

T H E

Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanters.

VOL. VII.

MARCH, 1869.

No. 3.

FAMILY WORSHIP.

“David returned to bless his house.”

THIS is an incident recorded of David, descriptive of his habitual practice. The day had been spent in bringing up the ark from the house of Obed-edom to Jerusalem. It was a great honor to the zealous Gittite to entertain the ark, and a source of blessing as well, for “the house was blessed because of the ark.” On the evening of that day, the King of Israel returned to bless his house, *i. e.*, to implore the divine blessing upon the members of his family. In this we have an example worthy of imitation. Heads of households should worship God in their families. They should walk in the footsteps of the royal psalmist. Whether they have been engaged in the public exercises of religion or the ordinary business of life, like him, they should return to bless their house.

Family worship consists of singing, reading the Scriptures, and prayer. It is not designed, in prayer, to impart information to God. He is omniscient—“he knoweth what we stand in need of, before we ask him;” neither is it to change the infinite purposes of Jehovah, for, like himself, they are unchangeable; but to secure to ourselves, and others, the blessings of the covenant, through the divinely appointed medium. Variety should characterize our family devotions; form, dullness, and mere routine should be carefully guarded against; earnestness and importunity cultivated. A little self-denial, to those most busily engaged, will secure the time requisite for the daily observance of this religious duty. The example of the Master is worthy of imitation by those who think and excuse themselves from its observance because they have not time to worship God in their families, on the morning and evening of each day. He rose frequently a great while before day, and in other instances spent a portion of the night in prayer. Few spend more than one half-hour in this exercise; the majority, not more than fifteen minutes; and who, however busily engaged, does not spend more than this time each day on objects of confessedly less moment, that are neither so replete with advantage or sacred in their obligation. Time is a talent more precious than gold and silver, and

in every wave. Shall a man be more earnest to save his natural life than you are to save your immortal soul?

But I would not apply to you the argument of danger so much as the argument of *duty*. You are simply robbing yourself of life's purest luxury when you rob yourself of the joys of a forgiving heart, and of an useful, holy life. The best part of your life for serving God may be irretrievably gone; but save every priceless minute of the remainder. It was far on in a day of disaster that the swift-footed Sheridan came flying up the Shenandoah to arrest his retreating troops, and to roll back a defeat into a victory. Sinner of many years! the battle has gone against you thus far. Sin has conquered conscience thus far, and robbed you of life's highest joys and best achievements. Stop not with mourning the lost years and the lost opportunities to do a good work for Christ. You may yet win heaven, and perhaps win some souls for heaven too. During the present revival in my church, several persons have entered the service of Christ who are past forty years of age. They will not bring in such a sheaf as they might have brought had they entered the harvest-field in early life; but they are gleaning vigorously, and may yet secure a handful of the golden grain.

II. Some persons who have long had a secret hope of conversion have wasted no little time by delaying a public confession of Christ. They sit nursing their doubts and fears instead of doing their duty. They are feeling their pulses to ascertain whether they are alive, instead of *proving* their faith by their works, and strengthening their feeble faith by action. "I have lost just eight years," was the sad confession of a friend of mine who joined the church after eight years of trembling, vexing, self-tormenting delay. Each year weakened her faith, until she grew alarmed lest the feeble taper would go out entirely; then she kindled it into a flame by one vigorous *swing* of decision. It burns brightly to-day.

III. We have an earnest word, in closing, to backsliders. You are the sleepers at the garden gate. Your eyes are heavy and your hands are motionless. The prayer-bell with silvery chime is ringing nearly every evening, but you do not hear it; nor does the loud alarm bell for lost souls rouse you from your slumber. Well might your neglected Master address you with indignant irony, "*Sleep on now, and take your rest*, for ye have betrayed me into the hands of sinners." But as the torches of detection fall on your sealed eyelids, methinks I hear that voice of injured love sounding into your ears with trumpet tones, "RISE UP AND BE GOING!" The night is far spent! Sinners are stumbling over you into perdition! The past is gone! Awake, or thou wilt lose thy crown! And what thou doest, do quickly!

OVER THE LINE.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER.

NEVER was there a time when it would be more appropriate to carve on the very walls of the sanctuary, and for every Christian to grave "on the palms of his hands" this divine admonition, "Be ye not

conformed to this world." "Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God."

No snare is so subtle, constant and perilous to the follower of Christ as conformity to the world. Nothing sooner saps his spirituality; nothing hinders a revival in the church more effectually. Conformity implies resemblance. And when a professed Christian begins to look like a worldling, and live like a worldling, how dwelleth the love of Christ in him? For there is a complete and irreconcilable *antagonism* between what the Bible calls the "world" and the service of Christ.

