

God's Word: Hid and Not Hid

LIFE HID AND NOT HID

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'Thy word have I hid in my heart.' — Psalm 119:11.

'I have not hid Thy righteousness in my heart.' — [Psalm 40:10](#)

THEN there are two kinds of hiding — one right and one wrong: one essential to the life of the Christian, one inconsistent with it. He is a shallow Christian who has no secret depths in his religion. He is a cowardly *or* a lazy one, at all events an unworthy one, who does not exhibit, to the utmost of his power, his religion. It is bad to have all the goods in the shop window; it is just as bad to have them all in the cellar. There are two aspects of the Christian life — one between God and myself, with which no stranger intermeddles; one patent to all the world. My two texts touch these two.

I. **'I have hid Thy word within my heart.'**

There we have the word hidden, or the secret religion of the heart.

Now, I have often had occasion to remind you that the Old Testament use of the word 'heart' is much wider than our modern one, which limits it to being the seat and organ of love, affection, or emotion; whereas in the Old Testament the **'heart' is the very vital centre of the personal self**. As the Book of Proverbs has it, **'out of it are the issues of life'**, all the outgoings of activity of every kind, both that which we ascribe to the head, and that which we ascribe to the heart. These come, according to the Old Testament idea, from this central self. And so, when the Psalmist says, 'I have hid Thy word within my heart,' he means **'I have buried it deep in the very midst of my being, and put it down at the very roots of myself, and there incorporated it with the very substance of my soul.'**

Now, I venture to take that expression, **'Thy word,'** in a somewhat wider sense than the Psalmist employed it. There are three ideas conveyed by that expression in Scripture; and two of them are distinctly found in this psalm.

First, there is the plain, obvious one, which means by 'the word,' written revelation. The Bible of the Psalmist was a very small volume compared with ours. The Pentateuch, and perhaps some of the historical books, possibly also one or two of the prophets — and these were about all. Yet this fragmentary word he 'hid in his heart.' Now, dear brethren! I wish to say a very practical thing or two, and I begin with this. **If you want to be strong Christian people, hide the Bible in your heart.** When I was a boy the practice of good Christian folk was to read a daily chapter. I wonder if that is kept up. I gravely suspect it is not. There are, no doubt, a great many causes contributing to the comparative decay amongst professing Christians, of Bible reading and Bible study.

There is modern 'higher criticism,' which has a great deal to say about how and when the books were made, especially the books that composed this Psalmist's Bible. But I want to insist that no theories, were they ever so well established — as I take leave to say they are not — no theories about these secondary questions touch the value of Scripture as a factor in the development of the Christian life. Whatever a man may think about these, he will be none the less alive, if he is wise, to the importance of the daily devotional study of Scripture.

Then there is another set of reasons for the neglect of Scripture, in the multiplication of other forms of literature. People have so many other books to read now, that they have not much time for reading their Bibles, or if they have, they think they have not. **No literature will ever take the place of the old Book.** Why, even looked at as a mere literary product there is nothing in the world like it! And no religious literature, sermons, treatises, still less magazines and periodicals, will do for Christian men what the Bible will do for them. You make a tremendous mistake, for your own souls' sake, if your religious reading consists in what people have said and thought about Scripture, more than in the Scripture itself. Why should you dip your pitchers into the reservoir, when you can take them up to where the spring comes gushing out of the hillside, pure and limpid and living?

Then there is the drive of our modern life which crowds out the word. Get up a quarter of an hour earlier and you will have time to read your Bible. It will be well worth the sacrifice, if it is a sacrifice. I do not mean by reading the Bible what, I am afraid, is far too common, reading a scrap of Scripture as if it were a kind of charm. But I would most earnestly press upon you that muscle and fibre will distinctly atrophy and become enfeebled, if Christian people neglect the first plain way of hiding the word in their heart, which is to make the utterances of Scripture as if incorporated with their very being, and part of their very selves.

But there is another use of the expression, **'Thy word,'** which is not without example in this great psalm of praise of the word. In one place in it we read, **'For ever, O Lord! Thy word is settled in heaven';** that is not the Bible. 'Thy faithfulness is unto all generations.

They continue this day according to Thy ordinances'; these are not the Bible — 'for all are Thy servants.' 'Unless Thy law had been my delight, I should have perished in my afflictions'; I think that is not the Bible either, but it is the utterance of God's will, as expressed in the Psalmist's affliction. God's word comes to us in His providences and in many other ways. It is the declaration of His character and purposes, however they are declared, and the expression of His will and command, however expressed. In that wider sense of the phrase, I would say, 'Hide that manifested will of God in your hearts.' Let us cultivate the habit of bringing all 'the issues of life' — the streams that bubble up from that fountain in the centre of our being — into close relation to what we know to be God's will concerning us. Let the thought of the will of God sit sovereign arbiter, enthroned in the very centre of our personality, ruling our will, bending it and making it yielding and conformed to His, governing our affections, regulating our passions, restraining our desires, stimulating our slothfulness, quickening our aspirations, lifting heavenwards our hopes, and bringing the whole of the activities that well up from our hearts into touch with the will of God. Cast the healing branch into the very eye of the fountain, and then all the streams will partake of the cleansing. Let that known will of God be as the leaven hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened. A fanciful interpretation of that emblem makes the three measures to mean the triple constituents of humanity, body, soul, and spirit. We may smile at the fantastic exposition, but let us take heed to obey the exhortation. **When God's will is deeply planted within, it will work quickening change on the heavy dough of our sluggish natures.** It is when we bring the springs of our actions — namely, our motives, which are our true selves — into touch with His uttered will, that our deeds become conformed to it. Look after the motives, and the deeds will look after themselves. 'I have hid Thy word within my heart.'

