

Christ, will never forsake Him. The true secret of Theological science and of Christian firmness is close fellowship with the Saviour; for "in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Do not suppose, as Christian students often do, that you must have recourse to books for enlightenment, and to *Jesus Christ for sanctification*. From Him, "dwelling in your heart by faith," you may derive more enlightenment and expansion of understanding in the things of God, than from all other sources; and without Him abiding in you, the best natural gifts and human helps will utterly fail in this pursuit. His manifestation to the heart, however, so far from superseding the use of books and diligent exercise of all our faculties, usually depends upon these, and stimulates them to the highest activity; as was exemplified in the pre-eminent illumination of Daniel's mind, consequent upon his prayerful study and improvement of the writings of the other prophets. Study the things of Christ in His own light, for thus alone can you see light; and this can be done only by personal communion and hearty sympathy with Christ. Do not suffer anything to interfere with your spiritual exercises of private and social worship; but be especially careful to guard the closet hour from every intrusion. You need this more than you can at present realize. One of the most devoted and useful men of the age, when addressing a body of Divinity Students, declared that "it demanded an effort and a watchfulness to which few had proved themselves equal, to maintain anything like a spirit of piety during the period of college life." We cannot now enlarge upon the peculiar difficulties and temptations of your circumstances. You who are now entering upon your Theological course, expect, very likely, that every lecture and class exercise will be a refreshing and nourishing means of grace; that you will be borne onward and upward in spiritual life by your continual conversance with spiritual themes. But you will soon make the discovery that, instead of realizing such delightful anticipations, you have to struggle hard to overcome peculiar hindrances arising from your habitual studies and from class-room associations. When the mind, wearied with scholastic discussions of the grand truths of the Gospel, looks for the accustomed refreshment, formerly inseparably associated with these themes, but now finds itself carried back, by the law of suggestion, to the ponderous tomes and abstruse speculations from which it longs to get free for a season,—the most holy court of the soul seems converted into a workshop—Heavenly things have lost much of their sweet spiritual charm, and the devout student cries "O God, my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is." The Bible itself has become to him, in a great measure, a dreary battle field; and the smoke and confused noise of the conflicts he has contemplated in his prescribed polemical readings and class exercises, haunt him in the secret place of prayer. It was not so in his literary course. It is not so with the Christian of secular life. When he leaves the counting room or the workshop for his closet or the sanctuary, he enters another atmosphere. His thoughts are borne away by heavenly associations. But the Theological Student is in great danger of losing all such helps; and, unless special care be taken to counteract these tendencies, his devotional fervour and spiritual life will droop. The only effectual means to prevent this is to "*abide in Christ*," maintaining frequent and intimate communion with the personal *Jesus*. This is more necessary for us than for any other of our Lord's disciples. To us with peculiar emphasis His words apply—"Without me ye can do nothing." The whole question of success in preparation for the ministry, as well as in its prosecution, is decided in the closet.

Suffer me to press this point in a more practical form, and to recommend the setting apart of the *first hour* of every day to secret prayer and devotional reading of the scriptures. If your *first hour* be held inviolably sacred to converse with Christ alone, all the succeeding hours and exercises of the day will bear the abundant fruits of thus sowing to the Spirit. Nothing so promotes clearness of perception, especially of moral truths; nothing so tones-up the powers of mental application; nothing so regulates the wayward lusts and passions of the heart. If you could but read the record of many a student's memory on this point, you would realize the importance of making this a fixed habit from the first: and it