

feeling always that we are in His presence, and have the light of His face and the glance of His all-seeing eye falling upon us. It is the habitual effort to feel that we are in His sight.

There must be a firm resolve and effort to "walk before God."

That firm resolve should be tolerance in the not vain vow, "I will"—in spite of all oppositions and difficulties—I will.

V. 12. "What shall I render unto the Lord?"

A plain, pointed, sensible, religious question, as appropriate to-day as in the time of David. We all know what reasons David had for gratitude, and it might do us good to catalogue our own merits. This question had its origin in the gratitude of David's heart.

V. 13. "I will take the cup," etc. It is the most natural thing to talk of a man's lot, either of sorrow or joy, as the cup which he has to drink, and there are numerous instances of the metaphor in the Psalms, such as: "Thou art the portion of my inheritance, and of my cup," "My cup runneth over."

"The cup of salvation" expresses the fulness and variety of the manifold deliverances which God had wrought and was working out for the psalmist. His whole life appears to him as a cup of tender goodness, loving faithfulness, delivering grace.

V. 14. "I will pay my vows."

How natural this seems to come after the references to his obligations to God.

A vow is a solemn engagement or promise made to Almighty God to do certain things which are believed to be agreeable to His will, or to abstain from things which are believed to be offensive.

A vow is an acknowledgment of moral responsibility, and a confession of guilt before God. It is a voluntary act of the will, and is, therefore, in the nature of a covenant with God.

ABOUT PLEDGES.

The ancient custom of offering and paying vows unto God has descended to us from the earliest times. Jacob, after his glorious vision at Bethel, Jephthah before his crowning victory over the Amalekites, and Paul in many places of struggle and triumph, made strong vows.

Pledges, variously worded to express the signer's determination to relinquish the use of alcoholic beverages, have been the best means of aiding those who have been struggling against the demon of drink. Many thousands have thereby been saved.

Our system of trade and commerce is founded upon promises made by one business man to another. When a man gives his note of hand, or I promise to pay," he is making a pledge. The man who uses a railroad ticket, or passes a dollar bill, or accepts a promissory note, or makes a contract with an employer, is depending on an individual or corporate pledge. The breakfast he eats, the house he lives in, the furniture he uses, the clothes he wears, are in one form or another the results of promises and pledges.

A good many young men and women do not join the Christian Endeavor and Epworth League ranks because they do not believe in pledges. They do not feel like committing themselves to a promise which they may at times find it inconvenient or incompatible with their feelings to keep. And yet these same young people are living and moving daily as citizens and social beings in the midst of a most complicated system of promises and pledges. These promises constitute the very framework of our social and commercial life, and in proportion as these promises are violated or kept we approach financial panic, anarchy and barbarism. Commercial credit, business

confidence, civil prosperity—all these things are the result of pledges kept or violated.

SUGGESTIVE HINTS.

Our pledge is simply the statement of our purposes. Should we not have purposes, and should we not state them?

When we make a pledge we are committed to it, but as a passenger is committed to a train which takes him where he wants to go.

No business man likes his note to go to protest. He regards it as a disgrace. It is an equal disgrace for a pledge of ours to go to protest, though no one knows it.

If a violin string breaks we do not throw away the violin, but put in a new string. So when we break a part of the pledge.

We do not need ever to say that we are alone if we are walking before God.

Taking the Epworth League Pledge is merely the public acknowledgment of the obligations that rest upon all Christian men and women and which it is their duty to discharge, whether they pledge themselves to do so or not.

The Epworth League is a pledged company. It is not a mass of unorganized young people subject to every passing sentiment of emotionalism. It stands for something and its members are pledged to something.

Other things being equal, the Leagues which have omitted the pledge, or allowed it to become inoperative, have as a rule been either shortlived or inefficient as a spiritual power.

We are not to defend our pledge but to live it. The best vindication of it is to be true to it.

QUOTATIONS.

To him who undertakes, in the divine strength, to do that which is enjoined by divine authority, there comes a grant of power by which to fulfil the obligation.—Rev. R. M. Palmer, D.D.

