

## Christ's Rule of Living.

BY J. B. GAMBRELL.

In Luke 9: 23, 24, the Master lays down the law of discipleship. It is in two parts: First, denying self. This does not mean denying worldly lusts merely. It means that and more. It means self-surrender to him, who is to be henceforth Lord as well as Saviour. The second part of the law follows the first in spirit and in quality. It is cross-bearing. The true disciple, therefore, is a self-renouncing burden bearer.

In the 24th verse the same thing in kind is stated in another way: "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it." Then we have the same put in another order: "But whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." The teaching of the passage is, that unselfishness wins the supreme good, and selfishness defeats itself. This is heavenly philosophy. It is reasoned from the character, the mission and the eternally gracious purposes of Jesus Christ. It crosses human nature and contradicts all human wisdom. To accept it is to rise at once into a higher life, and become superior to the forces about us.

Putting this doctrine and philosophy into concrete form Christ's proposition to the soul is this: "Give yourself to me, and I will give myself to you; look after my cause, and I will look after your interest." This is the sum of the whole scheme of redemption, and of rewards, too. If we renounce self and all, Christ takes our sins and gives his righteousness. He takes our sinfulness and gives his sanctification; he takes the sinner as he is, and gives himself as he is. But further, as the disciple, forgetting self and seeking the things of Christ, gives himself to Christ's work, the Master looks after all his interests for time and eternity. This is what that other passage from Christ's lips means: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." It means much more than giving priority, as to time, to the things of God. It means giving to the things of God the real pre-eminence in all life's plans and work.

Every one of us is face to face every day with this question: Shall I take on myself the care and burden of my own life, or shall I trust myself, my life in its manifold needs, to Jesus Christ, and simply to his work? Whoever has given himself to Christ and received Christ in exchange, has made life's greatest bargain. Whoever has accepted the care of Christ and given his services in the kingdom, has adopted the wisest philosophy, for all heaven is pledged to his supreme good.

There is really but one way to live a Christian life, and that is laid down in the simple words in the Scriptures above quoted. A surrendered life, a Christ-serving life, such a life has in it all good. It is a practical life. It is a happy life. It is a safe life. It is a tremendously forceful life. It is a victorious life. Let us consider somewhat more particularly. It is a practical life. No man, said the great Teacher, can serve two masters. He can have; but he can serve but one. Depend upon it, reader, your life has in it a dominating passion and purpose, and this is your real master, the one you serve. If this be Christ, it is well with you. If not, you are a slave to some ignoble master. It is practical for Christ to be Lord and Master of the soul. "For me to live is Christ," said Paul. Having him for Master, whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we can do all for the glory of Christ. And that is real living, high living, glorious living. It is a possible living. This will give to all the common work of life a new meaning, it will destroy drudgery and elevate plowing, merchandising, ditching, driving a dray, sweeping a house, cooking, etc., to the level of worship. It will invest the common duties of life with a heavenly joy. Such a life is intensely practical.

Such a life is a supremely happy life. There are those who go mourning all their lives, but they are such as insist on carrying their own burdens, and refuse the yoke of the Master, whose yoke is easy. The nearer we come to a complete surrender, the easier the burdens of life and the happier we are in the divine life. Nothing can dim the happiness of a person in loving service to the Master.

The surrendered life is the safe life. It is safe from the temptation of Satan. It is a spirit-filled life, and such a life is immune from manifold ills, such as afflict the worldly and the half-hearted. Spurgeon said: "The devil tempts some people, and some people tempt the devil." It is very unsafe for any one to live so low down as to get on or near the devil's domain. Such fall into many hurtful lusts and pierce themselves through with many sorrows. But from still another standpoint, it is safe to go in with Christ, heart and head, and all. It is safe so far as our worldly needs are concerned. Trust in the Lord and do good, and verily thou shalt be fed. We get our living from God anyway, all of it. Not one of us is sufficient to win a living a single day without the divine favor. Our times are in his hands. He treats us as well as we will let him. It is just as sensible to do our duty and trust, as it is to hope for salvation through grace. The records of time will not recall a case where a Christian was ever lost by doing his duty, or prospered by robbing God. It is infidelity not to believe this, for it is taught over and over in the Scriptures of truth, and demonstrated in countless human lives.

