

God As A Rewarder.

By Rev. Theodore L. Cuyler, D. D.

Among all the names and attributes of our heavenly Father, that is a very endearing one that is contained in that glorious epic of faith, the eleventh chapter of the "Hebrews." We read that God is the "rewarder of them that diligently seek him." That precious promise is linked with every earnest prayer and every act of obedience. God rewards labor. Does not every farmer act in faith when he drives his plough in spring-time, and drops his grain into the mellowed ground? Every minister prepares his gospel message—every Sunday School teacher conducts the Bible lesson; and every godly parent tills the soil of the child's docile heart, in the simple faith that God rewards good sowing with harvests.

God rewards obedience. He enjoins upon every sinner repentance and the forsaking of his sins, and the acceptance of Jesus Christ as his atoning Saviour. Every sinner that breaks off from his sins, and lays hold of Jesus Christ, does it on the assurance that our truth-seeking God will reward obedience. "By faith, Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." An unbelieving generation hooted, no doubt, at the "fanatic" who was wasting his time and money on that unwieldy vessel. But every blow of Noah's hammer was an audible evidence of the patriarch's faith in the Lord as a rewarder of obedience.

God rewards believing prayer for right things, when it is offered in a submissive spirit. "Ask and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find." Humble, childlike faith creates a condition of things in which it is wise and right for God to grant what might otherwise be denied. We grasp the blessed truth that He hears prayer, and gives the best answer to prayer in His own time and way; upon these two facts we plant our knees when we bow down before Him. Oh, the long, long trials to which we are often subjected, while our loving Father is testing our faith, and giving it more vigor and volume! We are often kept at arm's length—like that pleading Syro-Phoenician mother—in order to test our faith; the victory comes when the Master says "be it unto thee as thou wilt."

Godly wives are often left to press their earnest petitions through months and years before the answer comes in the work of the converting Spirit. There was an excellent woman in my congregation who was for a long time anxious for the conversion of her husband. She endeavored to make her own Christian life very attractive to him—a very important point, too often neglected. On a certain Sabbath she shut herself up and spent much of the day in beseeching prayers, that God would touch her husband's heart. She said nothing to her husband but took the case straight up to the throne of grace. The next day, when she opened her Bible to conduct family worship, according to her custom, he came and took the Book out of her hands and said, "Wife, it is about time that I did this," and he read the chapter himself. Before the week was over he was praying himself, and at the next communion he united with our church!

Verily, God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. That praying Hannah, who said, "The grief of my heart is that of all my six children, not one loves Jesus," was not satisfied that it should be so. She continued her fervent supplications until five of them were converted during a revival. They all united in a day of fasting and prayer for the sixth daughter, and she was soon rejoicing in Christ. The victory that overcame in that case was a faith that would not be denied.

Sometimes the prayers of parents are answered long after the lips that breathed them are mouldered into dust. When a certain Captain K—sailed on his last sea voyage, he left a prayer for his little boy written out and deposited in an oaken chest. After his death at sea, his widow locked up the chest, and when she was on her dying bed she gave the key to their son. He grew up a licentious and dissolute man. When he had reached middle life he determined to open that chest out of mere curiosity. He found in it a paper, on the outside of which was written, "The prayer of M— K— for his wife and child." He read the prayer, put it back into the chest, but could not lock it out of his troubled heart. It burned there like a live coal. He became so distressed that the woman whom he was living with as his mistress thought he was becoming deranged. He broke down in penitence, cried to God for mercy, and making the woman his legal wife, began a new life of prayer and obedience to God's commandments. And so God proved to be the rewarder of a faith that had been hidden away in a secret place a half century before! I have no doubt that among the blessed surprises in eternity will be upon you to forsake your darling sins and offers the triumphs of many a believer's trusting prayers.

My friend, if you are not a Christian, I entreat you to put the divine promise to the test. Jesus Christ's invitation to you is "follow Me!" He calls you pardon.—Southern Churchman.

Private Prayer.

By Rev. Handley G. C. Moul, D.D.

"Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet,

and shut the door, and pray to thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee." Here is indeed obligation, bound upon us by the golden cord of the personal direction of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and His personal guarantee of results. Whatever be our consciousness of the mystery of prayer, and the problems—some of them insoluble from our present view-point—which surround it, let us retreat out of them all into the sacred "closet" of this utterance of His, and confidently, while with uttermost reverence, pray. Let us recollect the fact which He has given us for our warrant. There, in the closet, in the tangle—that most domestic of words—in the nook and corner of the house of common life, pray to the Eternal Person who, secret in His eternity, is also present in the inmost secret of thy daily round. He is there, with a locality on which you may securely count. He is "seeing" there—a remarkable word, where we might have expected rather "He heareth in secret." But was not the Lord thinking of that word in the Thirty-first Psalm: "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy face"? The phrase is just such as to put before us in its most vivid form the thought of personal presence and cognizance. He is there to watch the very action of His worshipper, and so most assuredly to catch his every word.

Around this majestically simple—I had almost said homely—injunction are grouped a hundred Scriptures which develop the warrant and the blessedness of praying; such, for example, as those which emphasize our absolute right, as members incorporate in Christ to come with boldness, with the liberty to say anything "parresia," into the unseen holy place of the presence of God, by the Spirit. But let this first great warrant stand in its radiant directness amidst those surroundings. The Lord Himself here holds to our feet the lamp of His own Word to show us the way into the sanctum of prayer. All may be dark around with questions of the mind, with puzzles of experience, or with dullness of spiritual realization. Nevertheless, while the night is dark, and the landscape invisible, the lamp is alight and the pathway shines beneath it. To thy closet; shut the door; the Face is there; the Eyes of God thy Father watch thee come in; pray.

There is first the recollection, antecedent to the prayer of a filial relation with the Holy One. In His grace thou art His child. He has welcomed thee, in His Son, to His home. That closet is, from its spiritual side, His; a little off-chamber in the very house of the Father of thy spirit, who has loved thee, and restored thee, and delights to hear thee say, Abba, Father. Vastly more would be our joy in prayer, surely, if we would more habitually begin with the recollection (whether or no it burns into a realization at the moment) that it is thus. "I am the child of God through faith in Christ Jesus; I am more than a suppliant; I am a child at home; it is my Father who sees me enter." What will more effectually charm from the soul not only the misery of unbelief and servile fear, but the unloving spirit towards others which is, on the Lord's own assurance, one inmost obstacle to prevailing prayer, than such recollection? And, again, our Lord's precept here presupposes a certain deliberateness of purpose in our secret praying. Enter in, and shut the door. The time spent inside may be very brief, but it is to be, for what it is, deliberate. The disciple shuts himself quietly off. He gives himself, so far as he can, quiet of circumstance, to aid quiet of soul. He is desirous of that great necessary for successful prayer, "recollection." He would have time to believe, time to "set the Lord before him," as well as actually to speak to Him.

I do not forget how often, for many a disciple, "the closet" may be impossible in its literal sense. But even then, even in a crowd, "the closet of his Face" can be entered; the soul, aye, in a time measured by moments, can, if it has learned the habit of "remembering God," step in to be alone with Him. Only, to that very end, where "the closet" is possible, let us use it to the uttermost. Let us covet and greedily grasp the interview alone, in the quiet corner of the busy house, with the Father, in the Son.—Baptist Commonwealth.

Fish And Fishing.

Peter was a good fisherman in the sea, and Christ called him and made him a successful minister on land. A fisherman must get up and go where the fish are, for they will not come to him. The minister is to go out into the high and by-ways where the sinner and troubled are, or he will never get the people who most need the gospel, and refuse to enter a beautiful cold storage church. One must use the right kind of bait. The wise Isaac Walton takes a book of flies and changes his bait until he gets the right one; then follows the bite and the catch. If you can't get a man's heart and mind by the ordinary way of what you like and he dislikes, try something else. The Master was infinite in his resources. If a formal service of slow music and sleepy talk fails, try flowers, music, pictures, and stories from a heart of sympathy. Never give up. Be patient and unwearied in well doing. If the fish are scarce, or away or not inclined to bite at first, keep at it. Patient care is required in soul-catching. Because we work and wait, and fail in immediate results, we should

persist in loving attempt. In due season we will succeed in getting the indifferent and heartless. They may possibly get off and away, but we can bring them in later. Simple bait and tackle often prove superior to a lot of modern, expensive and complicated outfits. A cane pole has often shamed a \$50 rod and reel. The simple gospel in a plain little hall has often been the power of God to salvation where ritualism and rationalism have made aching heads and heavy hearts.

