

DISCIPLINE FOR LIFE-CHANGING SERVICE

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DEDICATED

TO

MOTHER

WHOSE silent prayers by my bedside, when as a youth she knew I was falling, have been a cleansing and sanctifying influence throughout my life. She watched with unswerving devotion each step in my spiritual progress. She was the first to ask me if I wanted to be a minister and she first found out that I wanted to go to the foreign field. Her prayers are now answered.

GOD BLESS OUR MOTHERS

INTRODUCTION

THE transformation of our nature is God's work; the formation of our character is our business in co-operation with Him. It is God who is working in us, but it is our part to express in character and conduct all that God is accomplishing. For our gardens, God provides the seed, gives the life, causes the seed to grow and provides the sunshine and the rain, but He does not dig the ground, plant the right seed, pull out the weeds, fence the garden, or keep the gate shut; that is all our responsibility. This book is an attempt to present our part in the formation of our own character, under the guidance of God and in the experience of His transforming power.

Much has been done in training the intellect and teaching principles and theories; this book is devoted to the work of training and controlling emotional life and directing volitional activity. There may be some material for intellectual work, but the chief purpose is to show that within the reach of all, even the illiterate, are ways to control and direct the feelings and affections, and discipline the will, so that we may live our daily life in line with the higher spiritual principles to which we have so often aspired, but have so frequently failed to attain.

God's most effective instrument in transforming others is the human personality and witness. Even the Bible is the product of God working within and through men's minds, bodies and spiritual lives and is an Old and New Witness to what God has done. Your body is God's opportunity for expression in your particular sphere. Some years ago I had to face the fact that I expressed almost as much of a satanic nature as I did of the divine nature. Under the conviction that I was being guided by God, I settled

down to the colossal task of eliminating every form of evil as soon as it was recognized. The index indicates in general the order that was followed in facing the problem of discipline, widespread confession of sin, the question of bringing myself into line with absolute love, honesty, purity and unselfishness, and then the problem of bringing every detail into my covenant with God. Each step was taken as a surrender to Jesus Christ and the outstanding features of those decisions are summed up in the Seven-fold Surrender.

The next result was a complete surprise. As soon as I began to share these experiences with others and witness to what God had done in my own life, people began to be convicted of their own sins and inconsistencies, to discipline themselves under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and to find the same victorious life. They began to take a vital interest in prayer, Bible study, Christian service and especially in witnessing to others. Their work was effective in making peace with those with whom they had been at variance and in bringing peace into families, churches and to the community in many ways, and also they were used in many places to win others to unconditional surrender to God. There was every indication that it was a work of the Holy Spirit.

The book is based on Bible studies and is planned for the use of missionaries and their co-workers in church, mission and group activity, and its purpose is to meet a need on the mission field in South India. If it proves to be of any assistance to others in their spheres of service, we shall be all the more thankful to God.

Every paragraph has been forged out of actual experience in life-changing service. There is no special attempt to be original; for everything has been selected for publication because it has already been used to help a significant number of people.

Finally, it has been written because of insistent guidance, which included the co-operation of others, co-operation of circumstances, and many requests from widely separated areas for the publication of this witness in printed form. A number in the Group in South India have contributed sections, and some of them have assisted in checking the manuscript.

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CHAPTER I

DISCIPLINE

'IN your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted ^{Heb.} so as to endanger your lives; and you have quite ^{xii. 14} forgotten the encouraging words which are addressed to you as sons, which say, "MY SON, DO NOT THINK LIGHTLY OF THE LORD'S DISCIPLINE, AND DO NOT FAINT WHEN HE CORRECTS YOU; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES; AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE ACKNOWLEDGES." The sufferings you are enduring are for your discipline. God is dealing with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline of which every true son has had a share, that shows that you are . . . not true sons. Now at the time, discipline seems to be a matter not for joy, but for grief; yet afterwards it yields, to those who have passed through its training, a result full of peace—namely, righteousness.'

