

Kindness of Unanswered Prayers.

BY REV. J. R. MILLER, D. D.

There are some of our prayers which God loves us too well to answer. If He did what we plead with Him, sometimes agonizingly, to do, he would withdraw from us great blessings. But He would rather resist our pleading and disappoint us than impoverish our life by letting us have what we want.

In one of St. Peter's epistles is a little phrase of three words which casts a world of light on many things in life which seem hard. The writer is speaking of trials and says: "Now for a little while, if need be, ye shall be put to grief." "If need be" is the illuminating clause in this sentence. It shines like a star with heavenly light upon the darkness and pain of sorrow. There is a divine reason for the trouble which we long to get rid of. There is a blessing in the thing which is so hard to bear. To take it away would be to take a good, a divine gift out of our life.

A marginal reading of an oft-quoted promise tells us that

Our Burden is the Gift of God to Us. This thought changes the meaning of the experience, in our life which is so hard to bear. A burden is something heavy, something hard to carry. It weighs us down, so that we feel as if we must last beneath it. It is natural for us to want to get rid of it. We say we could go on so much more easily, with much more celerity, if we could only lay off our heavy load. So we pray to God to take it away from us.

But just then our eye catches sight of the alternative reading: "gift"—our burden is God's gift to us. This unlovely, heavy, crushing thing, under which we are bowing in weakness—it is a gift of God to us. A gift from God! Then it must be good, there must be something gracious and loving in it. God would not give us something merely to make us suffer. He does not take pleasure in making our lives hard for us. This unwinning thing, this that causes us so much pain, unfolds in its unattractiveness a secret blessing. It is something we could not afford to have taken away. If only we could see the hidden treasure of good thing there is in it, we would no longer cry to God to have it removed.

The promise, therefore, about our burdens, is not that when we bring them to God he will lift them away. Very graciously does God tell us to cast them upon Him. This is one of the privileges of trust—we may take everything to God. But we are not told that we will be relieved of the heavy load we take to him, or that it will be lightened even so much as a feather's weight. Here is where many good people lose their faith. They thought that when they brought their troubles to God he would take them away. Now they cry to Him in their distress, from the midst of their difficulties, as they wait under the shadow of imminent sorrow, but nothing is changed, the bitterness does not become less bitter, the load gets no lighter, the torturing trouble is not removed. "God does not hear my prayer," the trembling heart says.

When we remember

Peter's "If Need Be,"

and the Psalmist's, "Thy burden is a gift from God," a new light falls upon the mystery. There is a meaning for this suffering, this sorrow, this hard struggle, this time of pinching want—it must stay until the work is done. The work of God which seems so empty of good, so full of evil, wraps up in its rough coat a diamond of Divine love and grace. A man picked up a large, round pebble. It seemed only a coarse-grained stone. But his trained eye saw something shining beneath the roughness and coarseness. He held in his hand a treasure which proved to be worth thousands of dollars. The experiences of our life which we look upon as most undesirable, which are so hard to endure, which we cry to God to have taken away—they have hidden in their unloveliness rich gifts of God.

It would be unkind in our Father to take away these things which we plead with him to remove. His kindness is shown rather in refusing our prayers. He cast the burden upon him as he bids us do, but it is still on our own shoulder. He does not carry it for us. Yet the prayer, is answered, answered, too, in a far better way than if the heavy weight were lifted off. "He shall sustain thee" is the promise. Instead of bearing the load for us he gives us strength so we can bear it ourselves. Thus we get the blessing of the "need be," and we do not lose the gift of God which came in the burden.

Besides, we are Divinely strengthened, and rise to new power as Christians. For it is a great deal better for us if God makes us strong, so we can carry our own loads, than if He carried them for us. It were better that Peter and John at the Beautiful Gate should make the lame man well, so that he needed no more to beg, than if they had given him alms enough to provide for him a whole year. God is much more eager to make something of us than He is to give us an easy time just for a few days—London Baptist.

