

The Christian.

ST. JOHN, N. B., - - - APRIL, 1898

EDITORIAL.

IMPORTUNATE AND PREVAILING PRAYER.—
LUKE XVIII.

Among the many wonders of redeeming love is the fact that our Creator condescends to communicate with us in these last times by His son, the heir of all things. He has spoken to us by His son and through him hears our prayers at His throne of grace. It is no wonder, therefore, that this "one Mediator" has given us more valuable instruction on prayer than all others who have written or spoken on the subject, and has thus decided its importance and made its way plain. What can be more clear and positive than His two directions in Mark xi., 25 and 26: "What things soever ye desire when ye pray believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them. And when ye pray forgive; if ye have ought against any that your Father also may forgive you. But if ye do not forgive neither will your Father which is in Heaven forgive you your trespasses." These two directions should shine as in letters of gold before the face of every one who prays to God. How we should regard ourselves when we pray to God Jesus illustrates by the two men, the Pharisee and the publican, who went up into the temple to pray.

In this place He spake a parable to them to this end that men ought always to pray and not to faint. An oppressed widow came to a judge saying, Avenge me of my adversary; and he would not for a while; but afterwards he said to himself, "Though I fear not God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubleth me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." Hear, said Jesus, what the unjust judge saith, and will not God avenge His own elect which cry day and night to him though He bear long with them? I tell you He will avenge them speedily. That judge, too selfish to care for God's approval or the widow's woe, would do her justice to rid himself of her trouble, and how awful to think that a just and kind Father would do less. Jesus states a similar case of the man who would not rise at midnight to lend his friends three loaves, but yield at length to his persistent importunity. These cases are cited by the great Teacher to encourage and enforce earnest and continued prayer for the blessings which seem long in coming. For wise reasons the Lord often delays answers to prayer, and hence this important parable.

In Matthew xv. we find Jesus on the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. When the Jews laid plans for his death, and his time was not yet come, he retired for rest and seclusion to Gentile territory; and a woman of Canaan cried unto Him saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he an-

swered her not a word. His disciples besought Him to send her away—perhaps said, why refuse to heal her daughter when you heal all others? Why not grant her request, instead of keeping her crying after us? He answered them: "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Whether the woman heard this discouraging reply or not, she was not to be discouraged. She drew nearer and worshipped Him, pleading "Lord help me." But he answered and said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs." And she said, "True, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." Then Jesus answered and said unto her, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

In Jesus' answer about the children and the dogs a mercy mingled which the woman was quick to appropriate, and her answer revealed her triumph. In the Master's house, as well as children, there are dogs, which are not despised or starved, but allowed to feed on the crumbs that fall from the table, and such food was all she desired. To be owned and cared for by such a Master was her highest ambition. She was in every way improved by this trial of her faith and patience, and the full proof that inside of that stern exterior beat a heart that overflowed with sympathy and love. A heart that welcomed her to all she desired was more precious to her than gold. Good men gain much by confidently waiting upon the Lord for an answer to their prayer. After Moses was long alone with God his face was too bright for the people to look upon without a veil between, and in no way will a Christian's character so shine as being often and long "in audience with Deity." It is said of the disciple whom Jesus loved that he was so much of his time on his knees that they became callous, and, from a passionate man who wished to call down fire from heaven to destroy the people who refused to accommodate his Master, he became one of the most lowly and amiable of human kind, who had to say, "This is the confidence we have in Him that if we ask anything according to His will he heareth us," etc., etc.

Jesus encourages all Christians to pray; parents for their children; husbands for their wives; wives for their husbands. Not merely to pray for a while, but to pray always, and not to faint. How many can rejoice in seeing their prayers answered, in feeling nearer their Saviour, and seeing God glorified in the salvation of loved ones.

This parable should be especially precious to preachers of the Word. They earnestly desire the salvation of their hearers and pray for it. But they should always pray and not faint. Jesus has so connected importunate prayer with prevailing prayer as to make the two almost, if not altogether, convertible terms; and in pleading with men to be reconciled to God, we should more earnestly plead with God for His Holy Spirit to make

us successful in the work, always remembering that in order to prevail with men we must first prevail with God. In this we have the example of the saints both of the Old Testament and the New.

When Jacob with his helpless family had to meet Esau, whose anger he had incurred many years before, he was in great distress, and earnestly plead with God to deliver him. When he had wrestled all night in prayer, and the angel said, "Let me go, for the day breaketh," he said, "I will not let thee go unless thou bless me;" he was told, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel, for as a prince thou hast power with God and with men and hast prevailed (Gen. xxxii). When Jacob had prevailed with his God, Esau's enmity was destroyed, and the meeting of the brothers was the most delightful.

Moses pled for Israel when God was about to destroy the nation for their sins. The Lord said unto him, Let me alone that my anger may wax hot against them and consume them in a moment, and I will make of thee a great nation. But Moses would not let him alone; he pled and reasoned with the Most High, and desired if Israel were destroyed that his own name should be blotted out from His book. Moses, too, had power as a priest and prevailed. God now will hear his elect who cry night and day to him. I tell you, said Jesus, he will.

Original Contributions.

A SUGGESTION.

E. C. FORD.

Would it not be an improvement on our present method if all our churches in these Maritime Provinces were represented in our annual by delegates who would be in a position to express the wishes of their brethren, and thus make our annual more representative than they have been? While our annual gatherings have been good and soul-inspiring, it is evident that the churches are not enlisted in the work as we think they should be. Individuals who attend those meetings become interested, and in some instances carry the spirit of the meeting with them to their home churches. But in too many instances the missionary spirit awakened is allowed to die out, and we hear but little more of it until the next annual.

The question is: What can we do to enlist all our churches in the work of spreading the primitive gospel over these provinces? Our annual meetings have become the business centre through which the different churches are supposed to co-operate; but under our present system this co-operation is more in name than fact. The success of our work demands a hearty co-operation of all our churches, else the desire of our hearts will never be realized. How, then, can this be brought about? To this question we seek an answer. It is believed that if some such method as is here suggested were