

these things will be accepted by the Almighty, and that *nothing else* is necessary to the obtaining and perfection of his salvation.

This may be a salutary religion, and it may serve as an opiate to conscience, it may relieve the sinner for a time from spiritual concern, it may nourish his feelings of self-complacency, it may encourage him to settle down into security. There may be no yearning of the soul, no suspicion that all is not *right*. There may be a perfect reliance upon his feelings and convictions, and never for a time may he be startled out of his dreamless sleep, never for a time may he awaken to find that he had been slumbering upon the edge of a grave, into which he may have turned, and been sealed to eternal death. Never for a time, alas! in many instances, never in the world will those dismal sophistries be exposed to the living consciousness of the sinner. Never may he be brought to see the utter inadequacy of human instrumentality, and human remedies to secure an interest with Christ, and peace with God. But the day is coming, which shall reveal to the living consciousness of all who have blindly adopted, and obstinately persevered in human systems and remedies for salvation, that the only system and the only remedy binding upon them to select and employ were those revealed in the gospel, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and obedience to his will and testimony—a personal surrender of body, soul and spirit to God, and a life of holiness. And this day too, shall emphatically reveal, and decide upon the merits and the efficacy of human and divine instrumentality, upon the sinner's plan, to save himself, and God's plan to save the sinner. Around the throne of the Judge will be gathered an innumerable multitude of those who trusted to the divine wisdom,—the divine method,—and the divine love for salvation, and who are now to receive the reward of their faith and obedience, to be welcomed as loyal subjects, as those who had obeyed the commands of their King; who had after many a conflict, many a hard struggle upon the battle field, come off with the victor's triumphs, and who are now, in token of their Sovereign's approval, to rest with him in his kingdom, themselves to receive thrones, and crowns, and governments; in a word, to repose for ever in the enjoyments of their hard won conquests, under the smiles and auspices of their Gracious Father, and within the compass, within the sunshine and shelter of Jesus, their glorified Redeemer's love.

There too, though not mingling with that august assembly, will there be all those who in pride and self sufficiency trusted to their own plan for salvation. They stand now upon the wreck of ruined hopes and blasted prospects. "These shall go away unto everlasting punishment."

D. B. P.

THE PRAYER MEETING—ITS SPECIAL BENEFITS

1. They present an excellent opportunity for preserving brotherly love in proper exercise among the members of a church. In our present imperfect state, differences of opinion will sometimes occur even among the best of the people of God; and the great thing in reference to them, when they unhappily occur, is to prevent them, as far as possible, from injuring the harmony of the Church at large. Now, of all the means which can be devised for accomplishing this, none will be found so effectual as meetings for prayer. For here heart blends with heart, individual or party interests are forgotten or sacrificed in the general good, every member is reminded of the interest which he has in his brethren,

the best affections of the heart are drawn out into exercise, and all are led to feel and to regard that they are brethren and members, one with another. Hence, where there is a general spirit of prayer in exercise in a church, the spirit of division cannot exist in it, the members will be too united in affection, in interest, and in co-operative plans and exertions for endeavouring to promote the glory of God and their mutual spiritual advancement, to admit of it. But not only are their affections thus united, they are also greatly strengthened. For, "as iron sharpeneth iron, so does the face of a man his friend," and, of all the means for strengthening affection among brethren, which may be thought of, none will be found so effectual as meetings for prayer. Frequent intercourse with one another in the common walks and avocations of life may, no doubt, do much towards the attainment of this end; but, no intercourse will be found so effectual as that which takes place at the throne of grace. For there we mutually connect ourselves with God, with Christ, and with heaven, and are led more than in any other way to feel that we are children of a common parent, that we are partakers of the same privileges and blessings, heirs of the same glorious inheritance, and destined to dwell forever in the same heavenly home. And how is it possible for us to feel all this, without, at the same time, feeling our affection to one another greatly invigorated? For, if we are destined to spend our immortal existence together, and that too in heaven, how can we prevent our affection to each other from being strong and lasting even as our being itself? Now, if this is the invariable effect which they will produce, how important are united prayer-meetings to the spiritual prosperity of a church?

