

"IS IT WORTH WHILE?"

By Rev. W. J. Clark.

There are certain temptations which the honest and faithful servant of Christ may be said to leave almost entirely behind him. They tried him once, but the upward course of his spiritual life has led him away from the atmosphere where such temptations flourish. But with the growth which is his, there arise certain other temptations, which are severe tests of his faith. Among these is that which may be succinctly summed up in the question taken as the title of this article. "Is it worth while?"

First, in regard to the self-denials which are practised by him, the abstinence from certain pursuits and occupations that others even of his fellow disciples indulge in freely. In the first flush of endeavor he gladly assumed the renunciation of certain pleasures which he had been accustomed to. Indeed the only difficulty then was that it seemed there was no sacrifice sufficiently great laid upon him. But the results of it all seem so insignificant. He has not even been called upon to defend his course. His friends smile at him as a little peculiar, but that is the only taste of persecution he has known. And the temptation is to think he may relax a little the laws he has made for himself. The gain seems to be so slight that it is hardly worth while to continue this discipline of self-denial. There are few temptations as insidious as this; but, if yielded to there is sure to be a falling away from high endeavor, a lessening instead of a soul in spiritual things. Slackness of soul spells defeat and disaster.

In regard also to work undertaken in the name of Christ for others. When an architect plans a house, he may hope to see his thought embodied in brick, or stone, or marble. When a business man enters on a commercial enterprise, he may hope to count the gains in tangible form. But when one is working for the things "unseen and eternal," very often there may be no evidence which can be taken knowledge of with assurance. To the Sabbath school worker this temptation often comes. Sabbath by Sabbath passes, and there is so little evidence that a harvest is growing from the seed which was sown. And many answer the question, "Is it worth while?" in the negative, and drop out from the ranks of those who teach in the name of Christ, remembering that it "is not the will of your Father which is in Heaven that one of these little ones should perish." One sometimes wonders if this temptation comes to those who are greatly gifted and highly honored in the church visible. Perhaps there is a more insidious and terrible temptation. But it is certainly a frequent and trying temptation for those who toil in the ranks of the humble unknown, never heard of beyond the confines of a contracted circle.

But when the servant's task is done, and we pause for a moment to think concerning him who has passed away, there are only two things which seem to us to have been worth while. First, what he had grown to in himself. And there is no real growth without much discipline of self-denial. Secondly, what he had done for others in influencing them to holy living. The money he leaves behind him, the fame he has had in his day, the pleasures which he enjoyed!—the money belongs to others, the fame is forgotten in a day, the pleasures are but dust and ashes. But this character has not only affected many while he passed through—it is his own capital in the hand and the life to which he has gone; while the work that he did in inciting and instructing others is like fruitful seed, ever bringing forth greater harvest in the lives he has influenced.

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A contented spirit is better than great riches. It is the Mada touch that turns everything into that which is better than gold. It is one of the secrets of a happy life, and a virtue which we all can acquire.

A PRAYER.

The Central Presbyterian publishes the following prayer for the sick and sorrowing, by the late Dr. Moses D. Hoge, and we gladly make room for it here:—

"Almighty and most merciful God, the consolation of the sorrowful and the support of the bereaved, Who dost not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men, look in compassion, we beseech Thee, upon all who mourn and comfort them.

"Father of mercies, God of all grace, ever assuring us of Thy love for all whom Thou dost chasten, be very near to us now, as we come to cast our care on Thee and seek the strength and consolation Thou only canst impart.

"As a father pitieth his children, so do Thou pity all the smitten and afflicted; as one whom his mother comforteth, so do Thou comfort them, and so sanctify to them this sorrow that there may be everlasting consolation. Grant them resignation to Thy will; and so overcome this chastening for their profit that being prepared for eternal blessedness in the world where, after the separation and sorrows of this life, they may find the true home where all who have departed in Christ await us, beyond the reach of separation, sorrow, pain and tears.

"We beseech Thee to hear us, O Father, most holy, most merciful, for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy well-beloved Son, to Whom, with Thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory evermore. Amen."

DON'T'S FOR THE NEW PASTOR.

Don't imagine that your predecessor accomplished nothing or knew nothing. The probability is that he was about your size.