The Christian's Treasures.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

The constant question in the haunts of business men is—Where shall I find a safe investment? Our divine Master anticipated all such questions when he said, "I have committed to him against that day."

for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." Paul was probably accounted a poor man at Corinth; for he earned his daily bread with a tent-maker's needle. But in God's sight he was a millionaire. He could say, "I know whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." The great Apostle had made Jesus Christ his Trustee. He had put his affections, his soul, and his everlasting hopes into his Saviour's hands; and when he reached heaven he knew that he would find the great deposit safe. He had made up nothing that moths could consume or rascals steal. His investments were in the real estate that never depreciates, and the Son of God had charge of it. So may every true Christian—whether in a brown stone mansion or in an attic—congratulate himself that what is more precious to him is the keeping of his Saviour.

The grand old tent-maker had other treasures laid up on high also; all the glorious spiritual results of his life were there. Brother and sister in Christ, so are yours and mine, however humble. And whatever we give up for our Master's sake increases our heavenly treasure. The profits which we might make and which we sacrifice, in order to keep a clean conscience, add to our wealth, for they make us rich towards God. Hoarding money, stealing time from prayer, and Bible reading, nursing popularity, all are wretchedly impoverishing. Giving up for Christ is an enriching process. Whatever we lay down here in order to please and honor our Master will be laid up to our account yonder. Our God is a faithful Trustee; he keeps his books of remembrance. He will reward every one according as his works shall be. Two talents will pay a grand dividend; yes, and even one talent will sparkle when some humble mission school teacher presents her class on the last great day and says, "Here am I Lord, and these children I brought to Thee!" When we speak of salvation as by grace and not "of works," we must not forget that other truth that God will judge us all according to our works. They will be laid up there. If the selfish sinner's "wages" are paid in hell, a Christian's wages are paid in heaven.

Compound interest will make some of Christ's servants magnificent millionaires. All that Paul gave up of worldly pelf and profit and fame and ease and emolument will stand to his credit up there; and the result of all this life of self-sacrifice for Jesus have been going on accumulating every day for eighteen centuries, and who can tell what they will amount to when the judgment morning breaks. People sometimes speak in a pitying tone of "poor ministers with small salaries." Wait until the treasure chests are opened up yonder, and see if anyone will call that hard-working soul-winner poor. John Bunyan when in jail comforted himself with the thought that he had "rich lordships" in those souls whom he had led to Jesus. What a Croesus the old tinker of Bedford will be when he comes into full possession of his inheritance!

Benjamin Chidlaw in the hard struggles of his boyhood sewed the skins of trapped animals into mittens in order to earn a few shillings; that log cabin experience fitted him for his great work as a pioneer of Western Sunday schools. I should not wonder if troops of children will salute him up in the Father's house. To John Eliot the converted Indian will be a star in his crown. Judson must have already met his "treasures" brought home from the mission fields in Burmah. I have just been reading the letter of our young American brother, Mr. R. P. Wilder, announcing the conversion of that Brahmin in India; his soul was filled with joy; for such a convert may make a breach in the wall of heathenism through which others will pour in. Who says that investments in foreign missions do not "pay?"

The simple fact is that the only investments that do pay interest through all eternity are those which are made for the cause of Christ and in his service. The gains are very steady up there. Poor city missionaries and frontier preachers and Salvation Army soldiers and godly needlewomen have their savings bank at God's right hand. Those banks never break. The only change from heavenly treasures is their enlargement. There is no corruption from within, and no consumption from without. The moth never gnaws there, and the burglar never breaks through to steal. It is impossible to compute what treasures every faithful, self-denying Christian may be storing away for his or her long life in glory. God keeps his record on high, and each good deed of love, each act of self-denial, each surrender of pride or worldly ambition for Jesus' sake will find sure remembrance there. "Follow Me, and thou shalt have treasures in heaven," says the Master. My dear reader, how much real estate have you got?—Evangelist.

Preaching Christ.

BY O. P. RACHES.

Paul gave the spirit of his ministry in the words: "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." These words we often interpret in a one-sided way. They make the ministry the iteration and the reiteration of the simple story of the gospel. In heathen countries doubtless this must be the method of the missionary. It is needful to fill the mind full of the facts of Christ's life. The story of his life, his teachings, his wonderful deeds, his sufferings, death and

of presentation, first in its weighty character was the presentation of Jesus Christ, whose death availed for our sin.

