

## II. The Fruits of Living near to God. Verses 8-17.

What an influence is exerted over us by our surroundings, by the presence of the things in the midst of which we live. Still more manifest is the influence exercised over us by the presence of living persons whom we love or fear. The soldier fights with more spirit under the eye of the general. The boy will run the race with greater eagerness who knows that his parents are watching every step. The lad who is idling away his time will turn hastily to work if he sees the eye of his master upon him. The presence of another may affect us, when conscious of it, in many different ways. It may be encouraging or deterring, invigorating or weakening, may inspire hope or pleasure, or cause fear or trouble. And how much greater must be the power over men's lives and conduct exerted by the consciousness of being in the presence of God, under His Eye, held in His power. The influences that flow from the realization—"Thou, God, seest me," must be most potent in controlling our conduct and moulding our character. We have here described some fruits of this consciousness of God.

1. *It purifies the heart*, the inward motives and intentions: it cleanses the hands, the instruments of our purposes, the outgoing energies and senses of the man. In all this it imparts singleness of purpose. The repentance must be thorough, the submission entire and complete. No one can serve God and Mammon. (Mt. vi. 24.) There will be real sorrow and contrition, instead of foolish and worldly levity. Matt. v. 4. There will be humility before God, by whose standards and not by those of men we will judge ourselves, and who will give us true uplifting. In this way will the consciousness of God's presence purify and humble us, it will awake within us a consciousness of unlikeness to God, and open up a way for His indwelling and purifying spirit.

Imagine a ragged boy out of the streets suddenly brought to the door of a brilliantly lighted room, filled with well-dressed company, and aware that all eyes are fixed upon himself. What will be the effect upon him? For one thing, he will certainly become alive to his own dirty and wretched appearance. Such a boy was once presented to the photographer, that a faithful picture might be obtained of him as he there was. He immediately woke up to the sense of something being lacking about him, and began to smooth down his rags and try to straighten his hair. And when any man or child begins to realize the truth that God's eye is upon him—that God is looking at him, it will awaken within a sense of need, and unless the heart turns away, consciousness of need will be followed by repentance, humility and pity.

2. *It corrects censorious and evil judgments.* A girl is just about to make some disparaging remark concerning an acquaintance. Suddenly she perceives the mother, sister, or friend of that acquaintance within ear-shot. She is stopped at once. She will say nothing in their presence and hearing. But suppose there is no one by who has any close interest in the person; does not the Father above care? Is it nothing to Him if one of those for whom He gave His Son is slandered and injured? "Speak not evil of one another," for He notices it. To speak evil against a brother is to condemn him; and to condemn him, when no duty calls us to it, is to usurp the function of a judge, and to become a transgressor of Christ's law. Matt. vii. 1-5. The only true and ultimate judge, who is sure to judge rightly, and alone can inflict the sentence of salvation or destruction, is God. Compare Matt. x. 28; Rom. xiv. 4.

3. *It leads to constant dependence upon God.* The special case of men travelling in search of business and gain is but the application of the truth which it is used to illustrate. What is condemned is not their industry or forethought, but their disregard of the transiency of life and their assumptions of independence. The future is in God's hands. We are both ignorant and frail. We have neither the knowledge nor the power to protect ourselves. We must therefore live in constant dependence upon God. But are we to live from day to day without aim, without object, merely awaiting what comes? That is the life of the atheist: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." There is not, as the ancients supposed, a blind Fate ruling us and determining our destiny, but a living God, who, if we accept his free gift of salvation in his Son Jesus Christ, will be, not our ruler only, but our Father and Protector. Let us be about His business (Luke 2. 49) active, earnest, painstaking in all that is given us to do—planning when it is needful, but saying from the heart, "If the Lord will." This is the secret of all peace and success, and he who lives as in God's sight lives in a sunshine which lights and warms and makes to thrive, and never deceives! So manifest and imperative is the obligation to live thus, that to assent as men do to the truth of the words of life, and yet to live in utter disregard of it, is sin. This seems to be the

special application of verse 17, although it has an universal reference to all who leave undone anything that they know they ought to do. There are negative sins, sins of omission as well as positive wrongs, sins of commission. And the root of all sins and failures alike is the radical sin of unbelief, when God is not in all our thoughts.

### CATECHISM LESSON.

#### Covenant Obligation and Covenant Strength.

Q. Dost thou not think that thou art bound to believe, and to do, as they have promised for you?

A. Yes, verily; and by God's help so I will. And I heartily thank our Heavenly Father that he hath called me to this state of salvation, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. And I pray unto God to give me His grace, that I may continue in the same until my life's end.

Here is a question put to the heart and conscience. The child has been instructed in the nature of the Christian covenant, its responsibilities and its privileges. Christian knowledge has been imparted to him. Is this knowledge to be barren or fruitful? (2 Pet. i. 8.) It is not a matter of memory merely, but of the will. John xiii. 17.

In answering this question the Christian child is not merely learning a lesson by rote; he is making a solemn promise to God, entering with his own consent into covenant with Him who demands, "Son, give Me thine heart." "When thou saidst, seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek" (Psalm xxvii. 8).