Don't be jealous of him. You will be glad to have them speak well of you when you are gone.

Don't expect to work a revolution in six months. Great bodies move slowly and small ones are often still more slow.

Don't attempt a revolution. To get this world a little nearer right is about all one man can expect to do.

Don't want to work a revolution. Why should you? This is a church of the living God, and it probably has the root of the matter in it.

Don't publish that your congregations are doubled, prayer meetings quadrupled, etc. If they are, be thankful, but publication may be premature. If all the reports from the first six months were true and ratios maintained, the problem of "the evangelization of the world in this generation" would be solved in two years or less.

Don't imagine that you have become another man in the new place. You are no larger and no different. Your subline head is no nearer the stars.

Don't imagine that the new place is so very new. There will be the same difficulties. Folks are folks, everywhere.

Don't lay your axe at the root of trees, literal or metaphorical, which have taken decades to grow.

Don't imagine that plans and methods which worked well in your last church will necessarily work here.

Don't issue bulletins of victory on the day of assuming command.

Don't assume command. Don't regale your new people upon the beauties, delights and virtues of the old field. Few second wives like that sort of thing. They wish you back with your first love.

Don't forget that you are an extremely ignorant, fallible, imperfect and unimportant human being, in the midst of forces, tendencies, and conditions which are not easily read and are still less easily handled, and that you need guidance and grace every step of the way, that you may be saved from conceit, rashness, and folly.—Prof. Philip Wendell Crannell, D.D., in *The Homiletic Review*.

Joy does not happen. It is the inevitable result of certain lines followed and laws obeyed, and so a matter of character.—Maltbie D. Babcock.

WHAT IS PHARISÆISM?

Some Bible Hints.

Phariseism is form without substance, the one tenth without the nine tenths (v. 42).

In condemning Phariseism Christ did not condemn forms; we must have the clothes, but we need a body inside them (v. 42).

The Christian fears fame, the Pharisee fears neglect. The latter seeks the chief places; so does the former—that he may place others in them (v. 43).

Hypocrisy is the most dangerous of sins as it is so often concealed from men, and especially from the hypocrite himself (v. 44).

Suggestive Thoughts.

It is not praying till we cease to think of men that hear us, and think only of the listening God.

It is not giving till we begin to long to do good with our money, and cease to desire to get good from it.

It is not Christian service if we work for Christ on condition that He will work for us.

The only cure for Phariseism is self-surrender, which instantly gains all that hypocrites think to gain.

A Few Illustrations.

Phariseism is an ornamented box, empty—and opaque; sincerity is a full box—made of glass.

Phariseism is a shout against a cliff, expecting back the echo.

Phariseism is a tower with a decayed foundation; and the higher it goes, the greater is its peril.

The hypocrite is a chameleon, taking his color from the changing circumstances around him.

To Think About.

Is my worship in the Spirit and in truth?

Do those nearest me believe most in me?

Would I be willing that my most hidden acts should become the most open?

A Cluster of Quotations.

All false pretences like flowers fall to the ground, nor can any counterfeit last long.—Cicero.

He is already half false who speculate on truth and does not do it. —F. W. Robertson.

O God of Truth, for whom we long, Thou who wilt hear our prayer, Do Thine own battle in our hearts, And slay the falsehood there!

—Thomas Hughes.

No true man can live a half life when he has genuinely learned that it is only a half life—The other half—the higher half—must haunt him.—Phillips Brooks.

DAILY READINGS

M., Aug. 13. Pharisees sought signs. Matt 16: 1-12.
T., Aug. 14. Hated by the Pharisees. Matt. 21, 33-46.
W., Aug. 15. Hypocritical Pharisees. Matt. 23: 27-33.
T., Aug. 16. Covetous Pharisees. Luke 12: 15-15.
F., Aug. 17. Silenced Pharisees. Luke 14: 1-6.
S., Aug. 18. Self-righteous Pharisees. Luke 15: 1-10.
S., Aug. 19. Topic—What is the sin of phariseism? Luke 11: 42-44.

As no man ever had a point of pride that was not injurious to him, so no man had ever a defect that was not somewhere made useful to him.—Emerson.

What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me.

—Browning.