

formed; and now they have gone a year, or it may be two years, or perhaps ten years, without once bending their knees in prayer. They arise in the morning, after a refreshing sleep, with health and comforts theirs, and they go out to the duties of the day in which they will need God's help; and they come in again at evening without a single recognition of the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. And this sort of life goes on for years. They do not feel like praying, and therefore they do not pray. Ah! friends, this is a sad mistake. You and I are not mere animals. God made us for Himself. Unto Him we ought to live. When He blesses us, as He does, we ought not to go on our way without one, thought of gratitude. You may not feel like praying; but if you form the habit of prayer, you will come to enjoy this holy exercise. "Many a child," said a teacher, whose religious character was unusually rich and vigorous, "brought up to begin and close each day with prayer, is guided by that simple routine exercise, connected with the other influences of life, into the true spirit of a disciple, and grows up in the kingdom as one imperceptibly initiated. Let any most dull and worldly-minded Christian gather himself up to the established rule of prayer for three times, twice, or even once a day, determined not to have it as a mere observance, but as an exercise of grace and practical waiting on God, and it will not be long before he is truly restored and walks in liberty." Routine observance, as in the case of the soldier's drill, or in the case of the schoolboy's elementary lessons, is introductory to a generous freedom. Very often the duty, which we at first compel ourselves to undertake, we, at last, rejoice in with exceeding joy. When the pianist gives expression to the grand thoughts of Mozart, or Beethoven, or Handel, or is thinking rhythmically, and is acquainting us with his thoughts by the rapid touch of the piano-keys, we often forget that this glorious liberty, which is the rapture of art, has come as the recompense of patient

hours of practice of the musical scales. Prayer may be practice, but it is also a glory of inspiration, which illumines the countenance and thrills the heart. Oh! let us remember that the man who passed those forty days and forty nights with God, and who came down from the mountain with a shining face, was the man who stood in alarm before the burning bush, and who shrank from the responsibilities of Israel's deliverance! Have your stated seasons of prayer, and then believe that at any hour, and in any place, you may cry unto God, and that He will hear you.

IV. As we watch the enemies of Daniel, who rejoice that they have succeeded in their designs against him, we realize that the calm fulfilment of duty will ever meet with opposition, which God is able to overrule. It is not to be supposed that Daniel was particularly careful to make a display of his religion after he became aware of the evil intentions of his enemies. He was not an ostentatious man. His entire career forbids the belief that he turned aside in order to give his enemies the desired opportunity. They were jealous. His prominence in the kingdom had aroused their worst passions. He was the trusted friend of Darius. We may believe that he more than once had defeated the plans of courtiers who wished to plunder the public treasury, or to aggrandize themselves at the expense of the state. They hated him, and then they sought his overthrow. But how could they bring that about? His hands were perfectly clean. His reputation was spotless. There was only one chance left to them—of that they were aware. They might entrap him on some religious accusation. He was a consistent worshipper of God. He had always refused to bow down to idols. His consistency was their opportunity. They met together and framed a statute, which they requested Darius, the king, to enact. This statute was very flattering to the vanity of the Oriental monarch, inasmuch as it practically deified him for a period of thirty days. "Who-soever shall ask a petition of any god