The thought of divine discipline appears many times in the Bible; the one above is perhaps the outstanding example. Weymouth, whose translation of the New Testament is used throughout this book, substitutes the word 'discipline' for the word 'chastisement' used in the A. V. It seems to suit the meaning of the whole passage better, for while there may be some scourging, all discipline is not chastisement. God is our Heavenly Father; He is interested in our enjoyments; He does not wish to punish us and has no pleasure in seeing us suffer. Discipline need not be all unpleasant, though much of it may be rigorous; the ultimate aim and attitude of the one undertaking the discipline will decide whether it will be troublesome or an enjoyable exercise. For years I failed to reach

effectiveness in life-changing service because I looked upon discipline as an irksome infliction which would rob me of many enjoyments, instead of an enjoyable exercise like training for sports. The last few years discipline has been more like the friendly suggestions of a father to his son; it has been the Father pointing out hindrances and helps. There has been no thought of self-flaying self-examination; the experience has been more like searching by the Spirit of God during which it would have been sin on my part to have flinched from facing anything that came to mind; it has also been a source of inspiration that God would point out to me in detail the features of my character and conduct that needed discipline. With this has been the encouraging experiences of finding that everything pointed out, whether good or bad, has been used to help others in finding release from those things which defeated them, or enabling them to be led into effectiveness in life-changing service.

Discipline by any passage in the Bible involves at least a brief quiet time on each thought or sentence, and all thought of others and how aptly these things would apply to them may be dismissed; it is best to discipline one's self and leave the discipline of others to God; that is His business. In facing this section I did not miss the irony of the first sentence; I certainly had not endangered my life or health in resisting sin, and I had quite forgotten that any form of regret or shame about anything I had done, was the Father talking, in His own way, to one whom He wished to be a son in a much fuller sense. What I see now as kindly discipline I then treated lightly as fanaticism. Fainting spiritually is like fainting bodily, and all work, exercise or discipline has to be stopped; preparation for responsible service must be laid aside till there is assurance that there will be no more fainting. God is just as thoughtful as a doctor or a nurse, and stops all discipline and guidance to it, till

one is prepared not to collapse and lie down at the sight of the next surrender.

Some of my own fainting spells occurred at the thought of getting up early in the morning for quiet times and I am still liable to them at the moments when I should actually get out of bed. For years I fainted at the thought of surrendering to do anything to which God might guide, and at the idea of disciplining my life by absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love. After undertaking to speak to some persons every day about their spiritual life if the opportunity arose, I developed a habit of fainting when face to face with the persons. Guidance to people stopped and for twenty years power for effective work with individuals vanished. The experiences of those twenty years are best described as the scourging of failure along almost every line, the depression due to futility and unguided activity and the absence of an encouraging sense of God's direction and fatherly care. Finally there came an appreciation of God's love in persisting till I did submit to discipline. Troubles are now no longer troubles, they are discipline and they vanish, as a rule, as soon as the lessons are learned. Sacrifice is no longer sacrifice, it is an opening door to fuller life. Personal humiliation has no sting left in it, for it has so often been the precursor to victorious experiences that it is almost welcomed. Righteousness, purity, confident faith, unselfishness and love are no longer distant and rather dreadful ideals; under the discipline of confession, guidance and surrender to God they are becoming more and more the normal reactions of every day life. Two years rigorous but stirring discipline 'under the mighty hand of God' has indeed produced results full of peace.

When I first began Christian life I disciplined in spots and later in patches. As a youth I joined the Church, began to read my Bible to some extent, prayed regularly, avoided impure conversation and attended

a large number of religious meetings. I did nothing about temper, resentments, excuses, misrepresentation, selfishness, impurity in many ways and the less flagrant forms of sin. It was discipline in spots. As a young man in evangelistic work there was vigorous discipline of dishonesties, a higher plane of personal purity, some elimination of selfishness, real attention to Bible study and prayer, many helpful spiritual experiences and a determination to become an effective personal worker. A great deal of attention was given to the experiences of power for Christian service and at that time I first realized that the guidance of the Holy Spirit and His empowering for service were for present day Christians. Discipline was limited to special verses which caught my attention or to which I was guided. Nothing was done in reference to temper, resentments, self-execute and many other sins; there were large areas of love, honesty, purity and unselfishness in reference to which no discipline was undertaken and wide ranges of spiritual service were unexplored. The result was that the unsundered areas of my character were weights that hindered progress and finally dragged me down in weakness and disobedience. The stirring experiences of that time faded, guidance was lost again, the Bible became dull reading, prayer brought little enjoyment and until I faced discipline by the four standards and departmental discipline of life I never found the reason. It was partial and incomplete discipline. It was discipline in patches, surrender to God in patches and victorious spiritual experience in spots. I was trying to put patches of surrender on an unsundered life, patches of discipline on an unchanged and undisciplined nature. Now I have put on a whole new suit of unconditional surrender to Christ and am trusting Him to keep it uncreased, unspotted and untorn.

