

Pastor and People.

MINISTERING.

What though your feet are oft weary,
On ceaseless errands sent;
And tired shoulders ache and ache so sorely
'Neath heavy burdens bent?
Be patient, lest the ones whom you are serving
Be soon beyond your care;
Lest little wayward feet that you are guiding
Slip past you unaware.

Ah, then no joy would seem so dear and blessed
As spending months and years
In ceaseless service for the vanished darlings,
So vainly mourned with tears.
But while you have your dear ones still around you
Do not regret your care;
Far easier aching feet and arms and shoulders
Than aching hearts to bear.

And still beyond your household duties reaching,
Stretch forth a helping hand;
So many stand in need of loving comfort
All over this wide land;
Perchance some soul you aid to day, to-morrow
May with the angels sing;
Some one may go straight from your earthly table
To banquet with the King.

THE POWER OF SIMPLE CONFIDENCE.

A young man, distressed about his soul, had confided his difficulties to a friend, who discerned very quickly that he was striving to obtain everlasting life by great efforts. He spoke of "sincere prayers" and "heartfelt desires" after salvation, but continually lamented that he did not "feel any different in spite of it all."

His friend did not answer him at first, but presently interrupted him with the inquiry, "W—, did you ever learn to float?"

"Yes, I did," was the surprised reply.

"And did you find it easy to learn?"

"Not at first," he answered.

"What was the difficulty?" his friend pursued.

"Well, the fact was, I could not lie still; I could not believe or realize that the water would hold me up without any effort of my own, so I always began to struggle, and of course, down I went at once."

"And then?"

"Then I found out that I must give up all the struggle, and just rest on the strength of the water to bear me up. It was easy enough after that; I was able to lie back in the fullest confidence that I should never sink."

"And is not God's Word more worthy of your trust than the changeable sea? He does not bid you wait for feelings, He commands you just to trust in Him, to believe His Word, and *accept His gift*. His message of life reaches down to you in your place of ruin and death, and His word to you now is, 'the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Rom. vi. 23

INDOCTRINATE THE CHILDREN.

The laxness of doctrinal views which prevails in many quarters amongst our people is no doubt to be traced to a neglect of this part of the training of our children. We need not go into a comparison between our methods in this matter and those of our fathers. It is enough for us to know that doctrinal error abounds on every hand, a great many who claim to be Presbyterians, at least by family or by education, have little or no sympathy with our Standards, some openly renounce them as belonging to a dead past, as far behind the age, and even speak of some of their teachings in disparaging and even reproachful terms.

We do not wonder so much at this in the case of unbelievers. Our scriptural and spiritual system of truth is distasteful to the natural mind. It offends human pride by asserting the sovereignty of God and the freeness of His grace in salvation. Human reason revolts at doctrines which it cannot fully comprehend, and at the claim of the Holy Scriptures to be received in all their parts as inspired and infallible. But we find remains of this feeling in many who call themselves Christians and even Presbyterians. Some are drifting far away in the adoption of unscriptural views and of a theology which is sadly latitudinarian. The tendency of this evil is alarming. While it begins with a low idea of inspiration, and hence naturally falls into what are called liberal views, it seldom stops until the dreadful extremes of scepticism and even infidelity are reached.

Much of the popular literature of the day helps forward this sad process. The most attractive books are saturated with this poison. Materialism and agnosticism assume the garb of poetry and romance. The heroes and heroines of a large portion of our modern novels are made to utter the most heretical and even immoral sentiments, to insinuate doubts of divine truth, and to ridicule the most sacred doctrines. The interest of the story, the beautiful traits of character associated with the holders of these false views, and the charm of the style, combine to disarm suspicion and secure a ready avenue to the mind and heart for these erroneous teachings. The readers do not stop to analyze the moral or doctrinal sentiments, or to see where they are being led; and before they are aware of their danger, they are hopelessly betrayed. Hence sceptics go out from Christian homes to spread the foul leaven of infidelity.

Now, what is the antidote? How can we prevent this mischief? Our only answer is that we must forestall the evil by filling the mind with pure truth. This is best done in childhood and youth. From what we have said it will not be inferred that we refer to what is generally understood as "religious instruction." To teach our children only the elements of religion, to confine their minds to the mere utilities or amenities of Christianity, to feed them only on the milk of even baptized ethics, is a very poor preventive of error in doctrine. We must give them true, solid, fundamental doctrine, and do this at the beginning of our training. And yet how common it is to assume that because what is called doctrine is regarded as something abstruse and difficult, it must be postponed to a more advanced period, and that meanwhile we must teach them merely moral sentiments, as expressed by precepts and illustrated by the lives of Bible characters, and of pious children in later times. Surely there is doctrinal teaching in all this, but it is false and unscriptural as a general thing. Thousands of children grow up in Christian families, believing that if they are good, they will be saved, and that they will be saved for their goodness, and the converse. And what is this but the doctrine of works?

