

A Dying Man's Regrets: Taken from Monod's Farewell

As read by Nigel Stone

By Adolphe Monod

sermonaudio.com

Preached on: Wednesday, April 8, 2009

Solid Ground Christian Books

PO Box 660132

Vestavia Hills AL 35266

Website: solid-ground-books.com

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/solid-ground-book

"A Dying Man's Regret," by Adolphe Monod.

This booklet contains a preface by Iain Murray and five short meditations by Adolphe Monod under the following titles. Number one, "The Secret of an Active and Peaceful, Holy Life," two, "The Study of the Word of God," three, "The Use of Time," four, "Prayer," and five, "The Occupation with Petty Interests." They were given between January 13 1856 and February 10, 1856.

We have a note from the editor that the following preface by Iain Murray is extracted from the 1962 Banner of Truth edition of Adolphe Monod's farewell which is to be reprinted in full in the near future.

And now the preface.

When in September 1855 Adolphe Monod was overtaken by a fatal illness, it seemed that the earthly ministry of the foremost preacher in France had come to an end. His voice would no more rouse the thronged congregations in the [?] Paris as it had done for nine years past. And soon his life would no more be the lighthouse as a contemporary described him to whom everyone looked as the sailor in the storm.

Thus, suddenly reduced to the pain of a sick bed at the age of 53, Monod had but one concern. "Oh, my God," he prayed, "is my work finished? Thou knowest. I should much have wished to leave behind me some lasting monument for thy glory."

His prayer was answered, yet not in the way he might have imagined. God did not restore him to his former work, but brought him to exercise a new ministry, a ministry of suffering and patience which occasioned the contents of this book, "Adolphe Monod's Farewell."

As long as evangelical literature is read Monod's farewell will be remembered as the most enduring monument he left to the glory of God.

The sudden termination of his fruitful ministry was a sore loss to France. Yet with his opportunities for spiritual usefulness presently reduced to the dimensions of a single bedroom, Monod devoted the months that remained to the ministry that abides in the pages of his book. Commencing on October the 14th, 1855 he began to partake the Lord's Supper with a varying company of friends who gathered in his room, at least in the afternoon. Too weak to speak for long and too ill to prepare anything more than a short meditation, Monod used these occasions to commend the Savior who now sustained in the incessant battling.

Knowing the time was short, his light shown brighter, no longer as an eloquent preacher, but as a suffering saint nearing his end. And this [?] of things eternal falls on the reader as he goes through chapters it is because the author was daily entering into deeper communion with him who has brought immortality and life to light.

These pages were neither written nor corrected by Monod, for they are the words of his short discourses taken down carefully as he spoke and purposefully left in their original spontaneous form. By their literary form, as well as by their peculiar unction and power we are, thus, reminded that Monod spoke as a dying man to dying men.

The delivery of these exhortations continued for nearly six months, though they were often a means of aggravating his physical suffering. On March the 23rd he gave his last address on the resurrection of Christ, but in such weakness that he seemed ready to faint in pronouncing the closing words.

The following Sunday, March 30th scarcely knowing whether he should be able to make himself heard, he collected the little strength he had to glorify the everlasting and infinite love of God and terminated with a prayer of thanksgiving for his ministry upon earth. Before the sun had set on the follow Lord's Day, April the 6th, 1856 Monod had entered the land of pure delight where saints immortal reign.

"More than anyone else," wrote professor G. Felice in his *History of the French Protestants*, "Adolphe Monod recalled to us the venerable image of the Christians of the primitive Church. That such a man who spent the last 25 years of his life in whole hearted devotion to Christ found it necessary to speak so fully as he does in this book on a dying man's regrets is a sobering fact. Right in retrospect under the shadow of a coming eternity and weighed in the balances of Scripture is an experience which all who read this book will one day share. Our present viewpoint will soon be changed. Things that are temporal must give way to things eternal."

To realize these facts in advance is to heed the exhortation of the apostle in 1 John 2:28 where we read, "Abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."¹

Signed, Iain Murray, August 1962.

¹ 1 John 2:28.

“A Dying Man’s Regret,” by Adolphe Monod.

The first meditation called “A Secret of an Active and Peaceful, Holy Life.” This was given January the 13th, 1856.

My dearly beloved in the beloved of the Father, I thank God who has permitted me once again to speak to you in his name for your encouragement and for my own consolation, but I must ask you to exercise toward me the patience of God who is pleased to accept a man according to what he has, not according to what he hath not. My declining strength will not allow me either to sit up or to turn round and, therefore, I can only stay in this position to speak to you. I hope I shall be distinct enough for you all to hear me.

A man is in a unique position indeed, who, for quite a few months already and perhaps for quite a time yet—how long, he knows not—is living constantly with the thought that his links with this life have been broken and that he is incurably and mortally stricken of God and that he does not know at what moment the Father’s voice will call him home.

He would, indeed, be heartless, unthinking and devoid of all Christian feeling not to glance over his past life. And at the same time he is brought to ask himself with the thoughts of the possibility of recovery mounting in his soul that they are bound to, for, after all, he is in the hands of God who raises the dead, this question. If my life was given back to me, what use would I make of it? And reminding himself of the weakness and the frailty of his resolutions which a lifetime has demonstrated to him, he would nevertheless hope that in the goodness of God such a visitation would not be lost on the second part of his life and ministry.

Then I say to myself—for I am that man—I would do such and such a thing and assuredly there is not one thing that I would not wish to do otherwise or better than I have done. It is a beneficial humiliation for me and it can be a beneficial instruction for you to consider the regrets of a man who is dying or believes himself to be dying and who figures to himself the different use he would make of his life if it were restored to him.

