

a form of prayer in which spiritual gifts were solicited, without caring or wishing to receive them; but papa, I own I am at a loss to understand how a christian could do so."

"Remember, my child," her father replied, "that the christian, while he lives, has to endure an inward contest between the new heart and the old, which accounts for, though it by no means excuses, many inconsistencies in his course; and which led even Paul to exclaim, 'The good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.'—Rom. vii. 19. Let us suppose the case of a man very extensively engaged, by which he is rapidly acquiring riches. He is become a christian, and soon finds that, having his time and thoughts so much occupied by mercantile concerns, and his mind often agitated by great and hazardous speculations, are sad hindrances to his growth in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. This can be remedied by curtailing his dealings, and he will have quite enough for every comfort, but the long cherished hope of becoming a wealthy owner of land must be resigned. He feels the necessity of doing so, and intends to do it, and prays to be enabled to act according to the dictates of his conscience, and it is not quite a sincere one. No; he knocks; but, afraid that the door will be too quickly opened, runs back to the spirit of the world, as the preacher expresses it, to go on a little while longer with his speculations."

"And can his heart deal thus treacherously with him, without his heart being aware of it, papa?"

"I fear so, my dear; you know 'it is deceitful above all things.' I would also remark that we are still more apt to be self-deceived in matters of comparatively less importance, because in prayer concerning them we use less watchfulness. Oh! let it ever be our anxious endeavor to ascertain that what we ask we sincerely desire to obtain to the full extent of the petition; and let us continue knocking until the gracious promise is fulfilled, and the door is opened unto us."

"What would you say, father," asked Edward, "is the best way of finding out that we are thoroughly sincere when we ask for spiritual blessings, and for grace to be able to make sacrifices of such things as interfere with our reception of them?"

"I would say," replied Mr. Hardy, "that the best test is, Are we ready to make the sacrifices? Are we doing it, and at once? If so, we truly desire the blessings we seek to the full amount of our wants, and will surely obtain them."

Assist us, Saviour, to believe  
That we shall all we ask receive,  
As we have oftentimes heard;  
Our hearts contracted thoughts expand,  
Wide as the beauties of thy hand,  
The promise of thy word!

—Tract Magazine.

#### THE BACKSLIDER.

Who was he? His name was Demas. "Demas," says the Apostle Paul, "hath forsaken me, having loved this present world."

There was a time when it was otherwise with Demas. When, Anno Domini, sixty-four, Paul wrote his Epistle to the Collosians, he said: "Luke the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you." And again, the same year, writing to Philemon, he says: "Demas and Lucas, my fellow-laborers, salute thee." But now, alas, two years later, writing to Timothy, he says: "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world!" What a change two short

years had made? Time works changes; often melancholy changes. Two years are sufficient to do this. But there are no changes more sad and disastrous than a change of the Christian religion for the world, for it is a change of salvation for ruin; and this change, lamentable, awful as it is, is not unfrequently effected in as brief a space of time as two years.

Perhaps some of our readers may know this from personal experience. Two years ago they might, to human view, have been spiritual, exemplary christians; but now, alas, are carnal and worldly. Two years ago, their pastor speaking of them, might have spoken of them as promising, engaged disciples of Christ. Now, referring to them, he may be forced to say: they have forsaken Jesus, having loved the world. Too often do the hopefully converted turn out thus. The tree blossoms, and we confidently look for fruit; but the blossoms fall off, and that which we look for is not found. The tree is barren; at the most, there are "but leaves only."

And how is this ruinous change brought about?—How does the believer backslide?—Usually in this way:

He begins to neglect his closet. "Backsliding," says Matthew Henry, "commences at the closet door." Secret devotions are suspended, or performed in a heartless, hurried manner. He does not daily, as formerly, "enter his closet, shut the door, and pray to his Father in secret." He is not drawn thither by a sense of spiritual want, nor "lingers, loth to depart," from satisfaction in the exercise, from the pleasure found in communion with God.—"Prayer is the Christian's vital breath," and the first symptom of spiritual decline is, the breathing of the soul growing shorter and more difficult.

Next, the inspired volume is neglected. There is less meaning and beauty in its pages than before.—Once, "the words of the Lord's mouth were more esteemed than necessary food," and this "bread of life" was daily gathered as was the manna by the children of Israel. But now this bread is called "light food," as that heaven-descended manna was, when Israel had begun to degenerate. It is not daily gathered, nor keenly relished. Other books are preferred to the "Book of Books." Newspapers and novels take precedence of it, and dust collects on it.

Neglect of secret prayer, and study of the Bible, are followed by a diminished appreciation of the Sabbath and the sanctuary. The Sabbath is not accounted the "day of all the week the best;" and whereas, when the pulse of spiritual life in the believer's soul beats quick and high, he could not fail to join the worshipping assembly whenever opportunity offered, and in his warm attachment to the public christian ordinances, exclaim—"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord!" "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!" he now can absent himself from the Lord's temple on the Sabbath, at least part of the day, often does; and while thus absent thinks his own thoughts, and speaks his own words."

Moreover, if he is the head of a family, the family altar has not the morning and evening sacrifices laid upon it; the messages of truth which his faithful pastor presents from the pulpit are cautiously criticized in presence of the household; these messages are too plain and pungent, or they are personal, or they are not sufficiently elaborated and adorned with human rhetoric. Those enterprises of christian philanthropy, which are the glory of the age, are not valued and cherished; the purse and the hand not generously opened in their behalf; there is conformity to the world in its views, principles, customs and