

MONTHLY RECORD

OF THE

Church of Scotland

IN NOVA SCOTIA AND THE ADJOINING PROVINCES.

MARCH, 1859.

IF I FORGOT TREE, O JERUSALEM! LET MY RIGHT HAND FORGET HER CUNNING."—*Psalms* 137, v. 5.

Sermon.

"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask, in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."—*Matthew* 21st chap., 22d v.

The prayer here spoken of, as you see, is believing prayer—it is the prayer of faith. Now all men have not faith. The prayer of unbelievers is an abomination to the Lord. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Prayer not flowing from a living faith, has in the nature of sin, for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. Not that prayer itself is a sin: prayer is a duty; but it is spoiled in the presenting, when it is offered without faith. Let there be a desire to seek the Lord; *that desire* will be the beginning of prayer, which it may be hoped, will issue in faith; but no prayer, until there be faith, can command the blessing.

Even believers do not always pray, believing. Distrust is too apt, at times, to prevail. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, and it shall be given him; but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth, is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed; for let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." His distrust spoils the success of his prayer. Distrusting he sinks, and would soon perish, if his faith, again reviving, did not bear him up. "Save me, Lord, I perish."—therefore, he was saved.

Even believers are too often insincere in their prayers. They do not really desire the things which the terms of their prayer imply. A man who judges by the ear, their prayers may seem eloquent and fervent; but God hearkeneth not on the outward appearance, but

on the heart. The Lord detects the hypocrisy, and is offended with their prayers. "They ask, and receive not, because they ask amiss." If they appear before God with unrepentant sin upon their consciences,—if they limit the Holy One of Israel,—if their prayers are dictated by selfish and worldly affections,—if they are presented in a formal and lifeless manner, the Lord will not hear them. Their prayers are an offence to him. He will reject their prayers; or if they receive the things for which they pray, they will receive them as a scourge.

Prayer, true prayer, believing prayer, is the breath of the renewed soul. It is the offering up of the believer's desires to God, for things agreeable to God's will, in the name of Christ.

Prayer is to be made only to God. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only thou shalt serve." "He alone is the hearer and answerer of prayer."

That our prayer may be efficacious, the things for which we ask must be agreeable to God's revealed will. "If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us; and if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." We are to ask for the things which God has promised. "Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." True prayer is the pleading of God's promises. Whatsoever God has promised in his word, that we are to ask for. The believer may pray absolutely for spiritual blessings, for this is the will of God, even our sanctification. He may pray also for temporal good things, but then it must be with an entire submission to