It is more especially on such thoughts as these that I propose to dwell in these next addresses. And in order to chose an example straight away, here is a point on which had I to being afresh, I would make considerable changes in my life, I mean my inner life.

It goes without saying that the more personal applications of the principle I have just laid down belong to the Lord, that there are more general applications which may without disadvantage be mentioned in a small meeting like this.

For instance, prayer, Bible reading, Christian liberty. Now here is the point that strikes me. I regret having regulated my life too much and my own plans. I mean, by my terms of faithfulness and Christian sanctification and not more simply by the plan which the Lord unfolds before each of us. I think it would be easy for me to make you understand my idea in a few words. And every child of God will enter it immediately.

We are inclined to form for ourselves a certain idea for the Christian life, Christian activity and the Christian ministry and to attest to this ideal certain plans and certain methods, so much so that we are not satisfied unless we come to realize them, unless it becomes important to make the best plans possible and to seek the best method of carrying them out.

All this is good, no doubt, but behind it all there is a fault, self, the hidden self which has its roots in the depths of the heart and which shows itself all too clearly in our best of purist works.

Now what I should wish to do is to take the plan of my life and daily conduct not with my own ideas and inclinations, but from the commandments of God in his inward testimony, in the leading of his Spirit and in the guidance he gives in the outward circumstances of our life.

My idea of how I would regulate my life would be understood perfectly if you consider the ways in which Jesus regulated his. In Jesus we do not find those plans and methods which with many good people have been taken up and which have often tormented them so much and taken up so much time which could have been better employed. But what do we find? We find a man. I am considering him here the Son of Man who has no other desire than to accomplish the mission he received from the Father and who has no other plan than to enter into the Father's plan so that with his eyes fixed on the Father, his only concern is to hear his voice in order to follow him and to discover his will in order to carry it out.

The good works which Jesus performs are all given to him one after another, each one placed before him by the hand of God upon his way. They follow each other so naturally and arise so easily, the one from the other, that there is no confusion even on the busiest days of his ministry.

During one day, for example, like the one which is described to us in the ninth chapter of Saint Matthew when he calls one of his apostles, heals some sick people, raises a dead man and, as he passes by, heals a woman who has been ill for several years without counting all the other benefits which he poured out everywhere on his journey.

There was not a single moment of embarrassment or hesitation, either as to the way in which he performs his works, or as to the timing of each one of them because Jesus Christ, for it was quite simply the plan of God and because God undertakes to guide him.

When there is on our side this perfect accord with the will of God he, for his part, gives us a perfectly clear light to guide us. In this way, a wonderfully profound word from the Holy Spirit is realized in Ephesians 2:10. We are, "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has prepared before for us to walk in them."²

² Ephesians 2:10.

Here good works are presented to us not as a way that we have to make for ourselves, but as a way which God has made and in which we have only to walk. It is God's way, not ours. We have only to follow this path and we shall moment by moment perform the will of God.

If I have you made you understand as well as I could without going into detail what I would have wished to do or what I wish to do if my life should be restored to me, you will easily grasp the conclusion. What great advantage is this conformity with the plan of God of us over keeping just to our personal plans, even the best of them?

I add, in passing, that I have no thought of discouraging personal plans. We must seek to make them as good as possible. And I believe that our human frailty needs them as the support provided that our personal plans are always subordinate to the general rule that we follow only the will of God.

Now to limit myself to two or three main ideas this way of which Jesus is the pattern, is, first of all, a condition of holiness. What is sin, in essence? It is the seeking of self; self confidence, self will, self righteousness, self glory and all that pertains to self. So that the desire to do what is right and even to do the will of the Lord is founded upon plans and projects of our own making, partakes, inevitably, in some way or other of the root of sin. While, on the other hand, the very essence of holiness being the union of our will with the will of God. We shall only be in a state of true holiness when we have no other plan than God's plan and no other will but his will. Then only shall we be truly holy with a holiness which is not only an outward appearance, but which has also an inward character, a holiness like that of Jesus Christ. His holiness follows and depends upon the principle I was expounding a moment ago. That is, constant abandonment to the will of God alone, manifested inwardly by the testimony of the Spirit. Outwardly, by the declarations of his Word and signs of his providence.

Jesus Christ is holy because he only desires what God wills, because he seeks not only his own glory, but that of the Father. Therein lies the power of his holiness.

[?] of the plan of God is, then, a condition of holiness. But, it is at the same time a condition of activity. A tremendous amount of time may be lost in seeking our own self interest, even in what is good. It is well to consider how easily we may be mistaken and how we may be taken up with endless reflections and deliberations and how many men have recognized at the end of their career that a considerable part of their life has been employed in forming plans whereas they might have devoted it much more usefully to the work immediately at hand and for the good of others.

[?] activity in the plan of Jesus which I quoted a moment ago involves him in, in the ninth chapter of Saint Matthew and elsewhere we see good works in abundance thrown in his way, not one on top of another, but one after the other. And there is no limit to activity which is founded upon this perfect harmony with the will of God. Man's action then becomes divine action. And life becomes, as it were, defined life, [?] in the heart of man in which something is accomplished by the power of God. We have no idea of what we

might do if we were completely swallowed up in this perfect harmony with God, if we sought no other will than his, if every word of our mouth, every beat of our heart, every thought of our intellect, every movement of our body and of our spirit would draw towards him to wait on him with the spirit of Samuel.

“Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.”³

There are some men, like Luther, Calvin and Paul, Moses, who have shown what a man can do when he seeks only the will of God. Jesus Christ has done much more because in him alone was conformity to the will of God perfect. It is, then, a condition of activity, of almost unlimited activity. Yet there are limits since God does not demand of his creatures more than they are capable of doing.

