

most violent storm? Are the heads of a family in the city involved in heavier domestic duties than the same individuals in the country? Which have the cattle to tend, the fowls to feed, the dairy to look after, as well as the ordinary household arrangements to regulate? And which occupy most regularly a portion of the Sabbath morning in conducting that sacred service so generally neglected by professing christians—family worship—previous to setting out for the more public worship of God in the courts of His own house? Still, the report says that, while in country sections the attendance is “especially good,” in cities “almost half of the regular families do not attend as regularly as they ought,” and some attend “only once on the Lord’s day, and then *only when the day is fine!*” Observation confirms the statement, and experience proves that a dull Sabbath finds our churches more than half deserted, although a similar circumstances would be considered no serious obstacle to the fulfilment of an engagement to be present at an ordinary Concert, or one of those fashionable entertainments called “evening parties.” Excuses the most trivial—a slight feeling of weariness, over-sleep, windy or wet weather, the tailor’s or dress-maker’s failure to complete a garment,—*seem sufficient, in many instances, for absence from the place of worship.*

This is a very serious matter, if a profession of Christianity has any meaning at all, and one that requires prompt consideration, not only by the absentees themselves, but by those who are “set over them in the Lord.” It is obvious that the cause of this standing rebuke arises from none of the considerations referred to, and we are forced to the inevitable conclusion, that the means of grace are less highly prized—that the professions of devotion to Christ are too frequently *only* professions—that the house of God is not, to many, the “beauty of holiness”—and that the service of God is really not so delightful as the worship of self. If it were otherwise, a little self-denial would surely be exhibited, for a stronger testimony ought to be given by Christians to the reality of what they profess; they should, at least, prove to the

world that a slight personal inconvenience is insufficient to warrant absence from divine service on the Lord’s day.

Now what is the result of this acknowledged indifference? Can it be productive of a blessing? Consider how it affects the *pastor*. He has, it may be, during the week, been exercised by some special thought, and has brought the matter to God, and prepared discourses with the view of awakening an interest in it among his hearers. After all his anxiety and labor of preparation, when the Sabbath-day arrives, he finds, because of the dull appearance of the weather, or the falling of a shower of rain, his people have largely deserted him, and a scattered few are all that assemble to receive his message. Apart from any other consideration, it is almost impossible for a sensitive pastor to labor successfully under such disadvantages and disrespectful treatment. He feels that he spends his strength for naught; his toil on their behalf is unappreciated; and it is quite natural that he should either become in a measure indifferent and unfaithful, or quit the field for another sphere of usefulness,—because he is denied that sympathy which is a great lever-power to sustain him in his work. He, as a man, has his own personal trials and discouragements; but this is an unnecessary and *sinful one inflicted upon him by his thoughtless friends.*

What is its effect on the *family*? If the fathers and mothers of the present generation are so manifestly negligent in attendance upon the means of grace, it follows, as a consequence, that their children will have no higher regard for the ordinances as they grow to years of maturity. Children are wonderful imitators. Even Sabbath School instruction and the example of the godly and conscientious can do but little when the influence of parental example is wanting. Then, what a solemn responsibility rests upon parents, who have pledged themselves to train up their children in the fear of the Lord. It is well to instruct the mind, and teach them the penalties inseparable from a disobedience of God’s commands; but unless the example accompanies it all, the work is but half done. There will be lacking that love for the company of