The chief end of a Christian's life is to glorify God. Is this the chief end of life with the people of the world? Ask any of them, and he will answer, no! I live to enjoy myself, in promoting my interests, in gratifying my tastes, and in taking my comfort. I want to get all I can, and to get the most out of it. He "looks only at those things which are seen and temporal." God is ignored entirely; the soul is ignored; eternity is forgotten. The pleasures most relished are the pleasures of sin; for God is not in any one of them. The worldling commonly delights most in what a consistent Christian finds to be forbidden fruit on forbidden ground. That forbidden fruit is *poison* to the Christian.

Bear in mind that every *pure* pleasure which an unconverted heart can enjoy, such as the joys of home and of friendship, the love of letters or art, the sight of beauty, or the delight of relieving sorrow, all these the Christian can have and enjoy likewise. They are not sinful, and the child of God can partake of them with a clear conscience. But just where a Bible-conscience tells him to *stop*, the license of the world begins. The word of God draws a dividing line. *Over that line* lies the path of self-indulgence. *Over that line* lies self-pampering, frivolity, slavery to fashion. *Over that line* God is ignored, and often defied! Christ is wounded there and crucified afresh. *Over that line* the follower of Jesus has no business to go. It was over such a "stile" that Bunyan's Pilgrim looked wistfully, for the path was soft and skirted with flowers, but when he stepped over, he soon found himself in the dungeons of Giant Despair.

Over the line which separates pure piety from the world, the Christian, if he goes at all, must go as a participant in the pleasure of the world, or as a protestant against them. If he goes to partake, he offends Christ; if he goes to protest, he offends his ill-chosen associates. Christian! if ever you attend a convivial party, a ball-room assembly, a theatre, or a gaming company, do you go as a partaker in the sport, or to make your protest against such amusements? If you go for the first object, you offend your Lord; if for the second, you offend your company. They do not want you there. We are quite sure that no bevy of merry-makers would be the happier over their cups, or their cards, or their cotillions, if all the elders and deacons of our church were to come in suddenly among them. Brethren! the "world" don't want you in their giddy and godless pleasures, unless you are willing to go all lengths with them. And if you walk *one mile* with them over the line, they will "compel you to go with them *twain*." If your

conscience yields the "coat," they will soon rob you of "your cloak, also."

Vanity Fair would have welcomed Christian and Faithful to their jovial town, if the pilgrims had only been willing to doff their puritan dress, and "take a hand" with them in all their revelries. But because the godly men refused to be conformed to the fashions and follies of Vanity Fair, one of them was soon sent to the prison, and the other to the stake.

Where does the dividing line run between true religion and the world? We answer that it runs just where God's word puts it; and a conscience which is enlightened by the word and by prayer does not commonly fail to discover it. Where God is honored is the right side; where God is dishonored, or even ignored, is the wrong side. Where Christ would be likely to go if he were on earth, is the right side; but where a Christian would be ashamed to have his Master find him, there he ought never to find himself. Wherever a Christian can go, and conscientiously ask God's blessing on what he is doing, there let that Christian go. He is not likely to wander over the line. And when a church member can enter a play-house, or into a dancing frolic, and honestly ask God's blessing on the amusements, and come away a better Christian for it, then let him go; *but not before*. When a Christian invokes the divine blessing on the bottle which he puts to his neighbor's lips, he had better look sharply whether there is not a "serpent" and a "stinging adder" in the sparkling liquor. Without going into further illustrations, we come to this fundamental principle, that whatever of work, or of recreation a Christian engages in to promote the health of his body or soul, and in which he can glorify Christ, lies on the safe side of the dividing line. The moment he crosses it to become the "friend of the world" he becomes the "enemy of God."

ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF PARDON, AND THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

DR. SCOTT.

THOUGH in some cases, persons may know the time and the place, both when they were awakened, and when they were comforted; yea, when they were brought to submit to God's righteousness in their condemnation, notwithstanding all their endeavors, and to cast themselves on his free mercy through the blood of Jesus, and to see his whole character and conduct lovely, and Christ precious, and his salvation glorious, and holiness beautiful, and his service perfect freedom; yet it is not generally thus.

At first, knowledge is usually scanty, experiences are indistinct, and views of divine things are confused, and mixed with inconsistency. Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning. Now in the morning the day dawns, a glimmering beam diffuses itself; but it is dusk still, and objects are indistinctly perceived; but gradually it grows lighter. Thus it commonly is with true Christians. In time they find that these effects are produced; and, if they are certainly produced, it matters not whether we know when or where.