

Lord thy God;" the second, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." God first,—man second. Or look at the Lord's Prayer. If we had been left to frame a model of petition, would not our needs have stood foremost in it? We should, I fear, have begun with "give us our daily bread," and ended with "thy kingdom come." But mark the Saviour's order: *thy* name be hallowed,"—" *thy* kingdom come,"—" *thy* will be done;" and then, "give us our daily bread,"—"forgive us our debts,"—"lead us not into temptation." God first, you see again; ourselves second.

The world utterly ignores and reverses this rule, and Christians are far from carrying it out consistently in daily life. We are all prone to seek *self* first. In laying, for example, our plans for a day which we may have at our disposal, is our first thought, "How may I best serve God to-day?" or, "How may I turn the day to most gainful or pleasurable account for myself?" Let us cultivate the habit of giving our first to God,—the first hours of our days, the first fruits of our increase, the first thoughts of our prayers. Life would be nobler and more joyful if we did this; its work and its enjoyment would have new dignity, new meaning, new zest, and its sorrows new comfort and new blessedness, if God were thus first in all our thoughts.

II. Our best for God. The first fruits were the freshest and richest of the harvest. The sacrifice which accompanied their presentation was to be "an he lamb without blemish of the first year." And all the sacrifices were to be thus young and free from defect. God will be served with our best, and his true servants, of their own love to him, desire thus to serve him. "I will not offer unto the Lord my God of that which costs me nothing." "Lo, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of the Lord dwelleth between curtains." Here, too, we have a principle susceptible of various and solemn application to our common life. In the matter of giving to the cause of Christ, how prone we are to give what is left, after making most liberal allowance for our own wants, to adjust God's claims to ours, not ours to his. Our time, our thought, our energy, would the faithful observance of this principle work no change in the use and devotion of these? But there is one application of it so solemn in its importance, that we may well pause to make it more pointedly. Young people, who are postponing attention to religion to some future day,—who are crying, "There

is time enough yet for me to begin to serve God: I must enjoy the pleasures of life while I am young,"—have you ever reflected how you are treating God,—how you are refusing this plain duty of giving your best to him? You are saying in your heart, "I will keep the best of life for myself, and give its refuse to God." Its young, fresh bloom and power you will spend for the world and sin, and account its faded, worn-out energies good enough for consecration to him. But God claims your first and best, the rich, ripe, golden first fruits of your life; and your conscience answers and sustains the plea. Has he not given his best to you? "He spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all." Oh, give your best to him, for your best is all too poor to recompense the love which thus gave its dearest and best for you.

III. Our all for God. How might two Israelites, the one a merely formal observer of the law, the other a truly spiritual worshipper, be supposed respectively to regard this command about the first fruits? How would each feel when he had yielded obedience to it? The former would think, if he did not say, "There! now God has received his due, his portion, his claim, the rest is my own. I may use it freely for my own purposes, now that I have performed this service." The other would cry, "I offer these first fruits unto thee, O God, as an acknowledgment that all I have and am is thine, as the pledge of my desire to devote it all to thy service and glory." And surely there can be no doubt which of the two would best apprehend and interpret the spirit of this law. You know that when one person allows to another some use of his property, say a right of way across his field, he claims some payment as an acknowledgment that the land is really his, and not the other's, and that the right to pass over it is held by his sufferance. The sum demanded may be very slight, but it suffices as a confession of ownership. And so, to compare small things with great, Jehovah claimed the first fruits as a confession that he is proprietor and Lord of all lives,—that all are held in subjection to his sovereign will. It was right that a special part should be set aside for him; but this consecrated portion was to be, not the substitute, but rather the specimen of the rest,—was to be presented in acknowledgment that all was given by him, and belonged to him. Let us try practically to apply this principle to our own lives. Take our Sundays, the first