

Training for Self-Conquest

By Flower A. Newhouse

Theme: THE POWER OF SPIRIT

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THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"As soon as he finds you ready, God is bound to act, bound to pour Himself into your being, just as, when the air is pure and clear, the sun must pour into it without holding back."—*Meister J. Eckhart*

REMEMBER

"Let your heart be His abiding place."



THE ALCHEMICAL POWER OF SPIRIT

In every human being some residue of "common ore" still exists. It is life's endeavor to mine the gold from our human experiences. The activity of the Presence of God, plus the working power of Truth, acts as an alchemy that not only releases the gold of our realizations, but in time changes the chemistry of the whole nature of man so that even ordinary ore becomes pure gold in value.

Coal does not change its color though we may wash it in strongest solutions. Only when we put heat to coal and burn it does the blackness give way to a bright red glow. From this alchemical change we can take hint. As long as our human temperaments and desires remain unfired, they shall bear the shadow of unregeneration. When we willingly and reverently apply the heat of overcoming, transmutation, and re-

creation, we too are transformed into brightness, radiance, and purer being.

Many of us postpone self-conquests and renunciations because we fear these acts shall be painful. True, a minor sensation of the purification may be felt, and this feeling can grow into a great inner torment if we feel tortured by our decision to be freed from the darkness of unregenerate qualities. The secret, however, of all voluntary offerings of baser instincts is to present them as a happy gift to the Christ Spirit which works for the re-creation of men. Center attention upon the constructive results to be achieved from wise renunciations: health, inner self-respect, and strengthened usefulness to humanity. All during the burning process of the inward change we want to keep our interest upon the spiritual powers that are releasing us from bondages into new states of freedom and service. Thus we do not resent the minor pains of recreation. We sense them somewhere below the level of our heightened interests. Neither do we exaggerate the steps we voluntarily take, for self-pity and negative martyrdom have no place in enlightened effort.

The validity of all our renunciations, vows, and resolutions rests upon the reality of our inward alteration. If we voluntarily choose to have the alchemical power of Divine Spirit change the base metals of our lower natures into the gold of higher qualities, *the gold, in time, should be apparent*. Nothing pretended could be natural and enduring. When we really pass through the fires of self-elected purification and simplification, we can weather any testing or trial, and the gold of the true qualities we have unfolded will meet strain and doubt without loss of power.

At birthdays, Christmas, New Year's Day, and Easter, we intuitively realize an impelling from within that urges us to discard the heavy, useless, and bind-

ing wraps we have worn. Not only is there felt a desire to be *purified* of dross, but also the desire to be simplified and unburdened from needless and purposeless activities.

In a Nazarene publication* Mary Sanders tells about an inexperienced young orchardist and one who was wise in the ways of husbandry. An elderly rancher visited a young neighbor who asked him what his vineyard most required. The old husbandman recognized that the vineyard lacked something vital—it *had never been pruned!*

With pruning shears the older man went to work. He cut branches right and left until it seemed to the young rancher that his vineyard was being destroyed. Yet, when the next crop of grapes appeared on the vines, they yielded a heavier harvest than the young rancher had ever had, and the fruit was of a finer quality. What had seemed like merciless pruning was actually the salvation of his vineyard.

Until we are re-created by the powers of Spirit, our perspective is defective. We see time, outer things, and conventionalities as important. When our higher nature is raised, we see that God, reverence, and ever-enlarging usefulness are important.

George Fox recounted to a friend the results he observed from having been fired by the powers of Spirit. "I was very much altered in countenance and person, as if my body had been newly molded or changed."

In 1938, Thomas R. Kelly reported a similar experience. Of it he said, "It is wonderful. I have been literally melted down by the love of God." To Rufus Jones, who had been his teacher, Kelly wrote, "I have had, this summer, a refreshment of spirit so amazing, so sweet, and so prolonged as to go clear down to the roots of my being."

To be transformed by the very powers of Spirit means to be surrendered and consecrated to God. Self is no longer the dominant force, the imposter, the deceiver. The rooms and halls of being are vibrant with a new Presence, a new Head and the House of being, the Holy Spirit of God in man. From the moment of his purification one prays with St. Augustine, "My life shall be a real life being full of thee."

THE PROMISE

"Unto you shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings" (*Malachi 4:2*)

THE PRACTICE

Whether it be the training of the appetite for wholesome foods, or the mind and tongue for worthwhile interests, or the emotions to be more tranquil, enter into the new month with the desire for thorough inner house-cleaning and re-decoration, and keep the House of your Being consecrated to the Good.

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