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Revs. Rude & Miller, Editors.

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Selections.

On Family Prayer.

That family devotion was practiced by Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Job, there can be but little doubt, as they sacrificed, from time to time, both for themselves and for their families; but the order and times of their prayer were probably the commencement of public devotion. When God introduced the Mosaic law, and regulated the order and times of their sacrifices, he appointed the morning and evening sacrifices, to be observed as a perpetual statute—Ex. xxix: 38-42. This was also the time of burning incense—Ex. xxx: 7-8; 2 Chron. xii: 11. The time of sacrifice and burning incense was a time of prayer—Luke 1:10; Ps. xlii: 2. Hence we read of the hour of prayer (Acts iii: 1) being the ninth hour, for this was the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, and therefore known and understood among the Jews everywhere as the hour of prayer. Here, then, we have the institution of morning and evening devotion, established by God himself. As it was impossible for the whole nation to meet at the temple daily, for the morning and evening devotions, they had their synagogues and places where prayer was wont to be made, or literally, prayer houses. At such a place as this St. Paul attended when Lydia was converted, and it was, no doubt, when they were going to the regular hour of prayer, that the damsel, possessed with the spirit of divination, followed them.

But when the sacrifices ceased, and the temple was no more, did the morning and evening devotions cease? The Jewish converts had always been accustomed to their morning and evening devotions; and although the Jewish sacrifices had ended, they had embraced Christ as their living sacrifice and as their high priest, to present their prayers as incense before the throne of the Eternal.

That the primitive Christians kept up their morning and evening family devotions, is clear from the history of those times. Dr. Cove, in his account of the primitive Christians says: "Their family duties were usually performed in this order. At their first rising in the morning they went to betake themselves to prayer, to praise God for the protection and refreshment of the night, and to beg his grace for the following day. This was done by the master of the house, unless some minister was present to attend to it. I question not but now they read some portion of the Scriptures, which they were ready to do at all suitable times, and therefore certainly would not omit it now. That they had their hours of prayer, the third, sixth and ninth hours, is plain from St. Cyprian, Clem. Alexandrian, and others. When night approached, before going to rest, the family was again called to prayer, after which they retired to bed, and about midnight they were generally wont to meet to pray and sing praises to God. The custom was very ancient, and took its rise from the times of persecution, when, not daring to meet in the day, they held their religious assemblies in the night. This practice, however, being found inconvenient for the generality of Christians, was mostly laid aside."

"That family devotion at certain hours, and especially morning and evening, in which all the family were to join, has always been kept up in the church of God, from its earliest history to the present time, can not be seriously questioned. The importance of this duty is not only argued upon the high authority of its origin, and its universal practice by the pious in every age, but also from its happy effects.

1st. Certainly that family is more likely to preserve harmony and order where the daily labor is begun and ended with prayer.

2d. It places the head of a family where he ought to stand, as giving an example and encouragement to order and piety.

3d. The influence on the minds of children. Where family devotion is regularly observed, impressions are a thousand times made which will tell on their future destiny, both in time and eternity. Inspiration has declared, "Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

To conclude. Those who neglect this duty seem to fall under the

awful displeasure of heaven. The prophet says, (Jer. i: 23,) "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen, and the families that call not upon thy name." Here notice those families that call not on the name of the Lord, are reckoned with heathen; but the prayer, "Pour out thy fury," this was the prayer of inspiration, and of course agreeable to the Divine will. O ye prayerless fathers and careless mothers! are you prepared to meet this prayer? and, perhaps, you make a profession of religion, too, and are you ashamed to own Christ before your families and the world?

And will not Christ be ashamed of you in eternity? And will not your children and families be swift witnesses against you? The good Lord help you to rear the family, as Elijah did the altar of the Lord that had been thrown down, and may the holy fire descend and burn upon your hearts, until you and your families shall say, from a sense of the Divine presence, the Lord he is God! the Lord he is God!

The Good Shepherd.

Some years ago, a friend of mine was in Greece in the month of March. He was traveling in the country where the shepherds live. He came to three shepherds with their flocks. One had about six hundred and fifty sheep, another had about seven hundred, and the other had about seven hundred and fifty. In all, they had about twenty one hundred sheep. They were out in the valleys where the grass grew. All the flocks were mingled together. Every sheep had its own name. It would not come nor go if called by any other name; nor would it come nor go, if called by any but its own shepherd. Every shepherd knew all his own sheep. He knew their names also. If any one was about to go into a wrong place he called it and it turned back. If the way was narrow and steep he would go before, and they would follow him. This is just like what the Bible says about Christ and his flock. "The sheep heareth his voice; and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him; for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers." I am the good shepherd and know my sheep and am known of mine. I lay my life down for the sheep."

