

"FROM FRETTING TO LETTING"

INTRODUCTION

I don't know if you've ever had the feeling of being "at the end of your rope"...hanging on desperately, afraid to let go... If you have, then you know what an uncomfortable and devastating state of affairs it is. A friend may suggest,

"Listen...get hold of yourself. Get
a new grip on life..." "Hang in there"

And it may seem to us like good advice. But life is not something to be "gripped", to be held onto desperately to keep it from slipping away. Life has hold of you. You do not live life...life lives you. It animates you and expresses itself as you. It is living you this very moment. It will never let you go.

DEVELOPMENT

I think that this "hold on for dear life" attitude leads to a kind of mental tension and physical exhaustion that is at the heart and root of so many physical ills. The truth is that no "grip" is needed. What is needed is the will to relax and to let go. Anxiety, fear, stress, tension and this "holding on for dear life" cut off the flow of the vital spiritual energies and juices that sustain life.

Life will no more of its own volition cease to flow through you than the Colorado River would abandon the Grand Canyon. If there is an impediment in the flow of life resulting in weakness and deterioration, it is because unconsciously you have closed off the flow by your tense desire to hang on.

Whoever you are, remember that you are never alone. You are not really bobbing about on the seas of life at the mercy of the winds and the storms of fate and circumstance. This seeming state is the result of seeing your whole self-partially. You are a whole creature, an expression of God, a spiritual being with depth. There is a built-in relationship with the allness of life that you can never change. There is no possible way that you can be separated from God, from His love, any more than a wave can be separated from the ocean. There is that Love, Divine Love, that "will not let us go".

The Psalmist says, "Fret not yourself..." This word "fret" is an interestingly descriptive word. It is the half-cry, the half-whine of an upset child. It may begin in anger or fear or discomfort, but it relentlessly continues feeding on itself, until in the end there is little awareness of what the fretting is all about. It is a childish action, but the term vividly describes the emotional preoccupation of many adults.

WORRY TIME

The average person in the course of a day probably gives more "worry time" to making car payments and tuition payments, meeting the mortgage, concern over business or job complications, fading beauty, loss of health and personal relationships than he or she spends in thinking in a constructive manner.

How great and how deepseated is this habit of dissipating out power by fuming and fretting about what we read in the papers...about the injustices in our own lives...about the seemingly evil people in our world - so often things we can do nothing to alter or correct. We would not think of drinking water containing poison, but we continue to inject ourselves with this poison of worry and anxiety - fretting daily over our loved ones, our work, our health, our prosperity or our lack of it. Many fret about politics, about the trend of

government, the problems of our cities. Certainly we should be concerned, and we should exercise the options available to us to participate in the democratic process of change. But fretting about conditions never helps anyone.

Paul says to us in the 12th chapter of Romans, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good".

Don't get all uptight fussing and fuming and fighting the darkness, the apparent errors and glaring injustices. Instead, return to your own spiritual center of life. This "returning" refers to pray, it refers to solitude, to meditation, to practicing the presence of God. One of the professors I had in Seminary use to offer this prayer before each class:

"Grant us, O God, such a vision of thy truth and
thy beauty that we may work without haste and
without rest".

He use to say that for him the word "haste" suggested that frantic, desperate, tense attitude...the fusing, the fretting and the fuming of trying to "hang on to life".

When the day comes when man really believes that life is lived from within out, he will place as much emphasis on the contemplative re-charging of his batteries in disciplines of prayer and of meditation as he now places on eating and exercise. Poem "The Place of Peace" - Markham

JESUS STRESSED INNER PRAYER

Jesus stressed what we might call "inner prayer". He infers strongly that God does not force Himself in man's consciousness, any more than air forces itself into man's lungs. The Infinite waits patiently for the recognition and the acceptance of the finite. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount:

"When thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father, who seeth in secret shall recompense Thee".

The world is ever with us - sometimes too much so! In the world of things and relationships and work we are faced with demands that can become a disintegrating influence. Like the super-powered automobile that is capable of high speeds and long journeys but must occasionally pull off the road into a service station for refueling, so man cannot long function without an inner replenishment. Man may be amazingly creative, artistic, productive, inventive, vigorous, powerful and dynamic - all this is the exhalation of his true being.

