

PRAYING IN SECRET.



WHEN thou prayest," said Jesus, "enter into thy closet." There are two reasons, in the nature of things, for this admonition: 1. Secret prayer is free from temptation to ostentation, hypocrisy and pride, and therefore will be pleasing to God, and for his glory. 2. The *habit* of secret prayer is of unspeakable advantage in soul-culture.

It is assumed that all Christians pray. Some, it may be, pray mechanically—from a cold sense of duty; and some from a superstitious notion that prayer is a kind of charm to ward off evil; but others pray because they love it, and regard it as an inestimable privilege. In the Saviour's time the spirit and design of prayer were misunderstood. It had degenerated into a mere outward form in which the heart had no share. Jesus sought to bring it back to its true place; and in a single sentence he has expressed its true nature,—secret intercourse with God.

That which the Saviour taught by precept he enforced by example. In the great crises of His life-work, He strengthens his soul by communion with His Father. Allusions to this fact are frequent in the Gospels:—"He went up into a mountain apart to pray." "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." "He departed into a mountain to pray." "He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed." "He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." If you would be like Jesus, be much in secret prayer. You have wants and needs that cannot be presented in any other way.

In regard to the method of discharging this duty a word will be in place. First, as to the *time*. It is well to have fixed seasons for secret prayer. Why? Because otherwise the duty will soon be neglected altogether. It is surely not claiming too much that we should treat our Heavenly Father with as much consideration as we do our friends. I know business men by the score who would not on any consideration neglect a business engagement,—who would feel that their reputation was seriously compromised if a note was not promptly paid at maturity, or if an engagement for business was not kept to the minute. Let us carry this principle over into religious duty. Let our engagements with God be as sacredly kept as our engagements with men.

There are times peculiarly suited for closet prayer. In the *morning*, when the powers of the soul are in full vigor,—when the mercies of the night call for thanksgiving, and coming duties demand help. At *noon*, when for a few moments the wheels of labor stand still, and the hurrying feet of Mammon's worshippers rest a space; then snatch a moment, from amid life's pressing cares, to tell thy wants to thy Father in heaven, and to cool thy fevered heart and brain by a draught from salvation's well. At *evening*, when the day's