its own plans fails continuously, for the Lord brings to naught the plans of such individuals. In short, God's work is hindered by our interference. God can work perfectly only when the soul ceases to strive on its own to accomplish things that it has no power to accomplish. In short, God's will can only be accomplished by God's wisdom, God's love, God's power, and God's Spirit.

The Impatience of the Flesh

In dealing with the flesh, blessed is the person who learns these lessons and fully accepts God's word that says, "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength" (*Isa 30:15*). Before he even picks up the scriptures, he dares not begin without first pausing and waiting until his soul is hushed in the presence of an all-holy God. Under a sense of divine nearness, the soul, feeling how self is always ready to assert itself and intrude even into the holiest of all with its own thoughts and efforts, finally yields in a quiet act of self-surrender to the teachings and the workings of the Holy Spirit. The soul is still and waits in holy silence until all is calm and ready to receive the revelations of the divine will. Its meditations and prayers indeed become a waiting upon God with ears and heart fully opened and purified.