A surrendered life is a life with much of God in it. Such

men; but wondrously felt by men. It is a life of super-human courage, filled with the wisdom that cometh down from heaven. It is a life full of visions which are wrought into living realities among men.

And such a life is victorious. It starts with life's greatest victory, victory over itself. It is allied with all the forces which make for conquest, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit for it and with it. The angels encamp round about the surrendered disciple. The "all power" of Christ stands for it and with it. All the marshalled forces of the moral universe, God, good angels, good men, the treasured prayers of all the saints which have been offered for the coming of the kingdom, are on the side of the man who stands committed in every fiber of his being, from head to foot, to Jesus Christ and his work. Besides, such a man feels in his soul the invincible courage and strength of the conquering Christ in him, and fear flees away. He knows he can't fail. He hears even in the noise of battle the shouts of the victors. It was this spirit that moved old Latimere at the stake to say to his fellow-martyr: "Cheer up Master Ridley, we will light a fire in England to-day which shall never go out."

The surrendered life is glorious.—Baptist Standard.

## The Unstable Reubens.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CULVER.

The eldest son of the patriarch Jacob has a prodigiously large family of descendants. "Unstable as water thou shalt not excel," was the verdict passed by the dying father upon the son who with all his good impulses was fatally lacking in moral stamina. Water is proverbially unstable—tipping to and fro with every motion of the vessel that contains it; but Jacob here refers to boiling water which foams up and effervesces from the heat, it is therefore a fit illustration of all lack of self-restraint and fixity of purpose. There was no hope for poor Reuben unless he had a radical change of heart, for the want of steadfastness, both mental and moral, is fatal to all success in life.

No pathway to success of any kind is an easy one. There are hills of difficulty to be climbed and boulders to be shoved out of the way, and temptations to turn to the right or left out of "air-line." The number of young men often possessed of good parts—who are wrecked through sheer instability—passes all computation. They are always starting and never finishing; they are everything by turns and nothing long. They have never learned Lincoln's secret of "pegging away." Oh, how much of human effort is utterly wasted; how many precious lives have ended in failure from this single vice of instability! How many bright intellects have been cursed by it into utter barrenness! How many good projects it has brought to naught, and what a vast amount of time, talent, energy, and precious opportunity have been trifled away only to end in mortification and disgrace. When the old, godly minded father of Burns was on his dying bed, he turned to his children and said, "There is one of you that I feel greatly troubled about," "Do you mean me, father?" enquired the brilliant young Reuben, whose heart was a boiling pot of restrained passions. "Yes, Robbie, I mean you," sadly replied the dying man. It has been too common to speak of Scotland's gifted genius as if he were only the victim of adverse circumstances whereas his whole life was a conflict between the voice of conscience and the clamors of wayward passions that nearly always carried the day. Burns had no moral stamina. The tragic story of his sad life—if it were fully and honestly written, with all his own bitter confessions, would be one of the most painful, and yet profitable narratives to put into the hands of every young man in the land.

Instability is often regarded as an unfortunate mental weakness—a mere foible or constitutional weakness. But it is really a vice. It is often the besetting sin that makes utter wreck of all hope of excellence, and is fatal to character. When I see a young man setting out in life with no fixed habits, no steadfastness of purpose, drifting from one place to another, chasing after novelties and ready to throw away everything that he has gained in pursuit of the next new phantom, I fear that there is at bottom a moral unsoundness that will end in ruin. If instability be a "constitutional weakness" then it must be resisted as much as a naturally violent temper or an hereditary appetite for strong drink, or an inborn lust of libidinousness. Whatever destroys all hope of honorable usefulness is more than a fault or a misfortune; it is a sin to be prayed against and fought against without compromise or cessation. Conquer it or you are lost!