To discourage young people from entering into definite pledges of service to Christ by the strange declaration that it is wrong to make promises and vows, is to cut the heart out of religion, which is nothing if it is not a distinct and definite engagement of the soul with God.—Rev. A. H. Plumb, D.D.

David braced himself against unsympathetic tendencies, growing out of his kingly power, boundless wealth and unbroken success, by recalling early vows, pledging all his life to God. "Thy vows are upon me, O God." He served God for other reasons than because he felt like serving Him. He did not pray because he felt like praying, but because it was right to pray, and he had solemnly promised to live a life of prayer. He did not go up with the people of God to the sanctuary because he felt like it, but because his word was pledged to serve God in public and in private.—H. C. Stuntz, D.D.

God's vows are upon you. These vows bind you with holy bonds to be loyal, whatever comes. Study your Bible earnestly whether you feel like it or not. You promised to obey Him who said, "Search the Scripture." Pray whether you feel like it or not. You said you would. Testify whether you feel like it or not. You pride yourselves on keeping your promises to men. Keep your covenant with God.—Dr. Stuntz.

The men who have done much for the world in a moral or religious way have been the men who have vowed unto the Lord, and performed their vows. The crusades and the great temperance move-

ments have all hinged upon a pledge. The Church itself stands upon a solemn covenant. The religious vow is the sign of a quickened conscience, a keen sense of duty, and a resolute purpose. It implies that the person making the vow has recognized some great obligation, has taken into account the difficulties besetting it, and in spite of all opposition has determined to do it to the very end. Half the battle is the attitude of the soldier. A determined man is more formidable than a glistening bayonet. A man bound by a vow to do a thing rises at once above the mass of careless men as a conspicuous force for good or evil in the community. His vow is his drawn sword, his levelled bayonet, his sign of aggressiveness.—Rev. C. A. Dickinson, D.D.

Another danger is in signing the pledge without knowing what it contains, and then not keeping it. I think it better to make a pledge and break it than not make one at all, for it shows we want to do right. But there is danger of growing careless. Remember your every day, and then keep it unbroken. "A broken pitcher will not hold water."—John T. Brown.

Why is it that we persist in getting our solemn vows aside so lightly, and become so careless and negligent in the performance of our duty. It is not that we desire to sin wilfully and deliberately against the God who has done all things for us, but that we consult our own feelings and yield to our inclinations rather than to our sense of duty.—R. Shaver.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

I was reading, the other day, of Mr. Lincoln. He had summoned his cabinet. He was telling them that the time for all doubt and hesitation had passed. Emancipation must now be made the declared policy of the administration. Mr. Then, in a low voice and reverently, Mr. Lincoln added, "And I have promised my God that I will do it."

Mr. Chase, who sat nearest Mr. Lincoln, heard but indistinctly the low-voiced utterance, and inquired, "Did I understand you correctly, Mr. President?"

Mr. Lincoln replied, "I made a solemn vow before God that, if General Lee should be driven back from Pennsylvania, I would crown the result by the declaration of freedom to the slaves." And the great President would and did keep his solemn pledge.—Rev. Wayland Hoyt, D.D.

Some years ago there were in my congregation a young man and a young woman of excellent Christian character whom I tried to persuade to join the society of Christian Endeavor. They objected on the ground that they did not believe in pledges, and were unwilling to make a promise which would be binding for so long a time. Some of my arguments with them were in vain, and they persistently refused to join the society. But about a year afterward I had evidence that the lady, at least, had overcome her anti-pledge spirit sufficiently to make a promise of a very solemn import to the young man. In fact, they both appeared at my door one day, and blushing asked if I would not impose upon them the most solemn and lasting pledge which a man and a woman can make to each other. They wanted to be married. When they stood up before me, and I said to the young man, "Will you take this woman to be your wedded wife? will you love her, honor her, comfort and keep her in sickness and in health, and cleave you only unto her as long as you both shall live," a tender glow came into the man's honest eyes, a great purpose seemed to thrill his soul, and he said in a voice which had in it none of the anti-pledge spirit, "I will." When I turned to the lady with a similar question she said, "I will," so promptly and clearly