

No.
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“IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD.” *COL.3.1*

“MEANS” AND “END”.

An Address (revised)

***At 65, St. Mary Axe, E.C.
20th June, 1913.***

by

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“MEANS” AND “END”.

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OUTLINE:-

- 1. What is our Aim?**
- 2. “Means” Appointed by the Lord.**
- 3. The Idolatry of “Means”.**
- 4. Does the End ever Justify the Means? See Rom. 3.8.**
- 5. Personal Application.**

It was not my arrangement, beloved friends, to call this subject “An interesting One”. I trust by the grace of God. We shall in one sense find it so, but that heading is not mine. I hope we shall find the topic throughout deeply solemn, not with a solemnity of miserableness, but with a solemnity of earnest yearning after the obedience of our gracious and glorious Lord. The subject is practical as well as devotional, indeed it concerns everything of our daily life, as I believe we shall shortly find. It is headed “Means and End”. We use the word “means” to signify anything and everything which is the pathway, or the instrument, toward a certain aim, object or result. The end is the goal. You can view the end in at least two ways, - that which is sought, or that which is reached. That which is sought should be that which is reached, if both are in accord with the will of God:- in other words, if both are as they should be, in the believing life. But how often we must acknowledge that our end in view is quite contrasted with the end that we really reach. We fail and falter, and fall far short, but there is, in the words of the Psalm, forgiveness with our gracious God, that He may be feared. We have proved His lovingkindness in the past, if so be that we have tasted that the Lord

is gracious, and therefore it becomes us this evening while speaking of this topic to be very humble before Him who has dealt so graciously with us.

What is our aim? We should have an aim. Aimless people accomplish little. The Holy Spirit caused Paul to say that he was ambitious, or that loved a certain honor. Yes, beloved friends, if we belong to Christ we should be very ambitious, but not ambitious for earth's glory to reach us, but that all glory might reach God. We should be ambitious, not to have our success in life, as men use the word, but true success in the spiritual life. Success with regard to God! Success in receiving an anticipation of the "Well Done" which the redeemed which are faithful will hear from the lips of their beloved Lord in that Day. Here in alone is "success". What is our aim? I have already anticipated the answer in dealing with the fact that we must not be aimless. Our aim should be, in the words of 1 Cor. 10, to do all to the glory of God. Mark the Divine command, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink" (an appropriate thought just now¹), "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God". It is one thing to speak about this as the right aim, it is another thing to feel it is our own aim. We may be clear-headed as to truth, without being earnest- hearted as to truth. Sometimes we grasp truth, sometimes truth grasps us. There is a vast difference. Truth that we grasp we sometimes let go. Truth that grasps us we cannot let go. If truth lays hold of us there is more than a thing in the truth, there is a Person; - God the Holy Spirit is applying the truth. What then is our aim? Not simply when we meet together, not simply on the first day of the week, but our aim in the midst of our daily work, our aim at our meal tables, our aim in the odd moments that we sometimes call our own time. What is our aim? What is our object? There is no advantage in being a hypocrite to dull our conscience, and to cause it to sleep. What is our aim? - our realized aim, our felt aim, our heart controlling aim, our life affecting aim, - what is it? Is it simply to go through a round of daily toil with a view to earthly advantages? Miserable goal! Is it simply to partake of earth's pleasures with their unsatisfying worthlessness? Is it to engage in Christian service? Though this may seem desirable it is a very poor goal. If our goal does not look beyond service in its manward aspect, if it does not look on unto the Lord Himself, and have everything within this wonderful sphere our lives are

* Some present had come from business and were partaking of a little physical refreshment.

