

## PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

### THE CHURCH—THE HOUSE OF GOD.

The command, "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is," implies that there must be a reason for it. Now, why do we meet in the house of God from time to time? The custom of meeting together, religiously, is as old as the race, nearly. What is the essential idea in all such meetings?

Many seem to think it is a nice place to meet with friends, to see and be seen, to display the new finery, to sleep a quiet nap, or to show their respect for their minister or the public sentiment.

Is it not rather to meet with God in His own house, to meet with Jesus, the soul's beloved? God says, "There will I meet with thee, and bless thee." "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," says Jesus. The true, the essential idea of coming to the house of God is to meet with Jesus—to hear what He will say to us; to receive His blessing and to worship Him.

But many seem to think they are doing God a favour, paying Him a compliment, by coming to His house. Others act as if they thought it was a Presbyterian, an Episcopalian, a Methodist, or a Baptist house; and so they seldom go to any but their own. To all such, the question of Paul would be in point: "Is Christ divided?" "Is He the God of the Jews only?" "Is He the Saviour of you and yours only? Alas! that there should be so much of this selfish, bigoted spirit that can see no good and no salvation in any other Church than our own. And sadder still, that so many think this selfish denominational spirit is true religion, is Christianity. Alas, that that which should have been for a blessing, should be perverted into a curse! God says "In all places where I record my name (not in your house only), I will come unto thee and I will bless thee." "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I, in the midst of them."

It is no new thing for some bearing the Christian name to be often absent from public worship and careless about attending God's house. Some go only when it is quite convenient, very pleasant weather, or they have pleasant company, or a fashionable preacher, or because they know not what else to do with themselves. The preacher must go, hot or cold, wet or dry; must be always there, to deliver God's message; but many will not make an effort to go and hear it. Remember that the house of God is His appointed place of meeting to meet with you, and then say if it is a light thing to neglect His house, His message, and Him. And every time you stay away from His house, without good cause, you say, in effect, "I do not wish to meet with Jesus to-day: I do not feel any special need of His blessing."

There are many reasons why we should thus desire to meet with Jesus in His house. It is a place of instruction, of warning, of consolation, and salvation. Besides, great loss is received by needless absence from the sanctuary—as Thomas, the doubting disciple, had to endure a whole week of painful doubts and fears, just because he was absent from the meeting place between Jesus and His loved ones, without any good reason. Such is the privilege and the duty of meeting with Jesus and His people in His house. But there are many hindrances and difficulties in the way of attending the house of God regularly. Yes, plenty of them, to those who are seeking for them or will entertain them. But "where there is a will there is a way." If the heart be in the sanctuary, the body will usually be there also. One who can say, "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord," will not easily be kept from His house.

Most of the excuses offered for not attending regularly on the house and worship of God are simply evidences that the heart is not there. It is not easy to keep a mother away from her infant, not easy to keep true lovers long separated from each other; and not easy to keep a true, loving child of God long away from his Father's house, the home of his heart. For the church members to stay away, without good reason, is like the ten spies to bring up an ill report of the land. It is as much as to say, "I do not find instruction there; I am not fed with spiritual food; I find no pleasure there; I have no love for it, nor do I care to meet with Jesus there. If He will only save me at the last, that is about all I desire. This meeting with

Jesus, in His house or at His table, I do not know anything about, and I do not know that I desire it much; for it would interfere with my ease, my business, or my pleasure." Is not this very like what some of you have felt, but never dared to say? And now, will you remember that God commands and invites you to meet Him in His house, that He may bless you? Shall it be in vain? Shall He have a message of love and mercy ready for you every Sabbath, and you not be there to hear it? Here we may see a reason why there are so many lean, sickly, half-starved Christians. They so seldom go to their Father's house and table to be fed. It is hard to see how they live at all, much less grow, with such long fasting.

Remember, then, the Saviour's appointed meeting place between you and Himself, even in His house! And do not let it be your fault if you fail to meet Him, and to receive his rich blessing.—*J. N. L., in Southern Presbyterian.*

### "WHO SHALL ROLL AWAY THE STONE?"

That which weeping ones were saying,  
Eighteen hundred years ago,  
We, the same weak faith betraying,  
Say in our sad hours of woe,  
Looking at some trouble lying  
In the dark and dread unknown,  
We, too, often ask with sighing,  
"Who shall roll away the stone?"

Thus with care our spirits crushing,  
When they might from care be free,  
And, in joyous song outgushing,  
Rise in rapture, Lord, to Thee.  
For, before the way was ended,  
Oh we've had with joy to own  
Angels have from heaven descended,  
And have rolled away the stone.

Many a storm-cloud sweeping o'er us  
Never pours on us its rain;  
Many a grief we see before us  
Never comes to cause us pain.  
Ofttimes in the feared "to-morrow"  
Sunshine comes, - the cloud has flown!  
Ask not then in foolish sorrow,  
"Who shall roll away the stone?"