We have here  
I. COVENANT OBLIGATION. *Dost thou not think?* Each one will have to answer for himself at the last day (2 Cor. v. 10; Gal. vi. 4, 5). Each one must make his own profession now (Matt. x. 32, 33). *That thou art bound to believe, and to do, as they (your sponsors) have promised for thee? Yes, verily.* It is of great importance to expose the fallacy of that delusion so commonly taken up, that men have no responsibility or obligation in regard to Christianity until they profess it. Upon everyone rests this obligation to be a Christian; if any refuse to acknowledge it, he does so at his peril. "He that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed" (John iii. 18). Yet how often we hear men loudly asserting in excuse for their evil living, "Oh, we make no profession!" as if this disclaimer relieved them from all responsibility. This obligation rests upon us because of our very nature, for God gave man the capacity to know and love Him. Much more it rests on us through redemption: "Ye are not your own, but bought with a price." We are not under this obligation merely because our sponsors answered for us at our baptism. In their answer they only acknowledged the obligation which rested both upon them and us. The obligation exists, whether it is acknowledged or not. Let no one think to escape from it by refusing to think about religion, or because he is living in neglect and indifference. On the contrary, see Matt. xii. 41, 43.

COVENANT DECISION. *And by God's help so I will.*

Indecision is weak as well as wicked. Beware of a divided service and a double mind (Matt. vi. 24; Jas. i. 8), halting between two opinions (1 Kings xviii. 21). Rather let us decidedly and openly be on the Lord's side (Ex. xxxii. 26), following God fully (Num. xiv. 24). Let us thus enter in covenant with the Lord, as did the Israelites (Ex. xxiv. 7), Joshua (Jos. xxiv. 15), and the people of Judah (2 Chron. xv. 12). This is to take up the cross and follow Jesus (Luke xiv. 27). We enlist under Christ's banner and become His soldiers. See the Baptismal Service. Hast thou avouched the Lord this day to be thy God? (Deut. xxiv. 17-19).

COVENANT STRENGTH.—"And I pray unto God," &c.

The great question for the Christian now is, where shall he find the strength needed? Not in himself, but in Christ, Phil. iv. 13, 19. He himself is weak, but in his weakness Divine strength is perfected (2 Cor. xii. 9, 10). Without Jesus he can do nothing (John xv. 3; but Christ dwells in his heart Eph. iii. 14-17).

Jesus Himself, although He was Lord of all, lived a life of faith. He "emptied Himself" of His Divine sufficiency, and "took upon Him the form of a servant" Phil. ii. 7. So that he could say "I can of mine own self do nothing" (John v. 30). Compare John viii. 28. This is one lesson taught us by the temptation. Man lives by God's Word. David prevailed by the strength of the Lord, 1 Sam. xvii. 38, 39, 47, 50. In order to "be strong in the Lord"—1. *We must have simple faith.* Little faith fails, Matt. xiv. 31. Great faith prevails, Mark xi. 22, 23; John xiv. 12; Luke xviii. 42; Mark ix. 23.

2. *We must realize our oneness with Christ.* "All my springs are in Thee" Ps. lxxvii. 7. We must abide in the Vine John xv. 4, 5; Col. ii. 3, 9; ii. 19; Eph. iv. 15, 16.

3. *We must seek strength by prayer* "They that wait upon the Lord will renew their strength" (Isai. xl. 31; Ps. xxvii. 14). Christ Himself sought strength by prayer (Heb. 7). (Luke iii. 21, v. 16, vi. 12, ix. 18, 29, xi. 1, xxii. 32, 39-46).

So He bade us "ask" (Matt. vii. 7; Jas. i. 5). Our God is faithful (1 Cor. x. 12, 13; 2 Thes. iii. 3). "Only trust Him." Let our resolve be—"I will go in the strength of the Lord God. I will make mention of Thy righteousness; even of Thine only."

## Missionary.

### MOOSONEE.

The following letter from the Bishop of Moosonee to the *London Record* will be read with deep interest:

Bishop's Court, Moose, via Temiscamingue, Ottawa R., Canada, Sept. 17, 1883.

When I last wrote, on July 16th, I said that although the season was very unfavorable the health of the settlement was excellent, there being scarcely a sick person at the place. How differently I am obliged to write now, having had four funerals on Saturday, two on Friday, and one in the earlier part of the week, four the previous week, three the week before that, two during its predecessor, while I take another to-morrow morning; and how many more during the week God only knows, for many are still very sick. The truth is, that the whooping-cough is amongst us, a scourge as fearful in its ravages among our Indians as cholera is among the inhabitants of the East. When it made its first appearance, twenty years ago, it decimated the population, and although we do not expect it to be anything like as bad on this occasion, seeing that grown-up people, having previously had it, are not attacked now, it is causing sad and distressing mortality. I have no one to assist me here, everyone being off on some journey or other, as it is only by means of frequent journeyings that the work of our huge diocese can be effectively carried on; and this makes my work very heavy. I have devoted myself entirely to the needs of my people, with whom I have spent every day, and all day long; it has several times been to me a source of deep gratitude, the being enabled to see the pious resignation with which, when they had done all that in them lay for their little ones, fathers and mothers have committed them into Christ's hands, feeling assured that all would be well; I doubt whether any people could have behaved better in such trying circumstances. The disease was brought from Albany, a settlement a hundred miles north, where the Ven. Archdeacon Vincent resides, and there its ravages have been very fearful; we received news last week, and then no less than twenty-six persons of all ages had succumbed. To Albany it came from far in the interior, Osna-burgh, and there, I expect, from some communication with the whites, for the disease is not indigenous. We must expect frequent visitations now from diseases with which the Indians are unacquainted. The year before last the north shore of Lake Superior was ravaged by the measles; last summer they were at Temiscamingue on the Ottawa R., and at Abbitabee as I passed through on my way to Moose; this summer we had expected them here, but instead we have that which is probably a great deal worse.

The disease is depressing enough of itself, but we have something else to greatly deepen the depression. Our annual ship has not made her appearance. On the arrival of our ship our very existence depends; without it there could be no life here. We do what we can in agriculture, but our best is but little; we grow potatoes, which this year will not yield more than half a crop, cabbage, turnips, and other vegetables; wheat will not ripen, and a small