crammed full with failures. What, beloved friends, I would ask myself, and would ask you, is our aim which has affected us today? What is our aim which comes as a thread in to all the cords of our life, which enters into everything in such a way that nothing is complete without it? The first commandment is “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart”. There is no room for another love. There is only room for a love wrapped up IN that love. There is no room for anything distinct. There is only room for that which is contained, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with All thy heart, and with All thy soul, and with All thy mind, and with All thy strength”, - so that the believer is expected to do everything directly toward God. Means are only partial, temporary and incomplete. The object is God, a personal object, a continual object, a heart affecting object. Just as we read in Hebrews about the Lord’s people running the race set before them, looking off unto their Lord, so should it be our custom, our JOY, to look off all else unto our gracious and glorious God. You follow what I mean. Mentally it is easy to follow, but oh that we may each follow in our daily life. This is not simply a human suggestion, but a Divine command. A command that is impressive to those who delight to be commanded. A believer does nothing too small for prayer. “In everything let your requests be made known unto God”. There is nothing too small for praise. “In everything give thanks”. And there is nothing too small to glorify God. “Whether ye eat, or drink, ... do all to the glory of God”. I believe these words suggest that necessary things are to be done to God’s glory, as well as those which are sometimes called “optional”; that common things are to be done to God’s glory; that small things are to be done to God’s glory, and that when some are together, as it is customary in eating and drinking in our very homes, - that when we are together, we are not to have the manifestly present company in primary view, but the Lord of glory in view. May I illustrate it in this way. In our various arrangements of daily life we have many immediate objects, but they are all of small value, - indeed they are of no value, except to be changed into that which is of all value. Suppose you go about daily life, have your hours of sleep, and eat your food, - at the best that is copper. Change the twelve pence into one shilling and you may have the silver of the spiritual activity which results from those physical necessities. But change the twenty shillings into gold. Never let the service of our daily life be an aim in itself, but only a stepping-stone to the gold, and that pure gold which belongs to God’s sanctuary. The worshipping, and magnifying, and honoring of Himself is first of all, and precious beyond measure.

We come next to consider that means are appointed by the Lord. Nature is a beautiful unveiling of Divine methods, and God has stamped law on nature. There is no disorder except that which sin has brought in. God could have given unto us daily food without the seed being sown and caused to grow by rain and sun, and ripen, and then brought into the hands of men, and turned into daily food. God could have supplied us with food by a sudden miracle, but He has been pleased to use means. Even the manna needed to be baked and dealt with in various ways. God does not waste His miracles to make us lazy. He uses means. It is so in connection with everything of our daily life. God uses means. And not only to build up our physical body, - for I venture to say we can go a step further than that which I was just bringing before you. Not only could God have fed us by miracles, but He could have caused us to subsist without food at all, yet He has been pleased to permit that there should be various foods with various powers to build up the various parts of that body which is fearfully and wonderfully made, but which redeemed ones should present as a living sacrifice unto God, for this is their reasonable service. God furthermore, has not drawn the line so that all can see it between food and true medicine. That God who preserved a prophet in the strength of one meal for forty days can also keep His people in physical health without the use of any foods with medicinal properties, I firmly believe. God is not subject to the laws which He has so stamped upon nature. He is beyond them, and He can and does work marvelously with the human frames of His people. But, beloved friends, we are not to put on one side altogether the use of those food substances which have medicinal properties by God's arrangement. Yet we would not be occupied with them, nor would we turn to human alterations of His plan and trust in man and his scheming. Right means are God's appointment, and we would thank Him for means. It is so with the preaching of the Gospel. I have no faith in the PREACHER of the Gospel, I have no faith in the preaching of the Gospel; but if we have faith in the living God, we believe HE uses both preacher and preaching. Indeed it is said, How can they hear without a preacher? It is our responsibility to look at the position from that standpoint. I am not going to limit God. I believe that marvelous grace which lays hold of infants who die in infancy, - that marvelous grace can work as God pleases, but from our standpoint there is the responsibility if we have received the Gospel in our hearts to make know the Gospel to others in this world. I do not say we can all preach on platforms. There are too many platforms, and there is too little of the platform of daily life. We

