

Arc We Getting the Best ?

There is no doubt that we live below our privileges as Christians. There are treasures in our spiritual inheritance undiscovered by us, heights of joy and good unattained. We do not get from our faith in Christ all that we might get. We do not begin to exhaust the possibilities of blessing and of growth in grace.

For one thing, we do not find the best things there are in the Bible. The finest gold lies deep and has to be digged for. It is hidden in the rocks and has to be quarried out. We will never get the best the Bible has to give us until we learn to search through its chapters as the miner searches with pick, hammer, shovel and lamp, in the dark mines, for the precious treasure that is concealed there.

One of the secrets of a strong Christian life is daily feeding upon the Word of God. The Bible contains God's bread for God's children. Bible-fed Christians are god-like men and women. It is great thinking that produces great character, and he who makes the Bible his daily meditation learns to think over God's thoughts.

We are not getting the best from our praying. It was the Master who said, "Enter into thy closet, and shut thy door, and pray to thy Father which is in secret." It is in the closet that we get our life-renewals. There we may open our heart to God. We never can speak the things of our innermost life in public prayer. Secret prayer is the communing of the individual soul with God. Here it is that godly men and women get their shining faces, the light that breaks through their tears, the strength that makes them victorious in temptation, the power that fits them for Christian work and Christ-like serving. The closet of prayer is the holy of holies of each Christian life. The blessing we may receive there is simply immeasurable. One writes :

"All empty handed came I in ; full handed forth I go ;
Go thou beside me. Lord of grace, and keep me over so-
Thanks are poor things for such wide good , but all my life is
thine ;
Thou hast turned my stones to bread, my water into wine."

We do not get the best possible out of our church life. The Church brings heaven down to earth. It keeps alive in this world the love, the grace, the beauty of God. Our Sabbaths are oases, where we may drink of the pure water that flows from the heavenly mountains, and eat of the fruits that grow on the trees of God, and thus be prepared to go out into the world for a six days' journey over the hot sands.

Some years since a party of Americans were about to leave Cairo for a journey across the desert. Before setting out they bought vessels in which to carry water. One found jars of brass whose fine designs attracted him. Another purchased porcelain vessels of rare beauty. A third, however, took some coarse earthenware bottles. The way across the desert was long and wearisome. The heat was intense. Every drop of water was of value. The brass vessels heated, and the water was made impure and unfit for use. The costly porcelain jugs cracked in the heat and the water was lost. But the plain earthenware bottles kept the water pure and sweet until the journey was ended.

We go out every morning to trudge over desert paths. We should be sure that on the Sabbath we make preparations that shall not fail us on the journey. Mere idle rest will not give it to us. We cannot get it from the Sunday newspaper, from mere literary books, or from studying works of art. But if we turn our faces to God's house on God's day, and commune with Him, filling our vessels of faith and love with the water of life, we shall not faint by the way.

The things we get from the Church are the lasting things. One writes of listening to the brawl of London streets and Parliament houses until he grew weary and sick of the emptiness. Then he went out of the city to watch the darkening even, and to seek the touch of the sweet airs of heaven. He writes :

Half a mile on, a sudden song,
Mounting above, in a girl's sweet breath,
Brought me to pause, and I caught the words,
' Victory, victory over death !'

From a little chapel so deep in green,
The psalm was heard ere the place was seen.
' These be the things that last,' I said.
Shadows we are that shadows pursue,
Triumph and weep over vanities,
Srut and fret and make much ado,
Verily, Christ, as He did say,
' Is with two or three who meet to pray.'
So, while the people sang and prayed,
' These be the things that endure,' I said."

We need the Church. It is never easy to live in this world. In the quietest day there are cares which tend to fret us and break our peace. Business has its temptations, and it is hard always to live out of Christ's teachings in our shops, stores and offices. Home life, with its household tasks and its cares and anxieties, wears heavily on the hearts sensitiveness. To many the day brings discouragements, disheartenments and sorrows. But it is possible to get into our souls in God's house such inspiring hopes, such uplifting joys that all the week in the dust and toil, heavenly songs shall sing in our bosoms. We rob our lives when we fail to use the privileges which the Church brings within our reach.

We do not make the most and the best possible of our life in the work of Christ. The possibilities of Christian ministry are incalculable. For example, the influence that a true home exerts on its inmates is beyond measure. A Christian man who had long been engaged in useful service tells of a visit to his old home. He was put to sleep in the spare room. He opened a closet door, and a scene was before him which brought a rush of tears to his eyes. An old chair stood there and before it lay a cushion, in which were deep knee-prints. Evidently this was some one's closet of prayer. Instantly the truth flashed upon him. He was looking into the secret sanctuary of his beloved mother, where she had prayed all her children into the kingdom of Christ. What a holy place it was ! What would be the result if every Christian home in the world had such a holy of holies, its old chair daily wet with tears of love and its cushion deeply indented by suppliant knees !

Every individual Christian is the centre of a circle whose hearts he may touch with a benediction of love. He is a custodian of blessing which he is to impart to others. The noblest life is the one that is given up most unselfishly to serving.

It is most interesting to think what kind of a Christian one would be who should realize all the possibilities of faith in Christ and truly find the best things in all life's ways.

Moral and Ceremonial Uncleanness.

BY REV. ADDISON P. FOSTER, D.D.

God's chosen people were to be trained to preserve, in an age of deep corruption, the true religion. At first poisoned and blinded by idolatrous surroundings, they were but children in their ability to comprehend spiritual truths. Hence God resorted to object lessons,—a priesthood, sacrifices, an imposing ritual,—to teach them. This was the main purpose of the laws of ceremonial cleanness and uncleanness, as set forth by Moses, regarding meats, dishes and physical conditions. These distinctions were partly sanitary, no doubt, but still more did they serve to show that there is a difference between clean and unclean, between right and wrong, that the difference is important, that God's law relates to it, and that a conscientious discrimination and prompt obedience are necessary regarding it. What position is taken in Christ's Kingdom on this point ? We cannot expect, when the sun is at the zenith, that candles lighted in the night will be kept burning. No ; Christ declares that

THE LAW OF CEREMONIAL UNCLEANNESS IS ABROGATED.

Christ's disciples were blamed for eating with hands ceremonially unwashed and He defended them. The key to His defence is found at the close of the passage, in the words, " This He said making all meats clean." The time had come when these artificial distinctions of clean and unclean should be swept away. They were no longer necessary. They had served their purpose and had now drifted into evil. Instead of the comparatively simple rules that Moses had enjoined, the Pharisees had imposed others, minute and burdensome. God had appointed one

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* A Meditation based on (Mark vii. 1-23.) in the Bible Study Union Course on " The Teachings of Christ."