

The Insatiable Desire of the Redeemed

by John Follette

The sermon explores the profound transformation of identity and desire in the life of a believer, emphasizing the journey towards spiritual maturity in Christ.

Scripture: Matthew 5:48, Luke 9:23, John 14:26, Romans 8:29, Ephesians 4:13, Colossians 1:28, Colossians 3:10, 1 Peter 1:16, 2 Peter 1:4

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Christian Maturity"

Description

John Wright Follette preaches on the theme of 'Identification,' emphasizing the importance of understanding who we are in Christ and the insatiable desire for spiritual growth and transformation. He compares the believer to a flame born of celestial fire, highlighting the need for a deep spiritual rebirth and a surrender of life to God. Follette discusses the significance of desire in the Christian life, pointing out that Jesus elevates and refines our desires to align with God's will, leading to a holy and mystical hunger for God. He challenges believers to strive for spiritual maturity and completion, emphasizing the continuous process of growth and transformation in Christ.

Transcript

IDENTIFICATION

I am a flame born of celestial fire

I bear a name, Insatiable Desire.

I wear in heart an image all divine,

Past human art, not traced by mortal line.

I hear God call to taste His heavenly powers

I give my all to burn life's single kour.

So let me burn through letters that would bind;

Thus will I learn and freedom will I find.

I shall return to Love's eternal fire,

There shall I burn--a satisfied desire.

---John Wright Follette

May I offer, along with the poem, Identification, a few notes or suggestions for those who wish to share in its message? These thoughts may be scattered and only hint at lines of thought which issue from the larger theme suggested by the title of the poem.

The question of identification--who we are, and why we are thus caught up in an arrangement so divine as the new creation--is not usually considered sufficiently to give a Christian very substantial ground for his thought processes and ventures in faith. His whole life, no doubt, would take on deeper significance and spiritual color had he a clearer vision to follow. If I am not sure what I am, there is endless confusion in life since I fail to reckon or count myself to be the creature God says I am, and make the mistake of thinking I am what I was before I became a partaker of the divine nature. If I fail to know why I am, then my objectives for living probably are quite foreign to God's purpose, or so much less than the ultimate which lie has for me that my life is lost in endless technical habits and side processes. All may be very good but they get me nowhere.

To discover a basic fact of one's being and to use that as a premise from which to live or "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" is of paramount value. Let us remember that man is essentially spirit. People often confuse themselves with their bodies. My body is not I. I am more than my body. My body is merely a medium of expression, the house in which I live this earthly life. When we recognize even this fact and work from it, ordering our lives so as to lay the emphasis on spiritual, invisible, eternal issues where it belongs, we begin to get adjustments in the new life which are vital and necessary. Bear this in mind as you read the poem.

I liken my new being to a flame. In Psalm 104:4 we read that God makes His ministers a flaming fire. In Deuteronomy 4:24 we read, "The Lord thy God is a consuming fire." He revealed Himself to Isaiah, Ezekiel, and John in the midst of fire. Since I am born of God and thus have become a partaker of His divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), I like to think of myself as a flame of celestial origin and one with God, for the heavenly fire not only has touched me but is ministering now in my whole being, making me daily more and more like Him. As new creatures we are born from above--born of God, who is fire--and so we share now in that nature.

By the strange miracle of a spiritual rebirth, the first I that was found in nature has been changed forever into a new I, a new creature or creation in Christ. God sees us thus, if we are truly born again, and He continually reckons with us and for us as a new being. All the life in the spiritual realm is working toward this goal. That is why we are born of the Spirit--to give us natures which are perfectly adapted to the new order of life. All the laws and principles of the spiritual life are made for this. As new creatures we are fitted for the finest and highest that heaven can afford. Christ has paid a tremendous price to make this possible, so we "beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."

My name, Insatiable Desire, is rather a character name. That is, it carries the characteristic mood or tenor of the new creation--insatiable desire. When we use the term desire we find ourselves in a field of very broad horizons. Desire is at the root of all life and conduct, and may be considered the starting point for all natural urges and drives common to the human nature.

We will not here discuss the fundamental urges--though they are God-given and surely to be recognized if we venture very far in the development of character and the building up of a new creation in Christ. Let us merely observe, in passing, that all the basic urges and hungers in life are according to God's creative scheme and belong to the plan for human life. Through sin and failure they may lose all sense of relation and proportion, and be abused, misused and misdirected. But the wonderful Christ who knows and understands us perfectly can take a poor, distracted personality and cleanse it of sin, fill it with His own powerful and beautiful life, and cause an integration of all the essential elements of our makeup. He centers them upon His own supreme being and builds us anew. He does not destroy; rather, He cleanses and unifies the personality, and causes it to function normally and perfectly for God's glory.

