

#62 A SPOKEN WORD.....

This word is spoken to me just before I awaken, "Go, shut thyself in."

So simple, is it not, and yet can be so difficult! We love outward action, fellowship and socializing. As social beings and members of the body of Christ we are made to communicate with others. We are also made to communicate with God. In our present age we seem to think it is different from biblical days when men and women of God withdrew at times to seek the Lord, giving Him their undivided attention. Christians today seem to think it is okay to give God five minutes here and there. If they had the same attitude in their marriages those relationships would have ended long ago!

Being busy about the Lord's work or service is not good if we are doing it to avoid spending quality time with the Master. The church of Ephesus mentioned in the book of Revelation was perfect in ministry and service, yet Christ was displeased with them---displeased to the extent that He warned them to repent or He would remove His light from their church. They had forgotten their first love which was Christ! Relationship and service complete one another as faith and works do---one will not take the place of the other.

Most praying is meant to be done in secret, as is giving and fasting. When we shut ourselves in solely with God, we are placed in a state to be more honest and serious with Him, but we must shut the door! It means to shut out all distractions so we can communicate personally with God. To know the Lord and His will and ways we must spend time alone with Him, and not just when we are desperate and hard-pressed for His attention. We can not be fair weather friends if we expect to go deeper with Christ. This time alone does not have to be spent chattering constantly and then leaving when we are finished with our agenda. Regardless of what the television charlatans may say, God is not a banker to whom we run to endorse our checks, and off we go to spend them. God will not be our Santa Claus or our big papa bear!

Prayer is communicating with God, and on many occasions we need to listen quietly and give Him time to speak. This is waiting on God! Busy, rushing and talkative souls have no time for such activity. Now some will say, "You just do not understand how busy I am, and all the duties to which I must attend. Why, I have my family, my church, my job, and---and---and---. It is not really how much time we spend in prayer as long as it is quality time." Sounds good, but is very untrue! Do not kid yourself, if all these things leave you no time for God you had better check your spiritual state.

Christ said something like this, "If you put anything before me (and He included family and self) you are not worthy of Me." I didn't say that; He did! We had better get a truer grasp of what the Lord means. We are children of God, yet we are His bondservants---His love slaves. A slave has one main duty which supersedes all else at all times. What is that one duty? It is obeying the master.

Surely it is not easy to discipline ourselves in this matter of time with God. It takes determination and effort, yet I find it very interesting that we make time for what interests us. My friends, if we are going to know God and know Him better we will make that time at all cost. Why, I am appalled that even ministers and students of the Word spend hours studying the doctrines of the Bible to make them fit their brand of theology or doctrinal slant. Yes, they can debate doctrine and prove many points, yet it often appears they do not really know God. Why? They major on minors and minor on majors. Biblical knowledge without the walk with the Author is dead works and useless.

We must have knowledge with experience. Satan often tries to sidetrack us. Knowledge without experience, like faith without works, has no proof of its reality. If we spend time with God and are obeying His Spirit's dictates we will have sound doctrine and meaningful experiences. Those who

gravitate toward mental knowledge of God's Word without practical application are often stunted in their relationship with God, yet can quote many Scriptures. Still this is wood, hay and stubble.

Those who are ever living for emotional feelings and stirrings are also stunted in their spiritual walk and never seem to be able to get past these childlike feelings that constantly rule their actions. If they do not have a tingle at every meeting they think the Spirit has departed. Experience without biblical knowledge opens one more to spirits of deception and to false emotional and even demonic experiences. Those who play the mind-game and those that play the feelings-game will never mature in Christ. Knowledge and feelings are good and have their place. They are not, however, the foundations of true Christianity.

Only as we submit to Christ and His Spirit in prayer and faith and obedience will we receive true discernment in these matters. Knowledge and emotions are good channels for the Spirit to move in and through when He so desires, but they are not the motivating factors. Our only motivator should be the Holy Spirit Himself.