But, there must also be a regular period of inhalation, or else he will "come to know want".

GOOD ACHIEVERS / POOR RECEIVERS

Most people are good "achievers", but poor "receivers". What I mean is that our goals seem ever to be set in the achievement of things and positions in the world. Because we do not look within for support, we so often do not receive the wherewithal to keep on achieving. Living beyond our spiritual means, we are overdrawn and over-expended.

This may explain why our mental hospitals are crammed to capacity, while even greater segments of the population outside of hospitals rush about in confusion and mis-direction, seeking solace from analysts and tranquilizers. The answer is to get involved in the discipline of solitude and meditation. To have much success with "inner prayer", we must cultivate the "art of letting go", and most of us know that this takes some doing.

Most of the problems that we fret about are bound to us by the hold we have on them.

I was reading somewhere recently that scientists have learned to catch monkeys in the jungle by using small jars with long, narrow necks and putting a handful of nuts in the jar. The monkey thrusts his paw into the jar to take a fistful of nuts. But when he tries to withdraw the prize, he discovers that his clenched fist will not pass through the narrow neck of the jar. So he is trapped in the securely fastened jar - unable to escape with his booty and yet unwilling to let it go.

We may smile at the monkeys, thinking how foolish they are, but in many respects we are just like them. We cling to the very things that hold us back, remaining captive through sheer unwillingness to let go. We feel we have been unjustly treated in our work by some friend or associate.

Often we hear someone say, "I will never forget this as long as I live". Thus he holds onto the handful of nuts and is trapped, spending the rest of his days complaining about the weight of the jar he's dragging around with him...unwilling to let go.

For many of us a great source of tension in life comes with the burden of having to make a decision. I must confess to occasional lapses into impotence of decisiveness myself. At such times we need to remember that there is an answer to every problem and right guidance for every turning of the way - and it exists within us even as we are facing the need.

SUM UP From fretting to letting. Every one of us must decide for himself or herself whether he is going to go through life "fretting" over the challenges and the problems that come through change, or whether he is going to let the activity of the Spirit of God as it comes to us through Christ find expression in and through him.

Letting go is a fine art. Like all fine arts it is achieved only through the discipline of practice. Fear tends to hold on. Faith lets go. Learn to practice faith. Human love holds on, but Divine Love lets go. Practice Divine Love.

PRAYER Our lives are not always easy O God. Stress and anxiety take hold and rob us of our energy. Help us in these moments to fashion a high resolve - to resolve in the days of this new season that now comes to withdraw to the quiet place and there to open our lives to thy love, as we find it breaking through to us in the person of Jesus. Amen

Phil

Monday / Sept. 19

Lynn and Carol,

Am I correct....today's schedule will have you both down for four hours?

Lynn - 9 to 1
Carol - 11 to 3

And no Nancy?

It's going to be busy....first day of school, etc....can you handle the buzzer, the telephone and generally assist Judy and the mothers, if they need help.

There will be some checks passed on to you...Lynn can you receive them, enter them, and around eleven this morning work on the Day School finance deposit sheet (Pink Sheet). I'll show you the procedure.

Other jobs for this morning would be to do GREEN CARDS and VISITORS' LETTERS from Sunday....about four cards and about three letters, I think.

Ushers cards have been done and can be given postage and mailed.

Carol...go ahead with the Education Committee stencils. I can do a couple for you on Tuesday morning, and perhaps one or two late today. Let me know what and where on the Sunday School material. SS supplies are in the lounge. Quite a bit has come.

Lynn, if you have time and want to help me run off the new directory, great. I'll start on it around ten.

We have a big mailing for Tuesday and Wednesday. I've asked Marion Busk and Gertrude Lesser to give us some time - folding, stuffing the envelopes. We'll set them up on the back table for Tuesday morning.

We're expecting new rubber matting for fourth floor. If it comes, let them put it in the 4th floor lounge.

PC