And now I venture upon a further application of this phrase, of which the Psalmist had no notion, but which, in God's great mercy, in the progress of

revelation, we can make. There is a better word of God than the Bible; there is a better word of God than any will uttered in His providences and the like. There is the Incarnate Word of God, who 'was from the beginning with God, and was God,' and is manifested in these last times unto us. I am keeping well within the analogy of Scripture teaching when I see the perfecting of revelation by the spoken Word as reached in the revelation by the personal word; and when, **in addition to the exhortation, to hide the Scripture in your hearts, and to hide the uttered will of God, however uttered, in your hearts, I add, let us hide Christ in our hearts.** For He will 'dwell in our hearts by faith,' and if He is shrined within the curtains of the secret place within us, which is 'the secret place of the Most High,' then, in the courts of the sanctuary, there will be a pure sacrifice and a priest clad 'in the beauties of holiness.'

II. The word not hidden, or the religion of the outward life.

Our second text brings into view the outer side of the devout life, that which is turned to the world. The word is to be hidden in the heart, for this very end of being then revealed in the life. For what other purpose is it to be set in the centre of our being and applied to the springs of action, than to mould action, and so to be displayed in conduct? It is not to be hid like some forgotten and unused treasure in a castle vault, but to be buried deep in a living person, that it may affect all that person's character and acts. 'There is nothing hidden, but that it should come abroad.' The deepest, sacredest, most secret Christian experiences are to be operative on the outward life. A man may be caught up into the third heavens and there hear words which mortal speech cannot utter, but the incommunicable vision should tell on his patience and fortitude, and influence his Christian work.

Nor is our manifestation of the springs of our action to be confined to conduct. However eloquent it is, it will be all the more intelligible for the commentary supplied by confession with the mouth. Speech for Christ is a Christian obligation. 'What ye hear in the ear, that proclaim ye on the housetops.' True, there is a legitimate reticence as to the depths of personal religion, which needs very strong reasons to warrant its being broken through. Peter told Mark nothing of the interview which he had with Christ on the Resurrection morning, but he must have told the fact. **We shall do well to be silent as to what passes between Jesus and us in secret;** but we shall not do well if, coming from our private communion with Him, we do not 'find' some to whom we can say, 'We have found the Messiah,' and so bring them to Jesus.

The word, if hid in the heart, will certainly be manifest in the life For not only is it impossible for a man who deeply and continually realises God's will, and lives in touch with Jesus Christ, to prevent these experiences from visibly affecting His life and conduct, but also **in the measure in which we have that conscious inward possession of the divine word and the divine Christ we shall be impelled to manifest them to our fellows by every means in our power.**

What, then, is the inference to be drawn from the fact that there are thousands of professing Christian people in Manchester, who never felt the slightest touch of a necessity to make known the Master Whom they say they serve? They must be very shallow Christians, having no depth of experience, or that experience would insist on coming out. True Christian emotion is like a fire smoldering within some substance, that never rests till it burns its way to the outside. As one of the prophets puts it, 'I said I will speak no more in Thy name'; he goes on to tell how his resolve of silence gave way under the pressure of the unuttered speech 'Thy word shut up in my bones was like a fire, and I was weary of forbearing and I could not stay.' So it will always be. **Every genuine conviction demands utterance. A full heart needs the relief of speech. If you feel no need to show your allegiance**

and love to Christ by speech as well as by life, I shrewdly suspect you have little love or allegiance to hide.

Further, the more we show it, the more need there is for us to cultivate the hidden element in our religion. If I were talking to ministers I should have a great deal to say about that. There are preachers who preach away their own religion. The two attitudes of mind in imparting and in receiving are wholly different; and if one is allowed to encroach upon the other, nothing but harm can come. 'As thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone,'— that is the short account of the decay of personal religion in many a life outwardly diligent in Christian work. **If there is a proportionate cultivation of the hidden self, then the act of manifesting will tend to strengthen it. It is meant that our Christian convictions and affections should grow in strength and in transforming power upon ourselves, by reason of utterance; just as when you let air in, the fire burns brighter.** But it is quite possible that we may dissipate and scatter our feeble religion by talking about it; and some of us may be in danger of that. The loftier you mean to build your tower, the deeper must be the foundation that you dig. The more any of us are trying to do for Jesus Christ, the more need there is that we increase our secret communion with Jesus Christ.

We may wrongly hide our religion so that it evaporates. Too many professing Christians put away their religion as careless housewives might do some precious perfume, and when they go to take it out, they find nothing but a rotten cork, a faint odour, and an empty flask. Take care of burying your religion so deep, as dogs do bones, that you cannot find it again, or if you do discover, when you open the coffin, that it holds only a handful of dry dust.

The heart has two actions. In one it opens its portals and expands to receive the inflowing blood which is the life. In the other it contracts to drive the life through the veins. For health there must be both motions; the receptiveness, in the secret 'hiding of the word in the heart'; the expulsive energy in the 'not hiding Thy righteousness in my heart.'