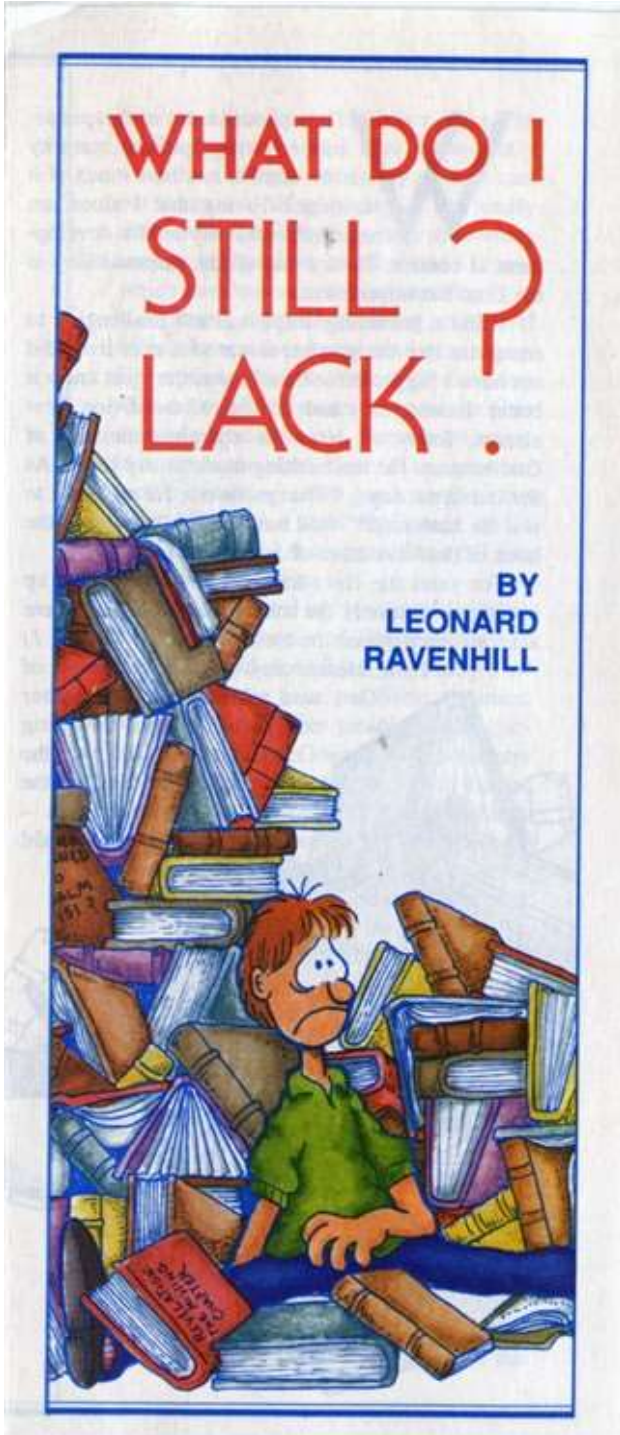


What Do I Still Lack?

By Leonard Ravenhill



What percentage of responsibility for my spiritual maturity is the Lord's, and how much of it is mine? To say that I alone am responsible for my soul's development is conceit. To say that all the responsibility is the Lord's is impudence.

I find it humbling, inspiring, and challenging to recognize that the greatest saints who ever lived did not have a bigger Bible than I have, they just knew it better. Indeed, they had far less of the divine Revelation. Today we have the complete message of God to man. He has nothing more to say to us. As the old hymn says, *"What more can He say than to you He hath said?"* God has no "P.S." to add to the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

For years the Holy Scriptures were wrapped up in tongues that only the scholars could read. *"There was no open vision in those days."* (1 Sam. 3:1) Then, blessed day, the whole counsel of God was released in our mother tongue. With this unveiling came the glad news of the priesthood of the believers -Hallelujah!