The day my friend saw the shepherds was a cold day. Some of the lambs were quite strong and full of play; but some of them were young and tender. The cold chilled them and they could not walk. The shepherds had on something like large cloaks tied around their necks and girt about their waists. So they took up the little lambs and put them in their bosoms. But they did not smother them, they left their heads out so that they could breathe well. But they kept them snug and warm. It was a pleasing sight to see an old shepherd, with his long grey beard and his bosom full of lambs. Just so the Bible says of Christ. "He shall gather the lambs in his arms and carry them in his bosom." Many little children have loved Christ. And he has never let such perish. He is as good to little children as to old people. He says, "I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me."

Among the twenty-one hundred sheep were some old and feeble ones. They could not walk much. If the way was miry or steep, they could hardly go along. So the shepherds would come and put their cloaks under their bodies, just behind their fore legs, and help them along. They treated them with great gentleness and care. Just so "the good Shepherd has pity on the weak, and gently helps them along." He never leaves nor forsakes them. "His rod and his staff comfort them." He leads all his sheep into his fold for safety. He leads them out that they may find pasture. If little boys and girls are wise, they will desire above all things to belong to Christ's flock. I hope all of you will commit to memory the twenty-third Psalm. It is beautiful. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."—Rev. Dr. Plumer.

When we are alone we have our thoughts to watch, in the family our tempers, and in company our tongues.

Preaching for Eternity.

We do work in the church for eternity as well as for time—even more for eternity than for time. So the ministers of the cross of Jesus should preach every sermon with clear reference to the future destiny of our race, of every individual, in the great forever. He should keep before the eye of his mind the value of the soul—the richest gem in the universe of man—destined to live and reign with Christ in eternal day, or sink to misery and woe irretrievable in endless night. The preacher should always remember pungently that some person is listening for the last time to the preaching of the gospel, and that this very sermon may be the means, if faithfully delivered, of saving a soul from death, and adding one more to the company of the ransomed on high. Every sermon, then, should be richly scented and savored with the name of Jesus, the clear, plain, positive declarations of God's word. There is nothing so interesting to an humbled sinner as the story of the cross; and nothing else will humble a sinner but the preaching of Christ applied to his heart by the Holy Spirit. And the word of God is the word of the Spirit whereby the ungodly are slain. Those ministers who would preach for eternity can find no time to preach anything else but Christ crucified. This may be to some a stumbling-block and to others foolishness; but to all who believe, it will be the power of God unto salvation. This will be more than all the vain philosophy in the universe can do.

It is to be regretted that so many who are the professed ministers of the cross of Christ almost or quite forget this grand and ever-new theme of the gospel, and spend their time and talent in preaching sermons which, to say the least of them, have but meager extracts from God's truth, and are filled up with imaginary or doubtful theories concerning philosophy, geology, astronomy or some other science. The science of salvation through Christ receives only partial attention from them, while it should engage their time, talent and their all. Here is an inexhaustible mine of truth in which every minister should be engaged all his life, and where only he may secure treasures unto eternal life. Not long ago I heard a man preach a sermon from a text which embraced the heirship of God's children in the kingdom of Christ. He labored long and hard to prove that there is no kingdom for God's children now within or without. He then closed up the argument by the quotation from St. Paul: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."—Rom. xiv: 17. It reminded me of boys building cobblehouses for the fun of tumbling them over when built. Thus ministers often speculate upon airy theories, instead of preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. They do not preach with that tremendous earnestness which the realities of eternity demand. They preach for time, with comparatively little interest in what is to take place in endless years. Oh, how shall it go with such when they stand before the judgment-seat of Christ?

What do men want with abstract questions of theology or of the sciences on the Sabbath, after having all the week been perplexed with a thousand difficulties of life? Do they go to have their perplexities increased, or do they not rather go to hear something that will soothe their sorrows and relieve their perplexities? Do they not go to feed on things easily digested, rather than to receive a mass of unmastered food? They go to get something to strengthen their good resolutions and comfort their weary souls. Christians go there to hear of Christ and the glories of his great salvation, and they want men to preach as though they mean what they say, with the power and demonstration of the Spirit. No man can preach for eternity who does not thus declare the truth of his Master. It is a solemn thing to declare the counsels of God to dying men—to be the messengers of mercy to the outcasts and the prisoners. It is an important trust committed to our care, to cry aloud and spare not, to give to each their portion in due season. Each minister of the gospel is charged with a message of awful weight to every individual, and he should deliver it carefully, solemnly—being all the time on the watch that he may not add thereto nor

detract therefrom, that he may avoid the plagues therein written, and that his name may be continued in the book of life forever.