need to live for the Lord, and our sermons should be as long as our life. We need to make manifest our communion with God in everything we say and do. The whole life should not be merely an expression of physical existence, but of spiritual fellowship. Nevertheless apart from the powerful preaching of godly living and helpful conversation, there is the special testimony which God has entrusted to various individuals; and as Scripture says that the Lord Jesus was exalted to give different gifts, we cannot presume upon these gifts, we cannot manufacture them, we must acknowledge they are gifts of a risen Christ, and that He is perfectly sovereign. The preacher equipped by God goes forth to preach, but the seed will all fall by the wayside, or on stony ground, or amid thorns, unless there be a Divine working in the heart first. It is the Spirit That quickeneth. Preaching of itself will never save one soul. Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God. It is the work of God to save, and if anyone is in Christ there is a new creation. God, however, has appointed the means; and therefore, though we have no doubt God carrying out His plan, we would use every opportunity by tract, and conversation, and street corner preaching, to sound into the ears of ruined men that there is a tremendous judgment from which there is still more tremendous salvation. In this connection I feel that I may just mention the learning of languages. God could have given to us all knowledge of Hebrew and Greek by intuition. Adam never learned Hebrew. He was created with perfect faculty of explanation, of speaking, as indeed there was a wondrous completeness in the Divine work with regard to his physical and mental capabilities, and possibilities. But we are not so. We bear the marks of the fall in our brains, for though we praise God for our brains, we realize their limitations. Yet God means us to use our brains, not as many would seek merely to please self and criticize Him, but to deal with the necessary means that He so employs for the fuller knowledge of Him, The illiterate cottager may know Christ with a fullness beyond the professor. God is not limited. But if, beloved friends, we have ordinary mental power we are thieves if we do not use them. We are stealing from God that which should be rendered to Him. The whole being belongs to God, and the whole being should be used for God. The learning of languages is a humbling reminder of Babel, and it checks pride in the usual (May I put it that way? or rather) in the right learning thereof. I am not sure humility grows by the usual learning, but in the right learning it does. In this connection, one word about a subject that is often debated, but I am convinced not really

debatable. God uses means. But, beloved friends, let us be careful that we have the means that are appointed by the Lord, and not our own invention instead. I do not know whether everyone will agree with me when I say that at the present time there is a sad wandering from God in this connection with regard to the making known of the Truth. Many will tell us they must amuse the world to “get the world to come and hear the Gospel”. They will adopt means and methods to get hold of the people, and then bringing them into a building they will seek to put in a spice of Gospel truth. I do not believe that God wishes us to treat the Gospel as something which is to be “sugared” over. Let us preach the GOSPEL which is sweeter than all else in reality, preach the GOSPEL to every creature. Preach the WORD is the Divine command. We are not to explain it away and cover it up. There are various cases of covering up in Scripture that are recorded for our warning. Philip tried to cover up that which he knew Nathanael would hate in connection with the Lord Jesus, and Nathanael fixed on that very point, and Philip’s method was reprov’d, though GOD worked in Nathanael. On one occasion Paul desired to please the people, and it is recorded for our warning, and he refers to it very definitely in the epistle to the Corinthians (ch. 2). He tried to please the people and preach attractively, referring to their own poets, and so forth, and putting “Jesus and the resurrection” as the ending of the address instead of as the sum and substance, and one result appears to be that no church was formed at Athens. Paul went out from the midst of them discouraged and heart-broken, but when he came to Corinth he says, “I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified”. But the Corinthians did not naturally like this. Did their dislike alter the apostle’s purpose? Nay, “for after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching (that which men think foolish) to save them that believe”. We should rather render it “by the foolishness of the thing preached”, for men despise the Gospel, since “the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom”, and we would pander to them? Ah no, not one word of that, “But we preach Christ crucified”, though they object to it, it is a stumblingblock! Paul adds, “Unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are CALLED, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the Power of God and the Wisdom of God”. Beloved friends, we are not doing business on our own account, we are not to introduce our methods, we are employees, and it is for us to fall in with the line of action which our Lord has appointed. We are not going up and