Are there no Reubens in the church? I do not refer to such flagrant cases of moral inability as send some professions of religion into darkness and others into knavery and others into disgraceful lecheries. Brother A—is no such reprobate as that, but his piety is quite too periodical and spasmodic, one day he is up to boiling point, and another day he is down to freezing. During the "week of prayer" or when an evangelist comes along to hold special meetings he sings more loudly and prays more fervently than any of the brethren; but, when the tide ebbs, he goes out with the tide. Brother B—is very fertile in the suggestions of new schemes of benevolence, and while the novelty lasts, he works fiercely. The next new device

thusiasm soon dries away. This type of church members are like the brooks swelled by midsummer showers. "What time they wax warm they vanish; when it is hot they are consumed out of their place." It is this sort of fitful, spasmodic religion that often makes church contribution such an uncertain quality. Instead of being the steady stream fed by systematic benevolence, they are dependent on the spasmodic influence of an eloquent sermon or church bazaar. Some church members are only flourishing during the heavy rains of a revival season. The rest of the year they are brown and barren. If pastors get sick of such periodical professors, how weary the Master must be of them! But the joy of every pastor is the evergreen Christian, who, when the community is as dry spiritually as summer dust, keeps his heart fresh and his prayers fervent and his purse open and his daily life as beautiful as an orange tree in full bearing.

Sometimes there are symptoms of this vice of Reubenness (if we may coin such a word) in the pulpit. It shows itself both in running after new devices and running after new places. In nothing does patient, persevering persistent work tell more effectively than in the work of the ministry. No tree can bear fruit that is pulled up so often that it never fully takes root. The epitaph has been inscribed over the fitful labors and frequent failures of more than one minister who ought to have been equal to better things, is "Unstable as water, he did not excel."—Independent.

## Study John Bunyan.

BY T. L. CULVER, D. D.

"Give me a hint or two as to the books I shall find most profitable," is the request of a young minister. In answering him, let me give a hint to some others. Next to your Bible study John Bunyan's immortal "Pilgrim's Progress." Spurgeon's pure, racy Saxon-English came from his constant study of the tinker of Bedford, and Bunyan fashioned his style on the English Bible.

He was a man of one book. He had but a small library, and when he went into Bedford jail he took only three or four books with him, for which let us be devoutly thankful. God's Word was the constant companion of his cell, the volume of his morning studies and his evening meditations. This perpetual delving in the mine of Divine revelation gave Bunyan the pure gold out of which he fashioned his masterpiece. He had read no other poetry than the sublime poetry of David and Job, Isaiah and Habakkuk, and we trace the effect of close communings with the inspired Hebrews bards in all the grandest imagery of the "Pilgrim's Progress." His description of the glories of heaven, when the gates open to "Christian's" entering footsteps, is almost a literal copy of John's Apocalypse. Bunyan had never seen the inside of a theological school; he got his body of divinity from the fountain-head by going directly to Moses, the prophets, the apostles, and to Him who spake as never man spake. Where in the whole range of religious literature can be found a richer, purer, stronger Evangelical theology than is contained in this marvellous allegory? Saturate your soul with it, my young brother; it will give you the right pitch when you sit down to your sermons. No danger of your theology becoming pulpy or mucilaginous, when you feed on the "Holy War" and the "Pilgrim."

Let Bunyan teach you, also, what wonderful things the Scriptures are when approached in the right spirit. He pored over them on his knees. Not a shadow of doubt as to their perfect inspiration and infallible authority ever disturbed him for a moment. He went through them, not with lexicons and commentaries, but with a keen spiritual eye that discovered every atom of gold as sharply as a Colorado miner picks out every grain of precious metal from the auriferous soil. The Holy Spirit took of the things of Christ and showed them unto him. This patient waiting on God's word, this humble sitting at the gates of infinite wisdom, and this fervent, earnest inquiry directly from God, led Bunyan into the interior truths that concern most deeply the human soul, with its experiences and eternal destinies. As your business is to deal with human nature in all varieties, you will find no ranges of portraits which surpass those presented by the dreamer of Bedford.

Bunyan will also teach you how to read your Bible in terrible earnest. He made it as literal as the flash of the noon-day sunbeams. Not one sharp edge of the Divine threatenings against sin did he ever blunt; in these times there is too little pungent preaching on the "sinfulness of sin" and its just retributions. Nor did Bunyan minimize the ineffable and marvellous love of God in redemption and in providence. Into the bosom of the exceeding great and precious promises he fairly leaped, as a child leaps into the arms of a mother. Every syllable of the Divine Book he pored over and pondered till his memory held it in solution.

You will be constantly delighted with his ingenious introduction of the out-of-the-way passages of Scripture into the most unexpected places. If you can learn how to do this, you will hold the attention of your hearers, and give them happy and profitable surprises.

Style is a vastly important element in effective preaching, as the Spurgeon's, Maclaren's, and Bushnell's testify. The