To preach for eternity, then, it is necessary to declare Jesus and the resurrection in a plain, distinct, and loving manner. He to preach nothing but Christ crucified. In order to do this properly it is necessary to be wholly given up to the work of the ministry, to be a person of but one work. It is also necessary to be filled with the divinity of the mission. It is from God. It is necessary to be conscious of his great and duration to all the world for all eternity. The soul must be filled with the love of the Saviour, gospel measure, baptized with fire, producing a quenchless flame in the heart, making the possessor a burning and shining light in the world. Then shall we preach for eternity, and sinners shall be converted to God. May the Lord give strength and grace for the work, and crown us among the blood-washed in the city of our God above.—*Religious Telescope.*

Christ's Sympathy.

The sympathy of Christ was not merely love of men in masses; he loved the masses, but he loved them because made up of individuals, he "had compassion on the multitude;" but he had also discriminating special tenderness for erring Peter and erring Thomas. He felt for the despoiled, lonely Zacchaeus in his sycamore tree. He compassionated the discomfited disciples. He mixed his tears with the stifled sobs of the babe at the grave of Lazarus. He called the abused children to his side. Amongst the numbers, as he walked, he detected the individual touch of faith. "Master, the multitude throng thee, and sayest thou, 'Who touched me?'" "Somebody hath touched me."

Observe how he is touched by our infirmities—with a special sympathy, a single throbbing in a single human bosom, that does not thrill at once with more than electric speed up to the mighty heart of God. You have not shed a tear nor a sigh that did not come back to you exalted and purified by having passed through the Eternal bosom.

The sympathy of the Divine Human! he knows what strength is needed. He gives grace to help; and when the world, with its thousand forms of temptation, seems to whisper to us as to Enoch, Sell me thy birthright, the other voice speaks, Shall I barter blessedness for happiness—the inward peace for the outward thrill—the benediction of my Father for a morsel of pottage? There are moments when we seem to tread above this earth, superior to its ailments, able to do without its kindness, firmly bracing ourselves to do our work as he did his. Those moments are not the sunshine of life. They did not come when the world would have said that all around you was glad; but it was when outward trials had shaken the soul to its very centre, then there came from him "grace to help in time of need."

He who would sympathize must be content to be tried and tempted. There is a hard, sterner ruthlessness in our hearts by nature, which requires to be softened down: We pass by suffering gladly, carelessly, not in cruelty, but unfeelingly, just because we do not know what suffering is. We wound upon by our looks and our abrupt expressions without intending it, because we have not been taught the delicacy and the tact, and the gentleness which can only be learned by the wounding of our own sensibilities. There is a haughty feeling in uprightness which has never been on the verge of fall that requires humbling. There is an inability to enter into difficulties of thought which marks the mind to which all things have been presented superficially, and which has never experienced the horror of feeling the ice of doubt crushing beneath the feet.

Therefore, if you aspire to be a son of consolation—if you would partake of the priestly gift of sympathy—if you would pour something beyond common-place consolation into the troubled heart—if you would pass through the intercourse of daily life with the delicate tact which never inflicts pain—if to that most acute of human ailments, mental doubt, you are ever to give effectual succor, you must be content to pay the price of the costly education. Like him, you must suffer—being tempted.

But remember, it is being tempted in all points, yet without sin, that makes sympathy real, manly, perfect, instead of a mere sentimental tenderness. Sin will not teach you to feel for trials. It will not enable you to judge them to be merciful to them, nor to help them in time of need with any certainty.