A spirit of discipline has become dominant. Any method, form or rule will be useless without the spirit

of discipline, as useless as the letter of the law without the spirit of the law. That spirit is given by the great disciplinarian of all true Christians, the Holy Spirit. The spirit of discipline is a spirit that will not rest as long as there is any known sin, any inconsistency or apparent failure to reach the highest. Years ago I knew that there were sins in my character and conduct, but I did not know of any way to deal with them effectively and I had little experience of an empowering Spirit within. For some years now I have been using a method guided and energized by the Holy Spirit; it has resulted in changes in my own life; it is contagious and others follow the example. It began when I stopped compromise and surrendered unconditionally to have my life disciplined by any and every known standard of God's will. In brief the method is to make a note of every sin, defeat, inconsistency or failure to reach the highest, as soon as it is seen, confess it to God, share it under guidance at the first opportunity, and then surrender to have it rectified. The responsibility for bringing this about is God's, my part is to be alert for guidance and obey.

There are continents of difference between facing a standard in the spirit of uncompromising surrender to obey to the limit, and taking the attitude of doing the best I can. The one results in vitalizing spiritual progress and the other in stalemate. The best I can generally means the best I can without much effort, without personal inconvenience and without costing too much in sacrifice. It is the incarnation of the spirit of compromise, for it means that I am unwilling to face the implications of an unconditional surrender to God; it is reserving to myself the privilege of turning tail if the battle thickens. In my own case the refusal to compromise marked the beginning of a changed life.

A successful barrister said that cases are not won in court unless they are first won in the study by winning every point in detail. Discipline is simply winning

spiritual battles before entering the fight. The Roman soldiers used to say that there was only one difference between their drill and their battles, that was the bloodshed; their drills were bloodless battles and their battles were gory drills. In peace they drilled with their arms, fought mimic duels, marched, camped, threw up embankments, besieged cities and went through every detail of real war and when war came they went through every detail of their drill as it was necessary. Discipline and life-changing service stand in the same relationship; discipline is facing a fight that will surely come and before the unknown date for the struggle arrives, winning the fight alone with God, and then making notes of the salient points of that experience. Life-changing service means living out the discipline to which, under God's guidance, one has been led to surrender and sharing those experiences of struggle, defeat or victory with someone who is defeated and in need of spiritual help. One is discipline for life and the other is living out discipline. When soldiers and armies can win battles for their countries without discipline, exercise and drill, Christians can expect to win victories for God without discipline of life.

After speaking briefly at a certain students' camp, a young college lecturer asked for about twenty minutes to talk over some matters. We met after dinner when there was no hurry, and he commenced by saying that when he came to the camp he was troubled by a very great temptation to which he had almost decided to yield. He had been offered a very important position under an influential person and the salary was a huge one. But one condition was that he must give up Christianity. The offer was so tempting to a young man making his way, that he had almost decided to accept. But he said that since coming to that camp he wondered why he had ever thought about the matter. He was like a man released and had obviously entered on a new spiritual experience. But I did not know

what to do with such people at that time, except to give them some general advice about Christian living.

It was twelve months later that we met again, and again the lecturer wanted to have a long talk. Twelve months experience in team work, during which scores of such talks had occurred, had led to itemizing surrender instead of generalizing; the Seven-fold Surrender had proved its value. We went for an afternoon walk up to an old fort, and on the way he began to ask questions about confession of sin in public; his problems on that point were easily settled, for he was really convinced before we started. We sat down for a rest and he asked how to begin this new life. He was told that people began in two ways; in one they sat before God morning by morning and asked to be shown any sins in their own life which needed confession and discipline. They usually took the four standards, absolute love, honesty, purity and unselfishness and tested their thoughts, motives, words and actions by them. But that took a long time and there was a much quicker way to begin and that searching could be continued later. This quicker way was to smash down the power of sin in one's own life by a frank confession of the worst sins in the presence of some helpful spiritual friend; the rest was usually easier after the worst had been shared. Then I told him my own experience of sharing my worst sins with the preachers and teachers of the field, told him what the sins were and of the response from the men. I had thought at that time it was the end of my usefulness among them, but since then I had learned that it was just the beginning. It was suggested that he take whichever course appealed to him; he said that he would take the latter.

