

explains why. They had robbed God—they had neglected his house and polluted his offerings. He assures them of returning providential favours—only in connection with their return to God. "Return unto me, and I will return unto you. . . . And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before her time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightful sojourn land, saith the Lord of hosts."

Keep Religion in its own Place.

"You are always talking about religion when I meet you; speak about something else, can't you, and keep religion in its own place." So replied a young woman to one of her companions, one day, who, with a heart overflowing with love to Jesus, was in the habit of speaking about Him to others.

"Yes," she answered, "keep religion in its own place; but what is its own place? The place where God puts it surely, and that is the first place; for the Bible says, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness:' therefore religion is not to be put in the second place, or third place, but in the first place, and that is its own place. But as we have entered on this subject, what place does religion hold with you?"

"Well, that is a matter which does not concern you, and I do not intend to make you my confessor."

"Nor do I desire to be so. The believer confesses unto God; but while he does so, he has also to confess Jesus before men; for Jesus saith, 'Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven,' " (Matt. x. 32.)

"Ay, but that means to be a church member, to observe the Sabbath day, and to lead a good, sober life, and thus to 'let our light shine before men,' " (Matt. v. 16.)

"You may apparently do all that, and yet be only a Pharisee, and have no true

religion. The candle must be *lighted* before it can *shine*; the branch must be in the vine ere it can bear *fruit*. Three words are needed to make up the true Christian—Possession, Profession, and Confession. He must first *have* Christ (Rom. viii. 9;) second, *live* Christ, (Phil. i. 21;) and, third, *confess* Christ (Rom. x. 9.) This confession is with the mouth; for thus says the Word:—"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." So, you see, friend, when I spoke to you about the love of Jesus, and asked you what place his religion held in your heart, I only asked you to do what the Bible says every Christian has to do, or ought to do, *confess Jesus with the mouth before men.*"

"Well, but one need not always be speaking about it."

"No, true; yet it is ever uppermost in the believer's mind—"the first thing," 'the better part,' 'the more thing needful,' and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; or, as our national proverb has it, 'near the heart, near the mouth.'"

"Yes; but every one cannot speak, and we are not heard for our much speaking," (Matt. vi. 7.)

"That is in prayer to God, not in conversation with your neighbour. But the Word says, 'Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened, and heard,' (Mal. iii. 10.) So, you see, that true Christians do speak often to one another; and it cannot mean about frivolous, foolish, or worldly things, but about heavenly things; for such only can approvingly engage the notice of our blessed Lord in heaven, who says of the speakers, 'They shall be mine in the day I make up my jewels; and, for 'every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment,' (Matt. xii. 36.) But let us return to the question I first put to you, '*Is religion indeed the first thing with you?*'"

"No, indeed; I must confess it is not. I have often thought about it, intend yet to be religious, and in truth wish to be so."

"That is a good wish; yet God is more