It is the same human sympathy which qualifies Christ for judgment. It is written that the Father hath committed all judgment to him, because he is the Son of man. The sympathy of Christ, extends to the frailties of human nature, not to its hardened guilt; he is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." There is nothing in his bosom which can harmonize with malice; he can not feel for envy; he has no fellow-feeling for cruelty—oppression—hypocrisy; bitter, censorious judgments. Remember, he could look round about him with anger. The sympathy of Christ is a comforting subject. It is, besides, a tremendous subject; for on sympathy the awards of heaven and hell are built. "Except a man be born again"—not he shall not, but—"he can not enter into heaven." There is nothing in him which has affinity to anything in the Judge's bosom. A sympathy for that which is pure implies a repulsion of that which is impure. Hatred of evil is in proportion to the strength of love for good. To love good intensely is to hate evil intensely. It was in strict accordance with the laws of sympathy that he blighted Pharisaism in such ungentle words as these: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers! how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" Win the mind of Christ now—or else his sympathy for human nature will not save you from, but only insure, the recoil of abhorrence at the last—"Depart from me! I never knew you."—*Robertson.*

Worldly Christians.

Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather renounce

When we read the simple truths of the Bible, and compare our daily walk with its holy precepts, how very far short do we come, of an "upright walk and conversation," and of putting on the whole armor of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil.

We are told "to have our loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, to be shod with the preparation of the gospel, and above all, taking the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, that we may be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

The dangers and temptations that beset the disciples of the Lord in St. Paul's day, exist to an alarming extent in our own. Crowding thick and fast upon us, are the powers of darkness, in the form of refined amusements such as the theatre, the opera, the ball-room and card party, as well as those far less so, such as the wine club, billiard and liquor saloons and that curse to society—the circus! Each and all are conceded by the world, as well as the church, to belong to the world, and as decidedly worldly; yet their baleful influence is fast creeping into the church, while they find many warm and stout defenders among professing Christians, who have fallen to put on the whole armor of God, and still cherish their besetting sins. The love of many a soldier of the cross waxes cold, in these evil times that test the true Christian, and many members of that Church, "that Christ so loved, as to give himself for it, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but should be holy and without blemish"—are aiding and abetting these devices to its grievous injury, and the encouragement of its enemies.

One may be a Christian, and occasionally overcome the tempter and frequent such places; yet it shows a faulty Christian sentiment, brings reproach on the church and proves a stumbling block to many. Though the conscience and the world may condemn yet such Christians may and often do excuse themselves upon the plea, "that there is so harm in it; simply a recreation, and one needs recreation; God created all things for man's enjoyment." But O man, O woman, where is your accountability for the way in which you use or abuse them? and how reads thy Bible? "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the

Spirit." "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth." "See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the children of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world."

Theatre-going, ball and circus-going Christians, have you put on the whole armor, and having done all, do you stand for the Church in your heart of hearts? Are you known by the fruits of the Spirit, or the works of the flesh and the world? If you are a parent, I pray you do not teach your children to take delight in that species of excitement experienced in the theatre, where they may form false tastes, and exaggerated views of life, that may unfit them for the quiet and sacred influences of home life, and the sweet relations of the domestic altar. Nor yet the false graces and vain glory of the ball-room, where their minds through excess of dissipation may exclude the wholesome mental discipline of sober thought, and the salutary lessons of serious reflection.

Nor yet the demoralizing, sensualizing, lowering atmosphere of the circus, where all that is best and holiest in Christian society is made fit subject for coarse jest, indelicate song, or ribald jest. Where a true man is made to blush for woman, and pity his fellow man; that being made in God's own image he should so degrade himself, and become a fool! to be laughed at, and yet held in utter contempt.

Thousands of our hard-earned money are squandered amid such guilty, unprofitable associations, while our churches languish for funds, our places of the dead from neglect, our homes of orphans—many of them children of fathers who died for us, our homes, and country—for the comforts and necessities of life. Be ashamed, O Christian, who pleads for these guilty devices of Satan.

Still battling for Christ and His church here upon earth; let us look well to our steps, that others seeing them may take courage. Let us resolve to love and honor Him more, who hath loved us and washed us in His own most precious blood.—*N. C. Presbyterian.*

Shooting on the Wing.

How to reach individuals with direct appeals of a religious kind is not an easy problem. If all who desire benefit attended the public means of grace, so that the preacher might at least speak in their presence, even then his words would not certainly be heard, much less felt.

As a teacher as well as preacher, often taking occasion to ask persons just from church what the preacher has said, I have been amazed to find many unable to answer intelligently. Either the preaching is above their capacities, or it is dull, or it has no advantage with the hearer from a predisposing love of religious truth. It is certain, multitudes fail to get much personal religious impulse from the pulpit. Perhaps we do not "preach the word" in all simplicity, and thus the service may have become with people a mere religious decency, and not a personal interest of the most pressing sort.

I do not pretend to say why it is, but merely to say it is so.