down the world to save the world, we are going up and down the world in the Name of the Lord Jesus, that sinners may be saved OUT from the world. There is no promise in Scripture that everyone will believe. We read of those who will be punished with a real and eternal judgment, but there IS a promise that God WILL save them that believe. And though all the ground is not rooky ground, there are those who are laid hold of by Divine grace, and are quickened by Divine quickening, and it is our privilege not to draw men to ourselves, not to seek after numbers, but to set forth Christ and Him crucified, whether men hear or forbear, knowing that God is pleased to work, and that if He works none can hinder. Let us therefore put on one side all methods which are contrary to the precepts and principles and practices of which Scripture speaks. We cannot imagine the Lord Christ, a Man of Sorrows, going about to make people laugh. There was nothing humorous in that solemn Life, yet those who bear the worthy Name of the Lord Jesus are sometimes not above dramatic displays and humorous amusements that they may “get hold” of people. “Singing”, which is a great privilege in connection with praise to God has been degraded to be made the attraction. Concerts so-called, and concerts not so-called, have been man’s substitution for the preaching of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh let us be clear of all means that are not appointed by the Lord. Let us search the Bible for every action, and the Holy Spirit will show us we have a complete textbook.

A word or two next as to the idolatry of means. I have already spoken of this in passing. A good thing out of its right place is invariably a bad thing. If the brazen serpent be worshipped call it a piece of copper. The appointed things of the Lord may be easily MISused. I have just mentioned God’s use of food and sleep in connection with the physical frame, but, beloved friends, I am equally convinced that believers are too changeable with their food. The apostle says that foods are for the physical frame, but he will not be brought under the power of any: not simply under the power of any man, but under the power of anyTHING. There are many believers who are in large measure the slaves of food, or at least many professing believers. I am not now speaking of various things which I would venture to say children of God should lay aside lest they cause their brethren to stumble, and lest they dishonor their Lord. I am not now speaking of the definite putting on one side of intoxicating drinks. That seems to me perfectly clear from the standpoint of love to the Lord and love to the brethren, but

ordinary foods which may be useful in their way, are too often ruling, and we are too much guided by our food, instead of being guided by the Lord. How many meetings are considerably hindered because of the partaking of a substantial meal first. In like manner is it with regard to the sustaining of health by the use of "medicine". That God can employ means, and that we cannot draw the line between all food and medicinal properties, I believe most of us will cheerfully acknowledge; but though I do not believe in much of the theory that is commonly known as "Faith healing". I do believe that Scripture brings before us the need for more confidence in the Lord as to our physical frame. Beware lest you make an idol of a man-appointed drug, an idol of a doctor, and so doubly dishonor the Lord. Many believers waste their time, and waste their money, and waste their energies in connection with imagined illnesses. They make themselves ill by thinking they are ill, and increase their illness when they have it by trying to get rid of it their own way. In like manner, is it not necessary at the present time in the middle of the summer to warn believers against the idolatry of a holiday? I have no doubt that God intends His people should have seasons of quiet meditation away from daily work. I have no doubt that God has shown that His people should have further opportunities for spiritual gathering together when they are in measure set apart from various usual toils, but the present day theory that you MUST have a holiday has become the tyranny of a foolish custom, and instead of the confidence in the Lord for the sustaining of health in regular consistent spiritual life, there is the trust in a few days spent often away from Christian influences in an excitable in an excitable health resort, and then the believer comes back physically weakened because of the sudden strain and variation, spiritually damaged with a damage lasting for months.

Next we can consider the fourth point. Does the end ever justify the means? You know what is signified by that expression. There are some who will tell us that if there be a good object, bad paths thither are permissible. The Jesuit motto is "To the GREATER glory of God", which is a poor deviation from Paul's command "Do all to the glory of God". "To the GREATER glory" while nominally emphasizing God the more, actually implies that there are oftentimes two actions, and that one of them is desirable because it will bring greater glory by the end justifying the means. The apostle in Rom. 3.8 declares that some in those days said "Let us do evil that good may come", and his answer to them was very severe.