2. These meetings afford an excellent opportunity for improving the gifts of the members of a church. Exercise, combined with study and meditation, is the surest way of improving mental endowments and gracious habits; and no way of exercising the gifts of the members of the church is so appropriate as meetings for prayer. And it is of the first importance that their gifts should be improved to the utmost; for the more they are improved, the more will they be able to edify one another, and the greater will be their influence in promoting the spiritual well-being of others. And of all the gifts which are ornamental to the Christian character, there is no one that is more so than an humble, edifying, and spiritual gift in prayer. But, how frequently do we find persons possessed even of a high degree of intelligence, and who furnish, it may be, satisfactory evidence of genuine piety, exceedingly deficient in this matter. Converse with them on the affairs of this world, and on the general subject of Christianity, and words will flow apace. Or, if they have any matter of complaint, or any trouble, in reference, to which they wish your sympathy or assistance, and they find no difficulty in stating it; but ask them to pray, and they are all confusion and full of excuses, and this may be even where we have unquestionable evidences of genuine piety. Now, in all such cases, it is a matter of no little importance to ascertain the cause from which this proceeds. And, after making all due allowance for constitutional timidity and diversity of gifts, we have no doubt that a great part of this feeling is to be attributed to a want of practice, particularly of praying in the presence of others. But, surely, it is on every account desirable to get above this timidity and confusion, and to feel as much at ease when praying in public, as we do when praying alone. And what can be more likely to enable us, under the blessing of God, to acquire this ease and self-possession than meetings for prayer among the members of a church? And the more frequently and regularly they are attended,

they will always be found to have this effect, and thus secure a greater measure of edification and usefulness to all.

3. These meetings afford an excellent opportunity for ascertaining the real state of religion in a church. As religion never can exist in any soul without prayer, so the manner in which the regular prayer-meetings of a church are attended will be found, at least as a general rule, a good criterion by which we may judge of the state of religion in it. If they are numerous enough to meet the exigencies of a church, and if they are regularly and well attended, if they are looked forward to with interest, and engaged in with proper motives, and if the whole heart and soul are consecrated in them to God, they will form a most gratifying and safe evidence of the flourishing state of religion in it. But if, on the contrary, they are but few in number, and thinly and irregularly attended, regarded with no interest, and engaged in in a cold or lifeless manner, or if they dwindle away till at last they are given up, it is a sad evidence that that church is far gone in a state of backsliding. It is thus that every church possesses within herself the means of accurately ascertaining the present state of piety among her members. Are they given to prayer? And are they eminent for this exercise? For these, a great deal more than numbers, or wealth, or mere worldly intelligence, will be found a safe criterion by which we may judge of the real state of piety within her. And do not think, my dear readers, that it is a small matter to ascertain the real state of piety in a church. In place of its being so, it is a matter of great importance; for, according to the state of religion in a church, just so is the duty of all her members clearly pointed out. As in the case of bodily diseases, the physician, after having ascertained the nature and progress of the disease, knows what means are necessary to resort to, with the view of effecting a cure, just so in reference to spiritual diseases; when their nature and progress are known, both pastor and people may also easily know what means are necessary to be adopted in order to cure, or to stop the spiritual pestilence from making any farther havoc among them. And we know of nothing which is so likely to render such important assistance to us in this matter as meetings for united prayer.

4. Such meetings have ever been honoured by God with obtaining the most important blessings for the Church. "The effectual fervent prayer (that is, the unwrought prayer) of a righteous man availeth much;" how much more then may we naturally expect from such prayers of many righteous men? Hence, said the Saviour, Matt. 18: 19, 20. "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven. For, where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." From what Christ here says, it is evident that he bestows the highest honour on united prayer; and, in attestation of the truth of this statement, we have many proofs in the Sacred Scriptures. Thus, the victory over the Amalekites, we are taught to regard as the result of the joint prayer of Moses and Hur: Ex. 17: 8, 13. See also, 1 Chron. 5: 20; Ezra, 8: 23. Daniel and his companions were saved from destruction, in answer to their united prayers: Dan. 2: 17, 18, &c. Just so too were the Hebrew captives, who were scattered throughout the Persian empire, saved from utter extermination in answer to their united prayers: Est. 4: 15, 16, and chap. 9th. When the Holy Spirit, too, was poured out, on the day of Pentecost, it was when the disciples were assembled in one place for prayer: Acts, 2: 1. Peter too, was delivered from prison and intended martyrdom in answer to the united prayers of