

us we are terribly deceived and are trusting to a broken reed. Said the late Dr. John Duncan in his dying moments, I am poor, wretched, miserable, lost, polluted, and but for Jesus Christ, a doomed sinner. My hope, my joy, my trust, now lies in this, there is Christ between me and God. That is my creed and my orthodoxy, and thus speaking, he departed for his heavenly home. Reader, in what do you trust, are you cherishing a false hope? Ascertain ere it be too late.

### THE PRAYER MEETING.

In discussing this subject in this paper, I will put what I have to say under three heads:—1. The prayer meeting as it is. 2. As it ought to be. 3. How can we make what it ought to be?

#### I.—THE PRAYER MEETING AS IT IS.

In public estimation it is not highly regarded. It is not a popular institution. This is evident from the attendance. Only a small proportion of the population are accustomed to meet there. The majority of people in our congregations feel under obligation to attend Sabbath services, but very few have or seem to have any scruples of conscience in neglecting prayer meetings. Appointments are made, engagements and arrangements entered into, parties held and places of amusement attended, without any consideration for the prayer meeting. No provision is made for that. It is entirely forgotten, or, if remembered, it is not thought worth attending, or worth any sacrifice or self-denial, or effort in order to attend it.

This applies not only to the population in general but to a majority of those who profess obedience to Christ. The indifference of these is the more surprising and shameful. That those who have no heart-felt concern about their own or others' spiritual welfare or the glory of God should take no interest in the prayer meeting is not wonderful, but rather very natural. But that those who profess to have been awakened to a realization of the importance and value of spiritual and eternal verities

and to a delight in God, should be indifferent to it may well be wondered at. Why they are so we inquire not just now, but the fact we notice for serious consideration.

When we leave it as it is in the people's estimation and consider it as it is in itself, how do we find it? Is it earnest, warm and attractive? Is it such as is calculated to awaken the interest and secure the continued attendance of those who may venture or happen once to go? Is the atmosphere such as will make them feel that there are men and women there in downright earnest? Is it such that living, warm-hearted Christians feel it congenial to their taste, exalting to their spiritual appetites, and a stimulus to their energies? Do those who attend do so because they love to go—because they are in living earnest and find an opportunity to pour forth and develop the aspiration of their Christian life, or receive comfort and strength in their perplexities and weakness, or do they attend merely from a cold sense of duty and no more?

I venture to say that though there may be some earnestness, and warmth, and life, yet there is very much dulness and coldness. Prayers consist too much in a certain round of petitions without point or adaptation, often long as well as pointless. Addresses are too often prosy and dry, made evidently just to fill up the time. All the speaking and praying is left to two or three who have been in harness for years, and who are in danger of getting into a tread-mill round. Thus a certain stereotyped form is gone through from week to week without variety, liveliness or special interest, so that they are attended by a few more from a sense of duty than from any real delight.

Now why is the prayer meeting so unpopular, and why so formal and dry?

Why so unpopular? It is not difficult to see why the general public take no interest in it. Their tastes and desires are not in harmony with its spirit and design. But why Christians should take no more interest in it, why they should show so little anxiety and use so little effort to