Finally, and with this I conclude, it is a condition of peace. There is no peace for a man who finds the mainspring of his actions in his own will. He is always in danger of being mistaken. He is often troubled and in error because human will and human interest are subject to [?]. He has no rest. He is disturbed. He is tormented and inspires a deep compassion in anyone who sees his real desire to glorify God and yet also sees how he accumulates for himself obstacles in his way by his lack of simplicity.

While, on the other hand, when he looks to God alone we can cast all our burden upon him and he sustains us.

What is more, if my projects are of my own devising they may be impossible to carry out. I might wish to wish to follow a certain profession, but it involves expenses which are beyond my means. I might want to be a painter, but my sight is not good. Or [?] that I have no voice or a surgeon, but my hand is not steady.

I have missed my vocation then and there can be no consolation for me. But there is no possibility of missing my vocation if my projects are devised for me in the plan of God. For then even this impossibility which I find of doing what I originally proposed to do, proves to me that God is not calling me to that and the very infirmities which disqualify me becomes so many lights by which God reveals to me my true vocation.

If we act in this spirit—I say it with deep reverence—our vocation is God’s affair, not ours. And the activity, the individual exertion that God always requires of us, just this only in following him in faithful and complete obedience.

There has to be [?] find perfect peace. God cannot mislead us. Often we are disturbed by the thought that we are not doing enough or that we are doing badly or that we are not doing the work which God has given us to do. I recollect, in particular, that during the first weeks after I received the fateful verdict of the doctors, I was troubled by the thought of my work was not yet done. By the grace of God I am now delivered from that thought because I understand that it is not a question of my work, but of God’s work that I have come to recognize that even by the sufferings and afflictions which he has sent me

³ 1 Samuel 3:10.

and by the hope of eternal life which must follow, then, the Lord has made me exercise another ministry, probably more important than that which I had in view and in any case more sure because it comes to me directly from the hand of God who mercifully constrains me to walk in this for his service and for his glory.

It is then that we shall be able to say like Jesus Christ as he was about to die, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.”⁴ Why could he say that? Because he sought only to do the work of God. And God took him as you would pluck a right root when his mission was accomplished.

Well, then, let us seek only to do the work which the Father has given us to do and commit ourselves into his hands.

We also, if we are faithful, shall only be taken when our work is done. God alone has the right to decide when the work he wants to do through us is finished. Oh, we may be very imperfect and incomplete in the eyes of man, but if we are upright before him, he will not allow our life finally to tend without leaving some traces upon earth. He will not take us until our work is accomplished before him. And we shall then be able to say like the Lord in the spirit of humility, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.”⁵

[?] without realizing when he gave his last lecture in theology on this words, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And what happened of any... happened at the same time to [?] as it happens to all servants of God. There is a great peace in seeking one’s plan only in God and in following him, renouncing self. Only, thus, is peace to be found.

Let us, then, endeavor to seek our plans in God alone so that those are being called home they humble themselves and those who are still to remain alive may grow in grace.

Let us, then, in this spirit, endeavor to follow Jesus Christ in his Gethsemane and to keep our eyes constantly fixed on the Father’s will. It will be for us as it was for Jesus Christ, a position of holiness, of activity and of deep peace. I pray God that you may have this peace and I shall be happy in deed if I could think that these few meditations might have stimulated those who still have their life to spend before them, to use them so faithfully and so simply for the glory of God according to their Savior’s example that they might be able to say in their turn, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do”⁶ and that they might spend the rest of their life on earth in deep peace waiting for the time when they will be called from this world to the Father by the grace of the Lord and by the virtue and unction of the Holy Spirit.

Second meditation, January the 20th, 1856, a study of the Word of the God.

⁴ John 17:4.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

My dear friends, the next regret of a dying man in the same order of ideas which I start to expound last Sunday concerns a new view which comes to him of a study of God's Word, of the many things he wishes he had done and would do otherwise if he were recalled from his half open grave. This is one of the most important.

Ah, he suddenly says then, "How differently I ought to have acted with regard to the Word of God. How much more I ought to have studied it. How much better I ought to be acquainted with it in order the more to live it out and communicate it to others."

Let us pause a few moments upon this salutary thought which will serve to humble those for whom the end of time approaches and to enlighten those whom time is yet given, though how long they do not know.

What is holy Scripture? Men will never be able to explain how it was formed, nor precisely how the Spirit of God and the spirit of man are combined in it to make it at the same time a divine word, high as the heavens and also human word, quite near to us.

This is no less difficult to explain than how the divine nature and the human nature are united in Jesus Christ. And this parallel is not mine. The Scripture calls itself the written Word and Jesus Christ the Word made flesh. Whatever may be the manner of their composition, the holy Scriptures are heaven speaking on earth. They are the maxims of the kingdom of heaven communicated to men in human language as if the invisible had descended into the midst of them and were made visible to them.

There is no other book, even of the best, which communicates to us the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven like the Bible. They are all more or less affected by human error. This, alone, is exempt from it. It is the book of God, full of the truth of God. In it we hear God speaking to us by the Holy Spirit. We see God, man, the present, the future, time and eternity described just as they are. Whoever, thus, comes to understand what Scripture is will not find it difficult to admit what use he should make of it. We ought to interrogate the Scriptures as we would an angel from heaven sent by God at this very moment expressly to instruct us. Or, still better, as we would interrogate our Lord Jesus Christ if we had him at this moment physically near us and could speak to him and hear him speak.

In fact, we do speak to him and hear him speak and when we read holy Scripture, for it reveals him. And on his behalf it reveals all things by his Spirit. Oh, how can we sufficiently venerate this book and give it the attention it deserves?