The question of desire has long been debated, and in many lines of philosophic thought it has become a problem. All are conscious of the human urges. Though these urges take various forms, expressions and tones of emphasis, they remain with us. Back of all the forms of outer expression we find desire, for without this they are meaningless. This unique quality in our makeup is God-given and is one of the marks which lifts man above the animal kingdom.

It is not possible for us to do all the things we would like to do, nor to become all that we would like to be, but God sees our desire if it is there. Remember what Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 8:12 concerning giving: "If there be first a willing mind [desire], it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." It is in the field of desire that God sees us, and it is here that He longs to work with us and help us. But man is so used to the external, tangible world in conduct that often he completely fails because he does not deal directly with the desire question. He gets into conflict, failure or frustration in his outer life because he ignores or is ignorant of the fact that outer conduct is but a reflection of the real man inside.

Most religions have something to say and do with this question, since it is common to all mankind. Hinduism would get hold of it by a process and technique designed to bring the personality to a desireless Brahman. Buddhism offers a different solution--strike it with death and kill all desire for life (a strange and subtle delusion) and so enter Nirvana. But Jesus has the true solution. He recognizes desire as a very necessary part of life, not only on the natural plane but also in the realm of our spirits, and instead of condemning it He creates a new place where it may find release and movement.

Jesus came not to destroy life or desire, neither to deny it nor suppress it. He came to give life and that more abundantly. He elevates this element to a new plane of living, and intensifies it. He comes into our hearts and lives to correct and create by His radiant presence. He sets new objectives before us; He cleanses our desires and adjusts them until we can say with the Psalmist, "Lord, all my desire is before Thee." The desires He creates in the heart are for spiritual, eternal qualities rather than material things. Therefore, while we tarry here the hunger and thirst are insatiable. The desire for God becomes an obsession--holy and mystical. The new man hungers and longs for completion. He longs to find adequate fields for expression of hidden, spiritual awakenings and discoveries in this new life.

At the new birth the spiritual man, in a sense, is like a newborn babe. He has within him a holy urge to attain full spiritual development. No doubt this phase of the Christian life was in the mind of Jesus when He said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father 'which is in heaven is perfect'" (Matthew 5:48). Do you remember when He spoke those words, and under what conditions? If you do not keep the context in mind you may give them a very different meaning from that which is intended. The word perfect that is used here means to complete, or to reach a goal--to be fully grown; to be of full age; to be fully developed

in mental and moral character; etc. In Greek it is teleios. It appears in Ephesians 4:13; Colossians 1:28; Colossians 4:12; etc. It has reference to something being brought to its maturity, as shown by the rendering of Colossians 4:12--"That ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

When Jesus spoke these words He had just finished one part of the Sermon on the Mount. He had painted a vivid picture of the ideal Christian life. The standard would seem quite impossible for a poor, natural man ever to reach, but Jesus was setting this standard for the new man, not the natural man. He has come to produce that new spiritual man in the believer. All the character qualities He shows in this ideal picture are to be found in the new creation. Jesus paints the picture; then He turns to His disciples and says, in effect: "Here is the ideal and perfect concept of the new man. Here also is the dynamic or the power for making it a reality--the Holy Spirit. I have given you life. I have begun the new creation in your hearts and lives. Now become completed and finish the new order."

He is not telling them to go and do something. He wants them to become something. It is easier to do than to be. He presents the blueprint and then tells them to carry it out to completion in their lives. His words were both a challenge and a command. He was not telling them (in the Sermon on the Mount) to be perfect in the sense of being holy and sinless. Nevertheless, the Bible does command us to be holy. See 1 Peter 1:16; 1 Peter 2:9; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Corinthians 7:34, etc. The word used here is hagios, meaning sacred, or morally blameless. We are told to be holy. We are also told to go on to perfection (teleios); that is, to completeness, to the consummation, to the fulfillment of God's purpose for the new man. We are to grow. This is the end toward which God is working. Read Romans 8:29. The Word does not say that God has predestinated us to go to heaven. It does say that He has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son.