We give this only as a specimen. Numerous other examples will occur to thoughtful observers. But the most deplorable error is the encouragement often given to the young to dislike and avoid all doctrinal instruction as dry, uninteresting and difficult, and as wholly unnecessary and unprofitable. Hence it is common to dispense with all such teaching.

But need such instruction be dry and uninteresting? By no means. If parents themselves carefully informed their own minds as to the grand truths of God's word, so as to understand their import and bearings, and learn to feed upon them and to relish and enjoy them, they would not teach them in a dry and uninteresting way. It is, besides, a great mistake to think that children feel no interest in such subjects. It is noteworthy how common it is for them to ask questions on the highest and grandest truths of the Christian system. We cannot, indeed, answer these questions, and remove obscurity and mystery from them, but, if we truly believe and love them, we can at least familiarize their young minds with them, and give them a place and a lodgment that will prepare them to resist the encroachments of great error.

Unless this work is done early, it is not likely to be done at all; and it ought to be done at home. The parent is the truly responsible party. The Sabbath school does not meet the case. We very much fear that the system of international lessons has a tendency to diminish doctrinal teaching. It is true, all Scripture contains doctrine. But we recognize the difference between narrative and biography and those parts of the Bible which directly and didactically teach doctrine, and we have sometimes thought that the latter have not a fair share in the arrangement of topics. This ought to be looked after and guarded against. A skilled and thoughtful teacher can find solid doctrine in all the lessons, but most teachers fail to do this.

We cannot expect to raise up a generation of solid, strong, systematical Christians unless we lay the foundation in a careful instruction in the doctrines of grace. The average piety of the day needs toning up, and that cannot be effected in any other way. Neither can the Church be well fortified against new and false views. These are multiplying, and are be-

coming more and more aggressive. They threaten the overthrow of Christianity and the destruction of all piety. What their force will be twenty years hence, no man can tell; but we feel certain that unless the children and youth now growing up shall be more thoroughly grounded in the grand fundamental doctrines, that force will prove overwhelming. A weak theology cannot stand before the assaults of either infidelity or baptized heresy. It will produce only a sentimental piety. It will be easily undermined. It will be ready to compromise the truth and sell it cheap to the insinuating advocates of "liberalism" or the unscrupulous agents of "progressive thought."

What the times are likely to need in the not distant future, is the sturdy devotion to the truth of God which made heroes and martyrs and conquerors of our Scottish and Puritan and Huguenot fathers. They were strong men because they had been nourished by the strong doctrines of the Gospel. They were unchangeable, because they held all of that Word which liveth and abideth for ever. They were invincible, because their armour gave no openings to the shafts of error. Let us be their children. And let our offspring inherit that truth which they bequeathed to us.—*Southern Presbyterian.*

WHY ARE YOU A CHURCH MEMBER?

We fear that there are a great many to whom this is an embarrassing question. If we are to judge by both actions and words, self advantage is the primary and controlling motive. When we see persons seeking a particular church which has the most wealth and social prominence, and after uniting with it "standing all the day idle," or hear them complaining that they receive little or no attention from the members, one knows at once that they have no proper conception of the design of church membership and no true sense of responsibility as members.

It is very true that the church is intended to confer great advantages upon all who join and that no one can be a faithful member without reaping much benefit. Amongst these is Christian fellowship, the aid and comfort flowing from brotherly love, the joy and support which arise from being associated with godly men and women, and being included in a circle of holy and disinterested friendship. If that be the real motive, its best purpose will be realized by both parties. It will be mutually beneficial. But no such motive or result is connected with this step as taken by large numbers. If one joins a church in order to secure social recognition, especially in a grade of society above that to which he or she has been accustomed, and still more if one does it for the sake of securing patronage in his business, he fails of any true benefit and debases a professedly sacred relationship to a mere worldly end. He may secure companionship, but not Christian fellowship, temporal but not spiritual help. He is simply making "gain of godliness."

Nothing is more disgusting than the whining complaint from many lips, "I am never noticed by my fellow members, they never visit me in my home, they never invite me to their entertainments, and all because I am poor and can make no show."

We do not say there is no ground for such a complaint. There is too little real brotherly love in the church, too much regard for wealth, station, fashion, style, and the like. There is too much pride of person and family, too much isolation and alienation, and too little exercise of that feeling of oneness and equality which Jesus inculcated upon his followers. We are not communists. We do not think that Christianity was intended to obliterate all social and intellectual distinctions. There must be freedom in choosing associates, and congeniality must be sought. Yet still it is true that in all spiritual concerns the *body of Christ is one and on the same level*. The poor and illiterate should never enter the church to get notice from the rich and cultivated. Yet the highest classes should enter it, in part, to exercise the benevolence of true piety towards all in the church; and there is a way of doing this without condescension and superciliousness.—*Southern Presbyterian.*

MANY men can easily become prophets as to the curses that will fall upon the heads of others for their sins, while they seem almost totally blind as to what will be the end of their own sins. Somehow they do not reason in regard to themselves as they do in respect to others.