True, the book itself is not the truth which saves us. It is the instrument of it. Likewise, it is not salvation itself, but it reveals to us our salvation. And without it we could never have come to the knowledge of it. By the Scriptures, also, the more we get to know them, the better we shall know Jesus as the Savior of our souls.

No Christian will contest the truth of this principle and yet how few there are who really study the Scriptures. The greater number read them superficially and limit themselves to

some of the great leading truths instead of penetrating more and more deeply. And as far as possible coming to know the whole as it is written, the secret things belong to the Lord, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and unto our children forever that we may do all the words of this law,⁷ Deuteronomy 29 and 29.

And why this strange contradiction? It is because of the difficulties which studying the Bible presents. We must agree that on beginning it there are many difficulties and obscurities. And as much labor is required to clear them up in the mind of man is naturally idle and lazy, we lose courage little by little and limit ourselves to reading the same Scriptures over and over again. This invariant sort of study hardly penetrates beneath the surface, nor does it learn new things, but always going over the same things repeatedly inspires in us a kind of weariness as if the Word of God was not interesting. As if we could not always find some new instruction in it, as if it was not inexhaustible as God himself.

Beware of thinking, however, that these difficulties are insurmountable. No, my friend, but we must be prepared to take trouble. And there as in prayer and all parts of a Christian life, God wants man to be coworker with him, knowledge of the Bible, taste for the Bible as the food and reward of this humble, sincere and persevering labor.

Ah, may each one go back to his Bible with a new vigor. Take book after book seeking to gather from your study not only a general idea of outward piety, but a deep and growing knowledge of the kingdom of heaven. Study a book until you have understood it as well as you are able. Then take a second and a third and so on. And you will find that on a second or a third reading, many of the difficulties which seemed insurmountable will disappear and even though some may remain, you will not benefit the less from this labor which you have undertaken before God.

In this study do not leave any books out, even the most difficult. For example, the minor prophets which many Christians leave on one side as unintelligible. If you will take the trouble to study them, you will find a multitude of extremely interesting things in them.

Besides there are, through the goodness of God, good commentaries on certain parts of the Scriptures which may serve as keys to the others. And by the hope of these good books we can enter more and more deeply into the knowledge of the Word of God.

You will, of course, give special attention to those parts of the book that apply particularly to Christians. But, I repeat, without neglecting any other part. This will be the fruit, the reward for those who will be thus faithful and persevering to understand and to love the Word of God, to enter more and more deeply into it and to find that time is always too short to complete a study of it.

I knew a man who used to spend seven hours a day studying the Bible and who found in this study an ever growing delight.

⁷ See Deuteronomy 29:29.

If anyone, using by faith, the resources which God puts at his disposal and relying on God to guide him, follows out these thoughts of mine which I can at this moment do little more than sketch, he will discover in the Word of God treasures which he never even suspected were there. Then it will become for him as firm a support as it was for Jesus when he was tempted in the wilderness. And it will become for him what it was for the saints in both the New Testament and in the Old Testament, what it was for David and for Daniel, for Paul and all the saints of God. May God give us all this blessing and may he for whom it is no more difficult to bless in a little time than in a long time, or with little strength than with much strength, so make the words that I address you, penetrate into your hearts that they will cause a transformation in your Bible study for which you will bless God for all eternity. Amen.

Meditation number three, "The Use of Time," February 27th, 1856.

My strength is exhausted, my dear friends, and I was wondering if today I should not be made silent. I will, however, say what I was going to say limiting myself to just indicating the four.

One of the things which trouble the Christian who thinks his end is near or would trouble him if he were not at the foot of the cross, is the manner in which he has employed his time. And, consequently, this is one of the exultations he must address to his brethren with their lives before them. It is written, "Redeem the opportunity."⁸ This is a more exact rendering than the received one, "Redeem the time."⁹

Redeem here does not mean to buy over again, but to buy with promptness the opportunity that God furnishes for the days are evil which means that the opportunity once lost may never come again. The good use of one's time is an idea so vast that it frightens the soul. There is something more modest about this thought. Seize eagerly the opportunities that God provides as they come from his hand.

What a lot of opportunities are lost through idleness, unbelief, negligence, through selfishness, self will, indecision, attachment to sin and through a thousand other causes. I need not dwell upon that. There is no Christian whose heart does not condemn him or whose conscience does not trouble him on this point.

Ah, how sufficient and precious is the time God gives us. God, who is just, proportions the time the work and the work to the time and never gives us a good work to do for which time is lacking, nor does he give us a moment in which we have not some good thing to do. But how can we arrive at filling up all our time? Well, if we do at least a portion of the immense good that a single man could accomplish, if we would put into practice this precept, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might,"¹⁰ Ecclesiastes 9:10, being constantly occupied in the service of the Lord.

⁸ See Ephesians 5:16, Colossians 4:5.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ecclesiastes 9:10.

To this end I want to give you two or three things to consider which I will leave to your conscience to develop.

First, we must be pervaded by the thought that we do not belong to ourselves and therefore our time is not ours any more than the rest of what we have. Our time belongs to God and, consequently, we must look to God to ascertain what we have to do to fill the time which he gives us. And we must respond to the opportunities he presents to us.

I assure you that sickness is precious blessing on that. I mean concerning the fact that we belong not to ourselves, but to God. Our heart is naturally bias and the root of sin is to make self the center and aim of our life. But when you are ill and you suffer, how can you find consolation if the object of your life is in yourself. Your purpose in life has, in that case, completely failed.

Quickness teaches us that we must look elsewhere for the purpose of life than in ourselves and that we live not just to be happy upon earth, but to glorify God. And this we can do in sickness as well as in health, often better.

