

## Restoration and Communion

Christian Friend vol. 19, 1892, p. 182.

This paper, taken from an old publication, is assigned to J. G. B. — if truly — the style is different from many of his writings.

I suppose there is no better test of the extent of our rest in Christ, and sense of what He is in Himself, than seclusion from everything else, and every one else. One learns in a sleepless night how much real resource and company one has in Him. Alas! we turn to Him more as we would to natural food, to support and revive us, than to the One "in whom we live, and move, and have our being." "I live, yet not I; but Christ liveth in me."

It is not that I can engage in my own pursuits and interests, and, when exhausted (like a labouring man seeking his meals and then rest), turn then to Christ to supply with heavenly cheer and strength. It is quite true that He does do this; but the soul will find that His ministry to it is very different when it turns to Him after being soiled with the care, and business, and plans of this life; and when it turns to Him for re-invigoration and repose, after it has been trying and seeking, however feebly, to live out Christ in every relation of life, and as one exhausted and oppressed with inability, turning to Him as the source of life and strength. Plainly the former lives two lives, the latter only one. The former probably would argue that there are duties and engagements devolving on him among men, which he was bound to attend to sedulously. This I do not deny; but if they cannot bring Christ into them, if they cannot make Him companion and Lord in them, it is plain that they live where He does not, or rather, where He is shut out. Hence they must live a life of their own. I am then at my own disposal, not at the Lord's. In the latter case, I am entirely at His disposal, feeling that I am His, sensible continually how feeble I am; but always insisting that this is my only true course — to be His.

It is not that I give this or that to Him. He is before me in everything. If I talk or arrange for my family (alas! how little one knows it), He is the One present who is first to be considered, how He would like things to be, etc., and they are determined accordingly. I think you will find there is a great difference in the way the former and latter receive from Christ; and in the seclusion and loneliness of solitude we at ordinary times discover who has been prominent with us, *Himself* or *ourselves*.

Hence, in God's wisdom and love, prolonged times of seclusion are imposed on us, in order to expose to us, and teach us, the extent of our satisfaction in, and occupation *with*, Christ Himself. If I wander into my own plans and arrangements here, and to my duties where Christ is left out, I shall find, on turning to Him, that there is delay to enjoyment of Him. The light is clearing the clouds away before the entrancing scenery is disclosed. I may and do feel that I am divinely dealt with, and this is a cheer to a wandering heart, though certainly not to a devoted one. The devoted one seeks to know something more of Him, and this is not imparted to the one only enjoying *restoration*. I do not say that restoration is not most blessed — it is so; but it is nothing in comparison to the communication of His own mind, which is made to the devoted one, and which he seeks. True, the restored one enjoys the power of the light in freeing him from all uncleanness; but the devoted one passes into the region where He is not a stranger, and looks and listens for His voice, and hence grows in the knowledge of Him. Seclusion continually leads the soul into this; and often has it to bless the Lord for such a time, when it has begun to learn such nearness to Christ, and tasted, to the great joy of the heart, the greatness of His resources.