An examination of Paul's letter to the Corinthians will show how the preaching of a crucified Christ covered the whole range of thought and life. He looked upon the life of the Corinthians, in all its details, in the light of the principles of Christianity. He condemned the parties in the Corinthian church because Christ was not divided. He condemned partisanship in the church because they were not baptized into the name of a man, but into Christ. All leaders and all the truth belonged to each of them. He condemned impurity in the body. He condemned a reckless disregard of the weak brothers, the putting of stumbling blocks in his way, because Christ had died for him. Every question that came before him was a question that could be considered in the light of Christian principles. With Paul Christianity was not an abstract system, apart from life, but a system that was intimately concerned with life—it was to make the entire life a Christian life. No part of life was to be heathenish, or worldly, or secular—all parts were to be religious, devotional, spiritual, Christian. "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

There are perils to the ministers to-day that they will be one-sided. A great and growing peril will be to make the pulpit simply a forum for the discussion of present day problems. Social science, political reforms, improved sanitation, methods of taxation, tenement houses, purification of the ballot box, these are vital questions confronting the nation. They must be met and settled. The pulpit may be a large moral force in the settling of these questions. But it will be done in the most effective way by the creation of a large, healthy, moral power in the church, that will lead the membership to a larger and more consecrated citizenship. The ministry must create a conscientious citizenship. The ministry and the church must not forget that they are in the world for the betterment of the world. But the emphasis of the ministry must be upon the construction of a Christian manhood and a Christian consciousness through the constant presentation of a crucified and ascended and reigning Christ. A merely ethical and social science ministry may make a stir for a time on the surface of society, but it can be no lasting good. All questions must be settled finally by Jesus Christ. All present-day discussions must be carried on in the light and under the authority of the abiding principles of Christ. A minister who always and everywhere magnifies Christ, who preaches Christ first and always in the manner of a Spurgeon or a Cuyler, may touch almost every practical question in a helpful and illuminating way. Another peril to which some are exposed is that of a falsely spiritual ministry—the feeling that Christianity has to do only with the getting of a soul to heaven, forgetting that the Christian man has two citizenships, a heavenly and an earthly. Paul's discussions are natural and authoritative because they exhibit the spirit and mind of Christ. The preacher may not, be a partisan, a political leader, a social science reformer and ethical teacher—he may and must be, above all things, a minister of Christ, holding up Christ as Redeemer and Lord, presenting the principles of Christ. And then in the light of Christ, it may be affirmed that all politics and social relations and economic questions and personal habits and methods of thought and manner of the personal life, all these must bow before Jesus Christ and confess him as their Lord and Master. A Pauline ministry will deal with present-day questions in the light of eternal principles. The first and last thought of each sermon will be a crucified Christ.—Baptist Commonwealth.

Parent and Child.

A parent's chief duty and endeavor should be to bring up his children as children of God, and therefore to cultivate the divine life. But there is danger lest external forms should take place of religion itself. A child may be drilled into attitudes and forms which look like real piety, but injuriously exclude it by the outward show of it. Better the real beating of the young heart toward God than any amount of mere pretence.

Beware of mere premature piety. Sobriety is not juvenile virtue, nor is childish uproar a proof of ungodly tendencies. Do not expect to find in children or in young men what is befitting the solemnities of age. Carefully separate and condemn what is immoral, but at the same time smile on all that is true. Specially beware of introducing to your children stories that involve sin, and at the same time show your interest in entertaining books and youthful games which make them understand that you are not opposed to their amusement.

Take your part in youthful pranks. Laugh with them in innocent mirth. Take obvious interest in their early struggles to learn, to speak, to sing, to recite, to work. Encourage the fullest confidence with their parents. Urge them never to do, or read, or find pleasure in anything which they would be ashamed to tell father or mother.

Be careful of the conversation you encourage in their presence. Never make game of religion, or religious people. Do not ridicule or censure people who may belong to some other church or denomination. Treat all who love God, and wish to live godly lives, as, with themselves, sons and daughters of the Lord God. Let them above all things else try in everything to please their heavenly Father, and so best to give joy to yourselves.

Let not your prevailing topic of discourse be social quarrels, or commercial schemes, or the gain or loss of money, but the fear of God, which is "better than riches,