Let us, then, learn from all the sicknesses and sufferings of life and from all that the Word of God teaches us that our time belongs to God and our only concern must be to use it for his glory.

Second, let us always be diligent in seizing the opportunities which God holds out to us. They will not fail us. And we shall find before us a light whirlwind of good works prepared and ready for us to walk in them which are linked together and lead on the one from the other so easily as our lives will be made up entirely of good works and obedience and, consequently, as we were just saying, joy and peace to the Holy Spirit.

For this we must have our eyes constantly opened and turned toward God saying to him, "Lord, hear I am. What wilt thou have me to do?" And when we have done one thing, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do now?" And so on without a single interval elapsing unfilled with the obedience we hold to God.

God will furnish us accordingly with the means of doing an immeasurable amount of good, for no one can estimate the good which might enter into a life of a single man who is thus disposed as witness, the man Jesus Christ. In the things of this world the men who have accomplished most have lived according to this principle of seizing opportunities.

If you study carefully the lives of men who have done the most considerable and numerous works such as Calvin, Luther, Bousset, you will see that they did them just as they presented themselves on their way and that they were men called by circumstances, almost imperceptibly to achieve their works.

For example, Bousset was led by the requirements of the dauphin's education to compose his best work. Calvin and Luther did their best work as circumstances demanded, while, on the other hand, ordinary men who do little are those who do not know how to seize

and profit by passing opportunities. They might, perhaps, have been able to do as much as those who did great things, but they lacked the true art of seizing the opportunity and this is the Christian art of having the eyes always turned toward the Lord and of, thus, taking each task as he presents it to us and, when that is finished going on to another. It is wonderful what can be accomplished in this way by simply following the path that the Lord opens up before each one of us.

Third, we must go about our work methodically and never leave to chance the employment of the time God gives us. I was saying a few days ago that we should not make plans for ourselves, but I am not contradicting myself by saying that we must work methodically provided that the method is undertaken in the Lord. To do what God gives us to do there must be method and order. Thus, it is desirable to have regular hours for getting up and for work, to be as punctual as possible at meal times and in all our various occupations.

Life then becomes much more simple and easy to cope with. It would be like a well ordered framework in which the Lord has only to act.

The men who have done most have been those who have known how to regulate their lives calmly and steadily. Above all, if they have been able to add this firm discipline a liveliness of mind and warmth of heart which do not always go with this spirit of method and order, but which when combined with it enable a man to do the most astonishing thing.

It is said that the philosopher Kant would sometimes amuse himself by call his servant to witness after 40 years he had risen every day at four in the morning. Just think that a man can do who gets up at four every morning. Besides, think of the power of method, whatever time a man gets up.

From the fact, alone, that I have a fixed hour for rising, how much more time will I not have to consecrate to the Lord for a simple reason of having fixed the hour in prayer before God, taking into account Christian wisdom and prudence while, on the contrary, if I rise haphazardly the hour will be determined by the impulse of the moment. That is to say, by various circumstances over which I might otherwise have triumphed. By my idleness, by my desire for a little more sleep, a little folding of your hands in sleep, so shall your poverty come on you as a prowler, Proverbs 6:10-11.

And not only poverty of money, but of spirit, of labor and of the service of God. God's method in a life peaceably regulated before the Lord is a thing of the highest importance if we would learn to accomplish much for the service of God.

And then, finally, not to multiply [?] let us keep our bodies and mind in such a condition as will bring no obstacle in the way of the good use of our time and our gifts which God has given to us to employ according to his will.

[?], unevenness of temper, the seduction of self will, the seeking of our own interests, the desire of human glory are so many obstacles that surround and harass us unceasingly and over which we must seek to triumph.

Therefore, then, let us not neglect the body. Bad health and bodily weakness are often a great obstacle to the accomplishment of our work for God. We must accept what God sends, but it is our duty before God to take all necessary exercise and precautions to strengthen and preserve even our bodies for his service and glory.

This thought uplifts and sanctifies everything. Many men would have accomplished much more than they did for the glory of God if they had not given themselves up to an activity that was more pious than thoughtful and which wore them out while they were quite young. Moreover, those who die prematurely should ask themselves whether they have not to reproach themselves for neglecting certain precautions, simple and easy, though difficult to persevere in, which would have allowed them to work longer in the service of God.

But, above all, let us be careful to strengthen the mind and the soul and to avoid all that would impede the work God will accomplish in us and by us.

My friends, none of us knows how long God may still leave us here, but we do know the signs he has already given us and the reproaches we deserve for the use we have made of it. Let us lay hold of what is still before us whether strong or weak, sick or in good health, living or dying. We have a Savior whose every moment of time was given up to obedience to God. Let us follow in his footsteps to glory by way of the cross and, then, again, we shall hear that loving voice saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things."¹¹

Meditation number four concerning prayer. February the third, 1856.

My dear friends in Christ, among the matters concerning which the Christian who is near his end feels regret, there is surely none which he would desire more to reform if he were restored in prayer. What is prayer, really and practically, for most Christians, I mean, believing and praying Christians? A few moments in the morning given to meditation, a few moments at night, sometimes long, sometimes short, sometimes very short. Then, also the heart lifted up to God in extraordinary circumstances which makes us feel a special need for drawing near to him. These are the meager proportions to which the habits of many Christians are reduced, or people who call themselves Christians.

