

The Pulpit Treasury

Conducted by a corps of eminent Clergymen.

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What is True Worship.—Worship has been defined to be “the act of paying divine honors to the Supreme Being.” If this be a true definition, the question at once arises what are “divine honors?” Do they consist in rendering by one or more individuals a variety of sounds which are destitute of intelligent thought to the congregation upon whose ears these inarticulate sounds fall? If so, there is an abundance of worship in some churches. The tenth part of the time set apart for the public worship of God in the forenoon of one Sabbath in a church which we recently attended was spent in paying such “divine honors.” We could not but feel that Paul’s words were truly applicable to the choir as we listened to their warbling notes: “When thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.” Neither Paul nor the writer would call in question the sincerity of the vocalizers in their at-

tempts at worship, but the gravamen of the defect in Paul’s view lies in the inutility of the exercise so far as Christian edification is concerned, and in its utter inadaptedness to predispose the mind and heart of the listeners for the worship that is in spirit and in truth. Such leaders of song in the house of the Lord are, to our untutored, unmusical ears, “cumberers.”

The Fourth of July.—This is the great red letter day in the history of our country. It is the feast day of the nation. How many memories it recalls—some sad, some joyous, all instructive! How times have changed since the first “Fourth” was celebrated! How many sterling men have finished their course and passed away into the unseen! How many blessings of God have since been poured into the lap of these United States! How many opportunities for blessing the inhabitants of other countries have been afforded! How many “great and effectual doors” for the spread of the Gospel have been opened! How many wiles of Satan have been put forth for the strangling of every ideal of humanity emanating from Him whom Bethlehem’s manger once cradled and Cavalry’s cross exalted: “If it had not been the Lord who was on our side,” now may our country say, “when men rose up against us then they had swallowed us up quick.” But “The snare is broken and we are escaped. Our help is in the Lord who made heaven and earth.”

Christian Liberty.—The mind naturally reverts to the great theme of freedom at the dawn of *Independence Day*. The air is resonant with joyous, crackling sounds. The breezes play with the banners that are thrown gayly before them, and the spirit of liberty seems to take possession of all things animate and inanimate. These would be refreshing, exhilarating thoughts and scenes, provided there was not an element intermixed which reminded us of the Satur-

secret resources of the Almighty. "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers, etc."

2. Our strength. See the oak smitten by the whirlwind, its branches shattered, and yet itself is standing unmoved in its rooted strength. A godless man cannot be steadfast in affliction. He has no hidden hold on God by faith and prayer. Props cannot take the place of roots.

3. Our purity. "Consider the lilies how they grow"—in the midst often of decaying rubbish and black mud, yet themselves as white as an angel's wing. So ought a Christian to be in this world—pure amid surrounding impurity. But how can he be? He must reach down into God and feed on Him. God can sanctify wholly.

II. The Christian's upward growth—"Built up in Him." The tree builds itself from the heart, and so must the Christian from within—from the root and principle of the divine life he gets when he is grafted in Christ—every part is developed out of the central source of life. Abiding in Christ this growth goes on day and night. By fastening our creeping affections on Christ who is in heaven He will lift us up. If the question is, what shall I do to grow in grace? we point to Jesus on the throne and say, "Seek to come unto the measure of the stature of the perfect man."

III. The Christian's outward growth—"Abounding therein with thanksgiving." This is the branching out into all service and fruitfulness and praise. God's gifts are bestowed in exceeding abundance, that that abundance may flow out in abounding blessings to others. The great end of our faith and obedience is not to get our own souls saved merely, but to fit us for saving other souls. We get life for personal salvation and abundant life for the blessing and enrichment of others. The whole comprehensive secret of the blessed life is contained in the words, "Abide in Me," and this can be effected by the diligent, humble, prayerful study of the word of God. The heart in the word and the word in the heart. Christ in us and we in Christ. Such is the secret of communion of growth and fruitfulness.

Esau's Choice.

By T. D. WITHERSPOON, D.D., IN FIRST PRES. CHURCH, LOUISVILLE, KY.

He found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.—HEB. xii., 17.

Two light-houses stand not far apart on our South Atlantic coast. That of Cape Henry is at the entrance to Hampton Roads, and every flash from its lantern is like a hand of love beckoning the mariner to come into the quiet haven. That of Cape Hatteras is on a bleak and desolate shoal, strewn with the debris of former shipwrecks, and every flash from its lamp is like a hand of terror warning away from the treacherous coast. The life of every man is like one of these. Either as an example of goodness it beckons us in, saying, "This is the way; walk ye in it," or, as an example of sin, it warns us away, saying, "Avoid it; turn from it and pass away."