Now let us go back to our theme of desire. Desire rules. Jesus recognized this and therefore He demanded a surrender of life in all of its meanings to Himself. We submit our lives to Him in a full surrender, even unto death. This death is the very means by which He releases us from all the hidden dangers that still lurk in the realm of natural life. We reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, and this very necessary act brings desire up and out upon a spiritual level where it can move freely in God. It becomes sane, safe, holy and amazing in its outreaches. Here nothing upon earth can ever satisfy it. The desire while we tarry here is insatiable; He wants it so. He and He alone is the answer, the center, the source to which the hungry heart ever looks for satisfaction. O matchless Christ! The One solitary grandeur of the world!

"I wear in heart an image all divine." This refers, of course, to the creative act of God. We are created in the image and likeness of God--not a corporeal likeness, but moral and spiritual likeness, as mentioned in Ephesians 4:23, 24 and Colossians 3:10. The process going on now in the new creation is the restoration of the image of the Son, and our conforming thereto.

"I hear God call to taste His heavenly power." Paul says that we are called unto a fellowship (1 Corinthians 1:9). As a rule, people think of God's call as merely a call to heaven, but here we find a call to a fellowship which precedes heaven. This fellowship is a phase of life right here and now on earth, and is for a specific and necessary reason. It is a relationship established by God and it deepens and comes into maturity as one yields to the demands and requirements laid down for its realization. It reaches past the external life of sense.

Many hear God call them from sin and from the world, but I am not now speaking of that call. I speak of a call that comes more definitely to the Christian after the initial steps of salvation, of water baptism, and of Baptism with the Spirit. It reaches the ocean floor of the heart--the seat of desire and motives and the veiled recesses of selfhood. This call reaches the more subtle form of the ego. It gets at the real person. God longs to bring the soul into a conscious relationship with Himself as fire. Fire does so many things--it cleanses, frees, reduces, refines. The fire is heavenly and must be so, since no natural force or process planned by man can accomplish the necessary miracle. It demands all of life.

"I give my all to burn life's single hour." When I think of the eternal ages ahead and know I am born for them, then this earthly life seems but a single little hour. Oh, but what an important hour! Here and now I must settle and plan the issues which project themselves on into eternity. Christ knew that, and in His teaching concerning the deeper and fuller life, He let His followers know it was no easy matter. He did not say, "Now just confess your sins and accept Christ and all things are yours." Instead He made very stringent and searching demands of those who wish to enter fully into all that He has for us. We must deny ourselves, take up our cross daily, and follow Him (Luke 9:23). Instead of loving our life we must lose it for His sake (Matthew 10:39). We must love Him more than we love our father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters (Luke 14:26).

And why? one may ask. Oh, friends, a miracle awaits the one who thus dares to yield all to God. "So let me burn through fetters that would bind." The fire frees and releases the soul. One finds freedom from earthly bondage and the soul experiences a rich spiritual illumination. The fetters of tradition, old forms, religious habits (religious but not born of the Spirit), unscriptural dogmatism and so much of natural setup in the religious life, are burned off. All this and more is consumed in the fire of God.

This flame is like the Word of God--the lovely Truth which now has a ministry in the inner life. As surely as the Blood cleanses us from sin, so does the Truth, this heavenly Fire, cleanse and set free the soul from hindering and binding things which could keep us from entering into that fuller understanding of His glorious purpose for us. "Thus will I learn and freedom will I find." This is the true liberty which God has for those who will pay the price. The Christian life is a series of crises and cycles of growth.

There is a deep and glorious spiritual evolution for those who meet the demands God requires. The new life becomes a schooling and a divine process of becoming. Here we are disentangled and extricated from the old, Adamic setup. Life becomes a series of divinely planned experiences in which God is faithfully working to release us and adjust us to a life in Himself.

How our hearts thrill at the thought of the ultimate victory. For this all creation is waiting and toward it all creation is moving. The heart once set on fire and illuminated in this fellowship can never, never rest in any form or pattern of earthly life. An insatiable desire, a divine discontent, a heavenly restlessness is its holy obsession. Here and now we may give birth to (but not fully realize) the character qualities we desire to possess in the ages to come. We find all these noble and ideal qualities in Christ. He is the embodiment of all perfection, the personification of all truth.

Oh, marvelous and wonderful Christ, we adore and love Him! We are changed as we behold Him. All that our souls desire is found in Him. Our deepest desires shall yet be realized for,

"I shall return to Love's eternal fire,

There shall I burn----a satisfied desire."

We shall return! We are homeward bound! Again, again this restless heart shall melt and move in God. We shall not lose our identity or personality. Each unique personality will persist through the ages. But we shall find a oneness such as Christ prayed for. His prayer shall yet be answered. We shall find in Him that completion for which we were given a new birth.

Yes, we shall continue to burn, glow, and move in God--a satisfied desire!

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