We had a quiet time to give opportunity for guidance in confession. There is usually no need for a quiet time to find out what sins should be confessed; in my own case and many others, certain sins immediately

sprang to memory every time confession was mentioned anywhere. At the close of this quiet time we prayed for each other and then he named three sins which undoubtedly were the ones most burdensome to his mind. I prayed for him and he prayed very simply asking forgiveness. We sat quiet for awhile and then he was asked if he would not give his life unconditionally to Jesus Christ. He replied, 'But what about all this discipline of life by absolute love, honesty, purity and unselfishness? I must first do that and after I have improved my life to some extent I will give myself unconditionally to Jesus Christ.' 'No,' he was told, 'You cannot do that without Christ, and He cannot do that in you unless He has control. The first thing to do is to place your life unconditionally in the hands of Jesus. Do with your life just what the boy did with the loaves and fishes; he placed them in the hands of Jesus and Jesus took them, blessed them, broke them and used them just as He wished. Will you give yourself to Jesus Christ just as you are for Him to make you what He wants you to be?' 'Yes, I will,' he said, 'but how shall I do it?' 'Do it definitely in prayer,' was the suggestion offered. He bowed his head and in very simple language placed himself unconditionally in the hands of the Master.

Then we walked on up the hill. There was nothing very emotional and one was disposed to wonder if anything very real had happened. We chatted for awhile and then took up the question of unconditional surrender to discipline of life under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, by absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love. He instantly remarked that he would have to do that or the surrender he had just made would not stand. We stepped into one of the archways of a ruined fort and there he surrendered unconditionally to discipline of life under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It so happened that the lecturer was due to speak

that evening at about nine o'clock. He opened his remarks by saying, 'I have given my life unconditionally to Jesus Christ for Him to make me what He wants me to be.' His address was clear in thought, helpful spiritually and arrested the attention of all, but there was nothing emotional; his style was conversational and not at all forceful. The camp was held in a travellers' bungalow and a Christian revenue official came unexpectedly and an end room was vacated for him. He was not a Protestant and during the address he sat with his feet up on a lounge chair, but was within easy reach of the speaker's voice; it was noticed that he was listening with wide-eyed attention. At the close of the meeting he went up to the speaker, remarked that he had been deeply impressed with what he had said about giving himself unconditionally to Christ, and asked the lecturer to come into his room for a talk. They spent some time together and there and then the revenue official gave himself unconditionally to Christ.

At about four o'clock in the afternoon the lecturer had shared his worst, made an unconditional surrender to Christ and had buttressed it by surrender to discipline of life under guidance, and six hours later he was used to stir deeply a total stranger and to lead him to surrender himself to Christ. The lecturer had surrendered as much as he knew of himself to as much as he understood of God. One may expect to be used continuously in life-changing service as long as those conditions are progressively fulfilled. The conditions may be fulfilled at five o'clock, but if at five minutes past, a man is faced with a step forward and does not take it, power to influence men may vanish. Today's surrender is not sufficient for tomorrow any more than today's meals. A surrendered life is a progressive life with always some step forward and always more radiant experiences following those steps upward.

People persistently insinuate that discipline is self-examination. If it is merely self-examination, I

strongly urge everyone to avoid it. If it is also God-examination and a searching under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, then it is sin to check the urge to discipline. I have never looked for a single sin in my whole discipline; every sin has been thrust on my mind, as if by some convicting spirit. I had to either back down and refuse to attempt to rise to the standards of absolute love, honesty, purity and unselfishness, which I saw others honourably facing, or deal with the sin, from the thought of which I could not escape.

Morbid introspection results when people see numberless evils in their own character and nature and try to hide them from others, repress conviction of sin about them, excuse themselves, and bemoan their evil state without doing anything about the matter, or when they know of no working method by which to approach the problems. I believe that my own discipline demands that, when an evil or a failure to reach the highest is brought to my attention in any way, it is my duty to note it instantly, in writing if possible, but if not, mentally in such a way that I shall remember the matter later. Then I confess the sin to God and as soon as guided before some other person, but I do not leave the matter there. I surrender that sin to God and ask for the desire to be taken away, but I am willing continually to repress the desire as long as it happens to continue. Before long, and often on the very day, there will come an occasion when the thought of that sin and surrender will occur to my mind during a conversation or an address or Bible study; I take such opportunities to share the experience, and with very, very few exceptions I am thanked for doing this. I have found that there can be no morbid introspection if there is outward expression, in confession and sharing witness to the power of God to heal and release. It is the most invigorating spiritual exercise available to me and always results in a sense of God's direction.