Do you wonder that Bishop Walsham How bursts into song about the Holy Word:

*"It is a golden casket,
where gems of Truth are stored.
It is the Heaven-drawn picture
of Christ, the Living Word."*

Trees are fascinating to most of us. I like to see the burdened fruit trees showing off their labor. The English like their mighty oaks and the Americans their redwood trees. At the moment, in the area where I write, the peach trees are richly endowed with fruit; but, it does not grow already canned. No! God gave us the fruit, we do the canning. Trees do not grow furniture, even in this scientific age. We have the trees, from them we make the chairs, etc. So it is with the spiritual life. Here is a stunning truth from Second Peter, Chapter one, verse three: *"His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain TO LIFE AND GODLINESS."* Paul backs up Peter in this area when he says, *"How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"* (Rom. 8:32) And to top these precious words, here comes Paul again with a staggering statement: *"The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; HEIRS OF GOD, AND JOINT-HEIRS WITH CHRIST"* Stop there? NO, add the remainder: *"...If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."* (Rom. 8:16-17)

With all this limitless resource to inherit *in this life*, why then, O why, do we settle for minimum spirituality? These Scriptures just quoted shatter all our excuses for carnal Christianity and explode all our feeble excuses on bumper-sticker evangelism: "Christians are not perfect, just forgiven." (Some backslider must have written that one.)

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Sinning is not permitted to believers. *"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin."* (1 John 3:9) Not that it is impossible to sin; but it is, by the blood of Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit, possible *not* to sin. John again shouts the triumphant note, *"Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world."* (1 John 4:4) God, then, has made it possible for you and me to have victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil!

Here are the Master's commandments to His own. These are not options but imperatives. With His enabling and our striving, we can explore what Lowrey called "the possibilities of Grace." We can leave the playpen in the Spiritual Nursery and *go on unto perfection.*" (Heb. 6:1) Here are His commands:

- *"Little children, keep yourselves from idols."* (1 John 5:21)
- *"Building up yourselves on your most holy faith..."* (Jude 20; Rom. 10:17)
- *"Keep yourselves in the love of God (by obedience to His Word)"* (Jude 21)
- *"Put on the whole armor of God..."* (equipment for beating Satan) (Eph. 6:11)

- The Scripture is very clear here: *"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."* (James 4:7)

Christian maturity is not a weekend operation. On the other hand, remember there is no finality to the Christian life this side of eternity. While we are in the flesh, we *"press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* (Phil. 3:14)

We hear continually about "Weight Watchers." O that we watched our spiritual growth as carefully!

I believe in instant purity: *"The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin."* (1 John 1:7) I do not believe in instant maturity. Faith in the finished work of Christ is one thing. To *add* to your faith, as Peter says in 2 Peter 1:5-7, is something else. As a tree must be pruned regularly to bring it to maturity, so we need pruning. It is easy to sing, *"And pour contempt on all my pride."* If I do that at all, I will do it conveniently protecting myself from any "bleeding." It is when the Lord does it - or worse still when He uses some other human being (less spiritual than I am) to do the pruning - then can I kiss the rod? This is a process in spiritual growth. Can I take it cheerfully when I am slighted, when my name is cast out as an evil thing (though I am totally innocent)? Can I joyfully help to promote another to a position that I would like and which I am more capable of handling?

I heard a preacher asking another if folks came to the altar at his last meeting. He replied, "Yes, but most of them are altar tramps." It's easier to go to the altar than to get on the cross. There is no magic in a trip to the altar. You will not grow an inch by walking a few yards to the altar, unless there is a total repentance and a holy vow to God that you will not fall into the same hole again.

That holy band of "Heroes of Faith" in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews staggers me. They had no Bibles, no millions of cassettes as we have, no Bible seminars, no daily radio Bible teaching, and (fortunate souls) no Gospel T.V. preachers whining about lack of funds (when did the Lord run out of supplies?). Yet what things these folks in Hebrews 11 accomplished: subdued whole kingdoms (O that some person rich in faith could subdue the worldwide kingdom of the drug trade), wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. What miracles, what men, what faith!

These "pattern" folks of our faith did not get to the heights in one leap:

*"They climbed the steep ascent to Heaven
Through peril, toil, and pain.
O God, may grace to us be given,
To follow in their train."*

Asked why he was used of the Lord so greatly in China, Hudson Taylor replied, "God had looked long for a man weak enough, and He found me." He takes the weak things of the world to confound the mighty. Spiritual wisdom does not come with years, neither does maturity. The key to both is obedience. Whatsoever He saith unto YOU, do it.

An insatiable thirst for God will produce an unquenchable love for holiness (as He is Holy), resulting in a passion for the lost.

Remember, friend, you are just as spiritual as you want to be .



Leonard Ravenhill was a powerful preacher and author of many stirring books, including the classic, "Why Revival Tarries." Formerly one of England's outstanding evangelists, he went to be with the Lord on Thanksgiving Day weekend 1994.

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