So how little do the greater number know of the fruits of the prayer so often promised in Scripture? Where can they be those mighty fruits of sanctification which make the soul triumph over all temptations as Jesus did in the wilderness and which makes us more than conquerors through him who loved us? And where are those fruits of consolation which spread a sweet and profound joy through the soul, capable of prevailing over all earthly affliction so that even in bitterness and anguish, over [?] and still rejoice with that perfect

¹¹ Matthew 25:21, 23.

joy which Jesus as he was about to die bequeathed to his disciples who were to lead a life of daily dying? And where are those fruits of deliverance in which the soul obtains from God all that it asks whether it says with Jesus, "I know that thou hearest me always,"¹² or whether unable to rise so high it says with David, "Thou art wont to hear me."

Let us be sincere and recognize that between the promises which the Scripture makes to prayer and the benefits that we receive from it, there is such a great distance that more than once our feeble faith has been troubled, perhaps for a moment shaken, and we have said to ourselves, "Is that all?"

No. That is not all that was promised. But we have not done all that was commanded.

Ah, my friends, prayer, as I have just depicted it for you from life is quite different from prayer as represented to us and to which it makes all the promises.

What is prayer not according to the Scripture? I was saying the other day that holy Scripture, the Word of God is heaven speaking on earth. I would say, to pursue this image, that prayer, according to Scripture is heaven received within us by the Holy Spirit.

Like the Word, prayer is null and void having no nourishment. Without prayer the Word is powerless and does not penetrate into the heart. But when the truths of heaven with which the Scripture is full are received and assimilated into the substance of our soul by prayer and penetrates into the very depth of our inner man, then we know that prayer brings heaven within us with all its wealth, the Holy Spirit and all his grace, God and all his promises. Prayer is a key which God has placed within our hands to put us in touch with the unseen world. By it everything is available to us and without it, nothing.

I say the key that God has placed in our hands for there is another which he has kept in his own and which he deigns to use sometimes to open up to us the unseen world when we have neglected to open it for ourselves to enter into communion with him and into line with his divine action according to that which is written, "We are laborers together with God."¹³

Thus, God in striking down Saul on the Damascus Road and raising him up a new man, opened heaven to him when Saul, far from seeking him, sought the disciples of Christ to torture them and destroy them.

But there we have acts of grace which we must not count upon. Indeed, the more we count upon them, the less they will be granted to us.

Without doubt if one pondered well upon it, even behind these special acts of grace the sincerity of the soul in seeking God will be found, this Saul of Tarsus who went about persecuting the name of Jesus in his followers, had nevertheless, a sincere heart which sought for God and inquired for the truth. And, perhaps, from the moment when Saint

¹² John 11:42.

¹³ 1 Corinthians 3:9.

Stephen had prayed for those who put him to death, who knows but that the spark of a new life had begun to enter into the soul of Saul.

Be that as it may God's normal way is to bestow his blessings in us with a prayer and to wait for prayer before granting them.

"The Lord," says Isaiah, "waits that he may be gracious."¹⁴ What does he wait for? He waits until you have cried to him.

And in Jeremiah when, "ye shall go and pray unto me I will hearken unto you and ye shall find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart."¹⁵

The same is true of us. It is by prayer that we can obtain everything and it is to true prayer, such as the Scripture depicts to us that all the promises are made.

Also, my friends, prayer is the distinctive mark of the might service of the Lord.

With all their considerable differences they all have this in common. They are men who pray much and men who pray earnestly. Take the prayers of a Jacob. He wrestled with the Lord for the whole night until he prevailed even with the Lord himself who allowed him, thus, to prevail in order to exercise the faith of his servant.

Take the prayers of a Moses, the founder of Israel, of a Samuel, the reformer of Israel of whom Jeremiah says at the beginning of his 15th chapter to emphasize that God was resolved to withhold a certain blessing, let us try to substitute our own name for that of Moses or Samuel when such or such a one among us has prayed it will not be granted. What a blow. How humiliating. How unreasonable.

Then take the prayers of a David. In the psalms are recorded prayers which not only sustained him, but like 150 pillars have supported the people of God from generation to generation and will support them until the end of the world.

Take the prayers of king Jehoshaphat who overthrew by prayer alone the combined armies of the Moabites, the Ammonites and the inhabitants of Mount Seir; and of King Hezekiah, his great grandson and imitator who, by prayer alone, called down the avenging power of God to exterminate an army of 185,000 men who were only waiting for a chance to destroy Jerusalem and level it to the ground.

Take the prayers of a Nehemiah and an Ezra to restore and to reform their people following the example of Moses and Samuel, the one by raising their spiritual state in observance of the law. The other by rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and reestablishing its civil affairs.

¹⁴ Isaiah 30:18.

¹⁵ See Jeremiah 29:12-13.

Then consider the prayers of Jesus the author and finisher of our faith who though he was Jesus the Son of God prayed spending whole nights in prayer and did nothing but by prayer. By prayer he chose his band of apostles. By prayer he sustained them. By prayer he triumphed over the devil in the wilderness, in Gethsemane and on Golgotha. By prayer he accomplished the whole work of our redemption being enabled to endure unspeakable sufferings of which the most excruciating of our sufferings is but a pale reflection.

Then, following Jesus we see beginning, again, the series of men of prayer. Paul, what a colossus of prayer. Prayer is the spring and soul of all his work. Paul is Paul above all by prayer.

Consider the prayers of a Saint Augustine, the prayers of a Calvin, of a Luther who at a time when he was appearing before the Diet of Worms and three of the best powers of the day crying to God in a loud voice not knowing that his faithful friend Dietrich was eavesdropping and recording those prayers of fire for the good of the Church.

We have on this page a footnote stating what Dietrich wrote, Melancthon. He is speaking of Luther's visit to Coburg during the Diet of Augsburg. Dietrich states, "I cannot admire enough his steadfastness, his joy, his faith and hope in these desolate days. He strengthens himself each day in his convictions by a constant application to the Word of God. Not a day passes but he reserves three hours at least for prayer out of the portion of the day which is most suitable for work.