The most disagreeable fisherman is the man who has not succeeded and is jealous of every fish his lucky companion gets. His face is a cloud, his eyes lightning. It requires a man of good moral character to stand the strain of telling the truth about the size and number of fish he has caught. A lying fish story is historic as well as classic. One of the most insidious temptations to the average minister is to exaggerate the number of accessions to his membership and the black and white figures of benevolence and work accomplished. The great apostle's "I go fishing" is a splendid text for ministers and members to preach and practice twelve months in the year.—G. L. Morrill.

Getting As We Give.

A little fellow who had noticed that his mother put only five cents into the contribution box on Sunday, said to her on the way home, as she was finding fault with the sermon. "Why, mamma, what could you expect for a nickel?" There was sound philosophy in the criticism, too; for it is a pretty well-established fact that we get out of things in this life what we put into them. The degree of profit is determined by the degree of investment. One who contributes ten cents, from the same income, towards the preaching of the gospel, is pretty sure to get twice as much good out of the same sermon as the one who contributes a nickel. The size of the contribution, or, what is apt to be the same thing, the measure of the sacrifice, determining the measure of spiritual expectancy and receptivity. One actually gets more of the same gospel for ten cents than he would for five. In filling a vessel with water in a given time, quite as much must be allowed for the size of the neck of the bottle as for the size of the stream in which it is immersed. On the human side of the analogy receptivity represents the neck of the bottle, and receptivity can hardly be more accurately measured than by the spirit of sacrifice that lies back of it. We get according as we give; and this is true whether we go to the shop, the school, the place of business, or the house of God.—Gospel in All Lands.

AN OUTSIDE INTEREST.

The home woman is the indispensable woman. It has been wisely remarked that we could do without the women who have made careers for themselves in all other directions; but without the home woman we should have to shut up shop at once. The homemaker is the absolutely necessary element, the woman the world cannot do without. It is a pity, therefore, that the home woman allows herself, so often, to fail of her full development and reward. She is apt to be so unselfish and so conscientious that she lets the four walls of home narrow about her. The "household" woman, as she has been called, does not get enough exercise every day, nor does she breathe enough of the outside air of thoughts and action to refresh her spirit. The simplest remedy is that of at least one outside interest. The woman who takes up one hobby, one charity, one line of work beyond the household cares, and follows it steadily, will find that it brings freshness and power with it. It becomes both outlook and inflow to her. The study and collection of old china, reading up a special subject, making a garden, any one of these, if pursued thoroughly, will bring her in touch with others and open vistas of interest unendingly. And the woman with a hobby grows old so slowly that she often never grows old at all, but keeps to the last that freshness of interest which is the mark of youth.—Harper's Bazar.

Watchfulness and prayer are inseparable. The one discerns dangers, the other arms against them. Watchfulness keeps us prayerful, and prayerfulness keeps us watchful.—Alexander Maclaren, D.D.

Discipleship to Christ is not a long labor, or a long pathway, at the end of which we secure a reward in payment for what we have done. It is a life which has its inheritance, as its birthright, at the outset, and moves forward in the conscious possession of it.—Timothy Dwight.

God's delays are not denials. They are not neglectful nor unkind. He is waiting with watchful eye and intent heart for the precise moment to strike, when he can give a blessing which will be without alloy and will flood all the after life with blessings so royal, so plentiful, so divine, that eternity will be too short to utter all our praise.—Rev. F. B. Meyer.

How strong, how peaceful, how deeply joyful our lives may be if they are sacramental, lived in the memory of Jesus, the central stream of their deep determination, like this—doing the will of our Father.—Maltbie D. Babcock.