Esau's career was of the latter class—an awful example of lost opportunities, forfeited privileges, chances forever thrown away.

I. Let it warn us against the recklessness that may perpetrate in a moment what cannot be undone forever. The spendthrift, who risks his fortune upon the throw of a die, may be overwhelmed with shame and regret, but that does not bring back his fortune. The murderer, when his passions have cooled, would give all of earth if his deed were undone, but his remorse does not call back his victim to life. Physical manhood is a birthright that one may throw away irretrievably by the dissipation of his earlier years. The educational opportunities of youth are a precious birthright too often sold for a mess of pottage. Unfettered freedom of self-control is too often bartered for overmastering habits of intemperance or other vices. The great, glorious birthright of the kingdom of Heaven—that which brings "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away," may be bartered away for the poor evanescent pleasures of a sinful life.

II. In all these cases the loss is irretrievable. Esau found no "place of repentance"—that is, no place for a change

of purpose in his father and his father's God, both of whom he had treated with contempt. The birthright bartered away in a life of sin can never be recovered. The probation once ended, there is "no place of repentance." It is too late! too late! too late!!

Confidence and Prayer.

By J. P. BOYCE, D.D., PRES. OF SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEO. SEMINARY.

And this is the confidence we have in him, etc.—1 JOHN v., 14, 15.

This confidence is in no respect misplaced. It is the Son of God who will hear; He who has said, "Ask anything." Not all prayer is acceptable; that of the wicked is an abomination; that without faith faileth. And prayer must be submissive. The answer is not always in the bestowal of a request; a gracious inclination may be given. Prayer is a privilege and a duty, for ourselves and others. Abraham, Moses, David and Elias are examples of the power of prayer. The history of Israel is one of prayer. The forerunner of Jesus taught His disciples to pray. Jesus did likewise. Pentecost came with prayer. The Holy Spirit came with prayer. Signs and wonders were wrought by prayer. Christianity's formation is prayer. It stands or falls with prayer. We read of no one praying oftener than Jesus. Men say God's purposes are fixed and nature's laws unchangeable—why pray? Why did Christ pray and teach to pray? It was the glory of Israel that they had a God who heard prayer. Baal did not hear prayer. Tyn-

dal and infidels have proposed an unfair prayer test, thus shocking the Christian world. The clergyman of England who said if he did not believe God answered prayer he would never enter his pulpit was right. God hears and answers. This erroneous claim that nature's laws are not to be affected is not new. It began in Job's days. They who question the power of prayer question a matter of fact of which they know nothing, and about which they decline to learn anything. The King of Siam, who tortured the man who told of the frozen river, was not more foolish. They say God's natural laws are fixed, and there is no room for prayer. If that is so, God cannot act in connection with them. But God does act. We form our purpose and accomplish our ends; cannot God do likewise? We plant seed and thus act with nature in securing a result; cannot God do the same? With telescope and microscope we supplement nature, seeing far away. Cannot God thus enlarge our spiritual vision in answer to prayer? He does. We neutralize nature—make water, which runs down, carry water up. Cannot God? Is He simply a mute idol in a temple? Then some talk of God's decrees. These are only matters of revelation, not of reason. We are free to choose, and yet our choice is so regular that men can tell with almost mathematical certainty how many murders, suicides, etc., will occur. To banish prayer is to banish God. God and prayer go together. How little do we all realize the power and privilege of prayer?

→* EXEGETICAL COMMENT *←

Conversion and its Fruits.

By G. W. SAMSON, D.D., PRES. BIBLE WORKERS' COLLEGE (BAPTIST), N. Y.

When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren.—LUKE xxii., 32.

This declaration of Christ to His leading apostle, Peter, uttered just after a dispute among the apostles at the Last Supper which of them should be greatest, and forming a part of Christ's warning to

Peter that his self-confidence would be followed by a denial of his Master—this declaration of Christ has in and about it a depth of meaning which only Christian experience and a study of Church history can bring out.

When the Vatican Council, which was forced to declare at Rome in 1870 the doctrine of Papal Infallibility, was ushered into the Council Chamber, the eyes