"One day I had the privilege of overhearing him pray. Great God, what a spirit. What a faith in his Word. He prays with all the devotion of a man before God, but with all the confidence of a child speaking to his father.

"I know," said he, "that thou art our good God and our Father. That is why I am persuaded that thou wilt exterminate those who persecute thy children. If thou dost not do it, the danger is to thee as much as to us. This cause is lined. What we have done we could not have done otherwise. It is for thee, merciful Father, to protect us."

"When I heard him from a distance praying these words with a clear voice my heart burned with joy within me because I was hearing him speak to God with altogether as much fervor as liberty. Above all he supported himself so firmly upon the promises in the Psalms as he seemed fully assured that nothing he asked could fail to be accomplished."

That is the end of the quotation by Dietrich.

We now continue with Adolphe Monod's meditation on prayer wherein he says:

Consider the prayers of a Pascal who, stricken at such a young age by such cruel and unrelenting sufferings was enabled to surmount them with a steadfastness and a piety

which we find deeply and indelibly marked in those prayers of his, so beautiful and so strong which have been preserved.

Consider the prayers of all the saints of all times. Prayer was their faith, their life, their resource, their work.

Oh, my friends, I do not know if you are as deeply humiliated as I am by these memories. For myself I cannot express just to what extent I am humbled as I recall what my own prayers have been compared to what they ought to have been, what they could have been. We surely would be in our own humble sphere of action what those men have been in the history of Scriptures and of the church if we knew how to pray as they prayed and if instead of saying theirs was a special privilege which God gave them, we could say, "Lord, teach me to pray."

Ah, if my life were restored to me I would, with the help of God, and watching against myself, give much more time to prayer than I have done and rely upon it more than upon work which, though it is our duty not to neglect it, has no strength unless supported and quickened by prayer.

I would, above all, breathe out of my prayers that unction and fervor of the Holy Spirit which is not learned in a day, but which is the fruit of a long and often painful apprenticeship.

Oh, my friends, you are full of life. You whose career seems not yet to have come near to its end, although we know nothing of this and I might live longer than you, seize this opportunity and redeem it. Begin new habits of prayer. Bring to your prayer not only a spirit of fervor, but combine with it a spirit of order and method which will increase its power as it will increase the power of all things human and will even promote the divine power itself. That order and method of which Jesus Christ has given us an example in the Lord's Prayer which is the model prayer.

Finally, pray God to guide you and depart from this place with this prayer filling your minds, "Lord, Lord, teach me to pray."

I will apply myself to it with you, however short the time may be. God is not concerned about the brevity of time, but with the uprightness of the heart. Let us altogether with one heart and one mind, humbled by the blackness of our prayers, form a holy resolution to know definitely by experience what his promises really are that we may reap the full benefit of them in that unseen world with which prayer alone through the Word of God brings us into relationship.

For that unseen world is now near to some and far from others rather than they think or wish. But be that as it may, in 10, 20, 50 or even 100 years, it makes no difference, or in the twinkling of an eye, it will open for all those who have placed all their hope in Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead.

And this is my earnest prayer for you. And if the Lord calls me to himself, it is a heritage that I would leave to each one of you commencing with my beloved family. Amen.

[?] meditation number five concerning the preoccupation with petty interests dated February the 10th, 1856.

My dear friends, once again you give me a token of your brotherly love by sharing with me in the Lord's love feast. Now one of the matters which would trouble the soul of a man who is facing death if he were not confident in this as in everything else by the free grace of God in Jesus Christ, it is a memory of that part of his life which has been wasted if nothing worse than petty interests when he ought to have been occupied with those great interests which alone ought to be constantly before the eyes of a Christian.

And that is why I wish to call your attention for a moment to the great evil there is in the Christian being preoccupied with petty things.

Let me explain at the outset that we must not confuse preoccupation with petty interests with attention to little things. We are called upon by God to occupy ourselves with a host of little things. And it is chiefly of such things that life is made up. The manner in which we fulfill our smaller duties is quite as true a measure, often more true of our piety, than the way we do the great because in the middle we have only God, ourselves and our family as witnesses whereas in accomplishing great things we are faced in a sort of theater where our pride is sometimes only too well gratified to see us established in the public eye. Besides, nothing is great or small in itself. It only becomes so by the spirit we bring to it.

[?] what we call little is as important as that which we call greatest. And what we call great is as insignificant as that which we call least since God is infinite and eternal.

A faithful servant who takes affectionate care of a child committed to her charged by her mistress for the love of God, does something very great in the sight of God which will receive his due reward. And the statesman who aspires just for his own stake to be renowned for wisdom or eloquence is something very little in the sight of God which may bring more shame upon him in heaven than glory upon earth. What matters, therefore, is that in all that we do we bring a large and lofty mind, always looking to God and doing all things as before him and eternity so that having God always in our hearts we should always have him in our words and our works.

And there should be nothing merely petty, earthly or transitory in the whole of our life.

The example of God himself will serve to make clear what I have just been saying. God makes no difference in the care he bestows between the little things and the great. He constructs a blade of grass or a snowflake with as much care as he regulates the proportions, the relative positions and the movements of the stars and whether he makes a grain of sand or [?] a mountain, he does all as God, that is, with perfect care.

Now this God who regards nothing as too small to merit his attention has always in view in his lesser work as much as in his greater, eternity, his kingdom and his glory as he himself says, "The Lord has made all things for his glory," and there is absolutely nothing in all the works of God, whether moral or even physical to which he does not apply the immense weight of an infinite regard and eternal concern.