He declared their judgment was just, and that God would deal with them very severely. I have no doubt you all agree with me upon this principle. It is a very different thing to put it into practice. I have no doubt we should all be of one mind that a believer must not tell a lie even to save another's life or his own. Better lose his life than gain a lie, for nothing is comparable with the favor of the Lord. But, beloved friends, when we come down to ordinary daily life, it is not so easy to put this principle into practice as we imagine. We need to be guided and humbled by the Holy Spirit very definitely. Let me illustrate what I mean. You are having a kindly controversy with someone else, - (A word of warning against controversy in this connection will not be out of place. Controversy is sometimes the occasion of more sin than blessing, but it is right to contend earnestly upon the faith, and there are right opportunities. Compromise is sinful. The misuse of "contending" does not spoil the use, but it always makes one doubly cautious.) You are having a friendly controversy about some point in which you think your brother is in error. (I need hardly say that in this meeting I hope differences of opinion will always come up with a frankness. I have not the slightest objection to finding out any of the things wherein you differ from me, not the slightest objection. I would much rather that things should come up than that they should be kept down, although I believe that there is usual opinion today that as soon as differences of opinion are mentioned, there are severances and quarrels. I hope by the grace of God our actions will disprove this sad theory. I would grieve over all the differences but not over their mention with a view to God's glory in their removal). Suppose you are in controversy with a brother, he brings forward an argument, you look at it and see a certain amount of force in it, yet feel sure it is wrong; do you always test that argument, and deal with it in a perfectly straightforward way? Your own argument is somewhat weakened awhile by his attack. Do you look your own argument in the face and ponder it? Beloved friends, I believe if we treated our own points to as much criticism as we treat our brother's, we should have fewer "points" but much more agreement, because more dependence on the Lord. It is so easy to think that we must be right, and there is nothing more dangerous than to believe one is honoring the truth of God when one is in error about the truth of God. If we feel we have the truth, how easy it is to gain a "point" by a little trick of argument which is not satisfactory in the light of Him with Whom we have to do. Oftentimes controversy becomes an opportunity for the speaker who is more able at repartee, instead of a means to

the unveiling of truth. Oh for more conscientiousness that we may never allow the end to justify the means. Doubtless our end is the holding up of the truth, and we believe we have the truth, but let us use the means that are appointed. We may be sure of this, that if the oxen are stumbling, and we put out our hand to touch the ark, the better thing would have been not to have the oxen there at all. There is something wrong when we defend the truth with wrong methods. Truth will take care of itself and of us as well. It is not for us to appear as apologists for truth, but to shelter ourselves within it.

The last point is the personal application. Need I take it? I hope we have had that printed across the other four points. I trust that our hearts have been applying throughout, that we have sought to consider if in the light of God our aim is His glory, as it should be, an all-consuming aim. “The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up”, said One Who is first our savior, and secondly, our Example. Oh that there might be the use of the means appointed by the Lord, for otherwise pride comes in. Oh, says one, I can preach without any preparing. Doubtless, but of what character is the linked preaching? It is easy to have confidence in the flesh. Yet there is the opposite swing of the pendulum, as it were. We acknowledge that the Holy Spirit can work without means, but to assume inspiration, and to ignore godly preparation, is often to boast of a false gift, and to be a cloud without water. Much study is a weariness of the flesh, but that is no reason why we should not have much study. If study becomes an idol, destroy the idol, but do not destroy that which has been turned into it. Go back to the right and humble and spiritual study again, confess the sin, do not remove obedience together with sin. The apostle instructed Timothy to become acquainted with the truth by abiding in the truth, and taking care as to the truth, and taking care as to the truth, and giving attention to the reading. I have no doubt that the verse now before us has a large reference to the public reading of the Scriptures, but doubtless it also included the continual reading for oneself of those precious books which Timothy had known from a babe. Beloved friends, we cannot live lives that bring God honor, by fits and starts. We do not in our physical life appear as babies one day and as grown men the next. The Lord can make a gourd grow in the night, but He does not usually cause a child of His to grow with such rapidity. I do not mean that He is hindered, but we are in the flesh in a physical sense, and have the flesh in us in a moral sense, (though

blessed be God, we are viewed in Christ Jesus our adorable Lord), and we may be sure of this that if we do not use means, and pride comes in, pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall, and great will be the fall of those who thus dishonor their Lord. Oh let us search our ways through everything. May the truth be a sword as well as a meal, and may the Holy Spirit convict as well as encourage.

Further addresses available:

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