Granting that there were a deeper interest in the class referred to, as to public worship, then we fear there is, we know there is a necessity of some further and different labor to reach the desired result. Truth, like an arrow or a rifle-ball, needs to hit the mark.

One night a thoughtless boy was leaving the church, unmoved by the discourse, but his godly uncle laid his hand on his shoulder with the intention to ask him to go to Christ, but his emotion allowed him only to ejaculate his nephew's name. That broken ejaculation led him to Christ and into the ministry. I speak only of the outward instrumentality.

I was once visiting "pastorally" certain families with my venerable colleague, one of the most successful pastors, the late Dr. Barnabas King, of Rockaway. He was then an old man, and I suppose, at least, in the forty-fifth year of his ministry. In the last family we visited that day, we met a lady who had long been a devoted Christian, and as we rose from our knees, and were about to leave, she said to Dr. King, "Do you

remember visiting the Pigeon Hill neighborhood one stormy day forty years ago?" The pastor remembered it well, and also in what discouragement he had kept the appointment, announced from the pulpit the previous Sabbath, as was his custom.

"Well," said the lady, "that was a great day in my life. I was a giddy, wicked girl, and had declared that you should not have a chance to talk to me. That evening you took tea where I was living, and I had to go into the room where you were seated with the elders. I sat in and was fitting out, when you said, 'And are you going to neglect your soul's salvation?' That was all, for I ran out of the room; but that arrow hit the mark, and I am a Christian because you said that sentence then and there!"

I speak again only of the human instrumentality, but that arrow shot at her did what a pulpit broadside had failed to do.

Some years ago an interesting but godless young man was riding in the cars southward, an invalid in the vain search for health. A Christian man seated near him became deeply interested in him, and on leaving the cars ventured to place in his hands either a tract or a blank leaf on which were the words, "Are you a Christian?" How casual, how trifling, the coincidence of two travelers thus coming near together without speaking, and no attempt at a religious impulse possible except those four words written on a leaf! And yet that little agency won that soul to Christ, as was discovered, through a published inquiry some months after, from the grateful friends of the dead invalid, for the faithful man who "shot a bow at a venture."

We are never to speak slightly of the preaching of the word. It is a great power, the greatest on earth; but if I were asked for another great force, not to supplant but to supplement the first, I would mention this force, the private, personal appeal to the unconverted sinner—man-to-man and wide-awake Christian fidelity may approve. It is the chance shot, or the taking the bird on the wing, or the labor to save souls "out of season."

The human heart has a tremendous aversion to evangelical truth. It is as shy as a mountain partridge to the hunter, and it will not do to wait until the bird shall light on a limb in plain sight, and we can "get a rest" before we shoot. We must fire when we can, even if the bird be on the wing, and trust Him for help who can give it, to send the shot home.

We must be ready in the shop, at the street corner, in the lecture-room, in the casual meeting, at any time or place, to give the impulse of a word, a sentence from the Scripture, or a tender invitation to Christ, with the prayer to God to make it to do what it was meant to do. In this way almost the entire field of society would be covered by very potent influences, warning and winning souls that otherwise might pass into another world unwarmed and unwon. Such shooting must bring down much game.—*Christian Banner.*

The Sabbath.

There is one weapon which the enemy has employed to destroy Christianity and to drive it from the world, which has never been employed but with signal success. It is the attempt to corrupt the Christian Sabbath, to make it a day of festivity, to cause Christians to feel that its sacred and rigid obligation has ceased, to induce them on that day to mingle in the scenes of pleasure or the exciting plans of ambition, to make them feel that they may pursue their journeys by land and water, by the steamboat and the railway, regardless of the command of God; and this has done, and will continue to do, what no argument, no sophistry, no imperial power has been able to accomplish. The "Book of Sports" did more to destroy Christianity than all the ten persecutions of the Roman Emperors; and the views of the Second Charles and his Court about the Lord's day tended more to drive religion from the British nation than all the fires that were kindled by Mary. Paris has no Sabbath, and that fact has done more to banish Christianity than all the writings of Voltaire; and Vienna has no Sabbath, and that fact does more to annihilate religion than ever did the scepticism of Frederick. Turn the Sabbath into a day of sports and pastimes, of military reviews, and of pantomimes and theatrical exhibitions, and not an infidel anywhere would care a farthing about the tones of Volney or Voltaire, about the scepticism of Hume, the sneers of Gibbon, or the scurrility of Paine.—*British American Presbyterian.*