It is the same with Jesus, God made visible. Not only does he not neglect the poor little children who are brought to him and whom the apostles regard as beneath him to bless, but he does not overlook even the fragments of the loaves and fishes. And he desires nothing to be lost when only a moment before he had shown that by a word and even without the word he could multiply the loaves and fishes at will.

And this is the same Jesus who accomplished the greatest works in his incarnation, his redemption, his passion, his resurrection and in his glorious ascension. But he does all these things in the same spirit. And whether he becomes incarnate or redeems us or suffers for us or rises from the dead, or ascends into heaven, whether he stops to bless those little children or to gather up the fragments of bread and fish or to speak even the smallest word of comfort to an afflicted soul or to offer a glass of cold water to one who is thirsty, he was always in every one of his actions God, eternity and the glory of his Father in view.

And it is in this way that Jesus Christ appears to us in all his works with his head always in heaven though his feet are on the earth and saying, "He who is in heaven," when referring to himself.

As everything in his soul is great so also are all his works and thoughts.

Well, then, my dear friends, that is the example set before us and it is, thus, that we should walk and be occupied not with the petty interests of earth and still less with this covetousness and with things, but with God and his glory, his love and the work of Jesus Christ for the glory of God and for the salvation of men as well as for our own.

Made in the image and likeness of God we should be his followers and in the smallest concerns as well as in the greatest, be always dominated by the thought of God and eternity.

Whatever the Christian does or says ought always to be great in the sight of God who weighs true greatness.

Painters represent the saints with a halo, but the Scripture does not do that except in the case of one Old Testament saint. Certainly it does this in quite an exceptional way. The saints wear their halo within themselves and shed it abroad wherever they go. And the Christian should give such an impression of himself that wherever you meet him, in the street, in the drawing room, at table, in prison or at the height of success, you always have the feeling that here the man who seeks God, who is concerned with advancing the great interest of humanity, who considers that it is not worth living for anything else but

to glorify God and who makes all his advantages and set back work together for that end, a man who is ready to leave this earth as soon as his work here is done, and who, like his master, goes about doing good.

Oh, how [?] and how happy such a Christian would be, free from covetousness, free from envy, free from anxiety and all that troubles the soul, always walking with God. Oh, how he would honor the gospel and victoriously put to silence the gainsayers, how many souls he would lead to the Savior by the humble brightness of a holy life, more even than by the most powerful words.

But where are these Christians, oh God, where are they? How much easier it would be to find sincere men, I mean true Christians who if they came to die would permit their souls into the Lord's hands and are at heart waiting upon him, yet who let themselves be distracted by him, preoccupied with petty interests, the love of money, a thirst for human glory, jealousy of a rival, a passionate desire for personal success an ambition for things outside the way which God has marked out for them.

They are hindered by impatience with [?] by a repugnance for humiliation and the cross. They experience sharp indignation over a word, perhaps the word is interpreted or in an insignificant little happening which will afterwards perhaps even in an hour or so leave no trace.

Oh, God, dear God. How few consistent Christians there are. It is because of this, my friends, that the gospel is compromised by those who profess it and it is said of them so often that after all they speak what others speak and what troubles others troubles them equally.

Thus, when the gospel is harmed by the very ones who speak in it their peace and their salvation and who ought to be employing all they have of life and strength to glorify it by walking with head high, their head in heaven like Jesus with their feet upon the ground, breathing the atmosphere of heaven and drawing from there the spring of all their actions, the strength of all their life.

Finally, my friends, if you knew how when you see death at close quarters all these allusions melt away, how that which is small really appears small, how only that which is great in the sight of God appears great, how one regret, not having lived more for God as Jesus lived and how if one had to begin all over again one would live a more serious life, more full of Jesus Christ, of his Word and of his example. Oh, if you only knew you would at this very moment put your hands to the work. You would beseech God to make your conduct answer more closely to your convictions and your faith. You would succeed in it as so many others have succeeded because they cried to God and sincerely desired it before God.

And this little handful of children of God assembled in this room around this bed of sickness and, in all probability, of death, these dear Christians with all their weaknesses and infirmities would do more for the advancement of the kingdom of God and the good

humanity than a dense crowd furnished with every possible gift. And they would do things so much the greater because all thought of vain glory would henceforth be banished far from their heart.

This is my desire for you and my ardent prayer and it is also the prayer which I beseech you to make to God for me so that during the time which is left to me, whatever it is, I shall think only of living for the glory of God and for the good of my fellow men. And this will be to live at the same time for my own eternal joy. Amen.

Dearest reader, these words you have read and these words that you have heard, came from the heart of a man lying upon his death bed and facing eternity. These regrets were uttered from a man who knew God personally and served God faithfully for many years.

What about you? Are you ready to face that day which no man or woman can escape? The Bible declares in Hebrews nine and 27, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."¹⁶ Are you prepared to face your maker unafraid? The only way is to be clothed in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Right now wherever you are, whoever you are, call upon him to prepare you for that day. Seek from him a new heart which will enable you to obey him and seek a church where God's Word is preached and taught without compromise and where people take seriously the commandments of Scripture.

May the Lord richly bless you and your household with his person forever with you. Amen and amen.

[music]

We hope you have enjoyed this edition of *Solid Words from Solid Ground*. If you wish to obtain more information concerning Solid Ground Christian Books, this broadcast or any other broadcast in our series, we invite you to visit us on the web at Solid-Ground-Books dot com. Or you may call Solid Ground Christian Books toll free at 866-789-7423. That toll free number again is 866-789-7423.

Thank you for listening and may God richly bless you.

¹⁶ Hebrews 9:27.