

The Christian.

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VOLUME VII.

THIS number of THE CHRISTIAN begins its seventh volume. It has now been six years before the public, and it appears to be the will of the Lord that it should still live and prosper. For this we are thankful to the Giver of all good.

The difficulties of publishing a religious paper in a small community have been so keenly felt by all engaged in such an enterprise that comparatively few of such papers have lived over a few years.

The following objects in starting THE CHRISTIAN have been kept before the minds of its conductors, viz.: To make it plain to the reader that the Gospel system given by Jesus Christ to the Apostles, for all the world is perfect and has in it all that the world needs. That a man can be a Christian without being anything else and a church can be a church of Christ without being anything else. And that the union of all that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity is practicable as well as desirable. This THE CHRISTIAN has advocated. It has also endeavored to foster in the mind of the reader a love for the Bible and a desire to study it. Bible themes have been constantly kept before the reader to induce him to prove all things and hold fast that which is good. THE CHRISTIAN has labored to stir up a spirit of Christian liberality in supporting the cause of Him who gave Himself for us and to foster a desire in the minds of all to be ready for every good work. It has also sought to promote peace and love among the Disciples of Christ as well as a love for all men. His disciples are urged by the Saviour as well as by every motive of His holy religion to love one another. Knowing how easy it is to find fault with each other it has been an object to guard against so unlovable and ruinous a spirit.

Will the friends of Jesus assist in this work? 1st. By writing for THE CHRISTIAN. 2nd. By circulating it among the people, and last but not least by earnest prayer to God that it may be kept from evil and prove a blessing in spreading the truth of the Gospel.

EDITORIAL.

PAUL'S URGENT APPEAL TO HIS ROMAN BRETHREN.

"Now, I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus' sake and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Jesus, and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints that I may come unto by the will of God and may with you be refreshed." (Rom. xv. 30, 31, 32.)

This passage awakens many useful thoughts on the subject of prayer. It shows that Christians have the great privilege of asking of God what they need and what is according to His will. Although God could if it pleased Him bestow His blessings on His people without their praying for them, yet He has graciously chosen to be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them. (Ezek. xxxvi. 37.) To invite His people to come boldly to a throne of grace to ask and obtain His favor through Jesus Christ is God's way of bestowing His blessings and also removing from them the

spirit of fear, and giving them the spirit of adoption whereby they cry, Abba Father. It is no small privilege thus to approach the one God through the one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. He has both the nature of God and man, and as such stands between the two. He is our brother, and by the blood of His Cross he reconciles us to God, and being reconciled we draw nigh to God by His loving mediation. To receive God's gifts in this way is much better than to receive them without prayer, as it purifies and elevates the creature to thus commune with the Creator, and it honors the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

It is true now as in the Apostle's day that we know not what we should pray for as we ought, and while we ask the Lord to teach us how to pray it is well that He has given us so much instruction both in what He said and what He did Himself to guide us in the matter. He tells us how to regard men when we pray. *If ye have aught against any man forgive him.* He tells us how to regard God. *Believe that ye receive these things that ye ask of Him, and ye shall have them.* He taught that men should always pray and not faint, that they should ask the things they know to be right, and never cease asking till they receive them. He spent the whole night in prayer to God. But this was in private. We never hear of Him making long prayers in the hearing of others. The Pharisees made long prayers before men. The heathen thought they would be heard for their much speaking. Jesus condemned both and charged His people not to be like them. To hear a long prayer from one that leads others does not stir up the spirit of prayer, but kills it, because it generally indicates coldness and formality instead of warmth and earnest pleading. "When we remember that God is in Heaven and we on earth our words should be few and well ordered."

We should not rush unthinkingly into the presence of God, but remember how solemn it is to speak to the Searcher of all hearts. We should know what the things are which we want before we ask them, and have faith and hope fixed on them. We will notice

HOW PAUL URGED HIS BRETHREN HERE,

He besought them for the Lord Jesus' sake and for the love of the Spirit. It was customary for him to earnestly seek the prayers of the brethren for himself and his grand work. The majesty and glory of his work in preaching among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ on the one hand and his own weakness on the other caused him often to exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?" and while the only answer that could satisfy him was "Our sufficiency is of God," he sought the prayers of the brethren to mingle with his own before the throne. None of those he addressed held so high a position as he did, being an Ambassador of Christ, but they all were kings and priests to God, and he was glad to have their united prayers for himself and work. Thus he asks the Ephesians, "Pray for me that utterance may be given unto me that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel," &c. (vi. 19.) And the Colossians "withal praying also for us that God would open unto us a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ," &c. (iv. 3.) And to the Thessalonians, "Brethren, pray for us." (1 Thes. v. 25, and II Thes. iii. 1.) "Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified even as it is with you. And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men," &c.

So we learn that it was common for Paul to desire the prayers of the brethren. In this case, however, there is a more earnest and emphatic appeal. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, for the Lord Jesus' sake and for the love of the Spirit," Why so very urgently beseech them on this point?

May it not arise from the fact that the brethren in general, or at least in many cases, are more liable to forget in their prayers the men that are engaged in preaching the Gospel than they are to forget other persons and things for which they ought to pray, and that Paul and his fellow-laborers were not an exception. This seems to account for the earnestness of the appeal.

When churches engage men to devote their energies in preaching the Gospel they are apt to forget these men in their prayers. This does not always arise from want of affection for the preacher or an interest in his work. They are glad when he is successful and grieved when his labor seems a failure. But it arises from our aptitude to trust in men rather than in God. Churches want eloquent preachers, men of grand utterance, who will draw the people, draw them first to meeting, then draw them to Christ. Who is it that gives men utterance, gives them power to draw the people? Is it not God? And why should we hope for so much from men and so little from Him? Does He not choose the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty? Can any man come unto Jesus without the Father who hath sent him draw Him? Experience shows that it is not those who are accounted the greatest preachers who are most successful in winning souls and building up the church. God alone knows how many faithful preachers, who feel insufficient for the great work and are crushed with opposition and discouragement, would rejoice and be glad to know that their brethren were sympathizing with them and earnestly praying for them that utterance might be granted to them and that the word of God might have free course and be glorified in their field of labor. Such men can enter into the urgency of Paul's appeal to the brethren at Rome.

We next consider

HOW PAUL WANTED THEM TO PRAY.

"That ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me. Strife seems a strange concomitant of prayer, yet they often went together. There are times when every thing and every person seem to frown upon the child of God as if determined to drive him from the throne of grace, and he must either strive in prayer or not pray at all. Jacob strove in prayer when he wrestled with the angel who was about to throw him off as the day was breaking. When the blind beggar was charged to hold his peace he cried so much the more "Thou Son of David have mercy on me." The woman of Canaan strove in prayer for her daughter when she was again and again repulsed, till at length Jesus exclaimed, "Oh, woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Paul and Silas had what tried their faith at Philippi. Day after day they preached the Gospel without a soul manifesting the least interest in them or the Gospel, except the maid possessed with a spirit of divination, who cried that these men showed the way of salvation. In grief Paul expelled the spirit, and for so doing was falsely charged of crime and was, without trial, beaten with many stripes. When the jailor received the dreadful charge to keep him and Silas safely and thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks, they wrestled with the rulers of the darkness of this world and strove in prayer at midnight. They were more than conquerors through Him that loved them, and before the sun arose that was to witness their execution there was joy among the angels of God over a whole household of sinners that repented. Paul earnestly desired that his brethren, whose faith raised them above all the discouragements of earth, should strive together with him in their prayers to God for him.

But Paul made the matter very clear to his brethren by stating very distinctly