Burden not thy soul with sadness;  
Make a wiser, better choice;  
Drink the wine of life with gladness;  
God doth bid thee, man, "rejoice!"  
In to-day's bright sunlight basking,  
Leave to-morrow's cares alone;  
Spill not present joys by asking,  
"Who shall roll away the stone?"

—George Washington Mason.

### WHAT DOES IT SIGNIFY?

"Well, I think I will take this dress. It is more than I expected to pay, and is really too expensive, but it is so becoming and so pretty that I must have it. Besides, it is absolutely necessary to keep up appearances these days. We will manage to afford it some way."

"Is it really time for another subscription? I could not have believed it was a year since I gave the last. I see most of the ladies give only one or two dollars; I do not know why I should give five. I know the object is a very worthy one, but we are all feeling the hard times, and there are so many calls I really cannot afford it. It is hard to find money to live with these days, and any benevolence is a sacrifice."

"Well, wife, I ordered a carriage on my way up town to take us to-night. It rains, but it would not do for us to stay at home. I promised Mr. B—— we would certainly come, and everybody will expect us. It would be a great pity to disappoint ourselves and them. You can wrap up, and the enjoyment will be quite refreshing after the work of the day."

"I don't think I will go to the prayer-meeting this evening. The weather is quite disagreeable out, and I have been tramping the streets on business all day; I am really too tired to enjoy it. I suppose there will be only a few out, and our pastor will expect us, and will be disappointed, but I think my place this evening is at home."

"I declare, it is nearly midnight! Never mind, what does it signify now and then? What with good music and agreeable society the evening has passed so quickly I could not have believed it was much past ten!"

"It was too bad of our minister to have kept us so long to-night. I thought it was understood that prayer-meeting was to be only an hour long, and it is sometimes nearly an hour and a half before we are

dismissed. Half-past nine is too late to be out. If the deacons would make shorter prayers, and the dominie would not have so much to say, it would be better. I believe I shall stop going if this is to be the way of it."

Has our stenographer been taking the speeches of some so-called Christian people? Have you never heard any similar? Have you ever yourself spoken or thought such? What do they signify? Much, very much. They are fearfully significant of hearts loving the world and the things of the world far more than the things of God. They are significant of money, time, affections freely bestowed on carnal self, the world's things and the world's company, and grudgingly withheld, or more grudgingly given to God and the cause of God. They are like straws floating on the surface of the stream, deeply significant of the direction in which the current of the heart's affections is flowing.

The manifest worldliness of a large portion of the Church in these days is a very serious subject, and one that demands the attention of every lover of the Lord Jesus Christ. It has been published, as said by one of our most prominent ministers, that if two-thirds of the present membership were stricken from the rolls the Church would have greater moral power in the presence of the world than it has to-day. Whether this is true or not, it cannot be gainsaid that there is very much of inconsistency in the professions of many church people, and very much of worldliness in their lives. And it is just because professing Christians have fallen under this controlling spirit of worldliness—the greed of gain, the lust of power, the ambition to make a fair show in the flesh—that they have so often fallen into grievous iniquity and brought reproach upon the cause of Christ.

It is very easy to say what the world must think of all this, but a more serious and important question is, what do we think of ourselves? The Bible says, "Where the treasure is there will the heart be also," and "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." "Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?" "If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him." "Purify your hearts, ye double-minded."—*Illus. Chris. Weekly.*

### HOW EVERY MAN CAN HELP THE TEMPERANCE CAUSE.

I urge on you the duty of self-denial for the sake of others. If you are fond of drink, abandon it before it be too late for your own sake; if you are not fond of it, it will cost you nothing to give it up. We are all face to face with a hideous, a degrading, a colossal evil. The legislature either cannot or will not help us. Warning, preaching, moral influence, even extended education, fails to help us; increased wages, diminished hours of work, only deepen our peril and our loss. There is one way, and one way only; but that is a certain and an easy way by which not merely to check, but even to annihilate, the curse. It is that every one of us should cease to contribute to this monster evil the penny of a contribution or the shadow of an example. The use of that deadly, peculiar and wholly unnecessary substance is so far inseparable from the abuse, that where the individual use is, there the national abuse will be. Unrestricted liquor traffic will, to the end of time, mean for myriads intense temptation; temptation means drunkenness; drunkenness means degradation, horror, ruin, crime. You are a Christian. Will you give up a needless luxury to help in saving others from a blasting curse? You are a patriot. Will you give up a poor tickling of the palate, an unwholesome tingling of the brain, to rescue your nation from a blighting degradation? If you do not help, at least be ashamed to hinder. Call not those fanatics who would clear their conscience from every taint of so dangerous a leaven. Do not gild a self-indulgence with the Ophir gold of Holy Scriptures or hide the forehead of a luxury under the phylactery of a scribe.

Not long ago there was in a certain colliery an explosion by which four hundred miners were suddenly hurled, amid shattered ruins, into horrible death. It was caused by a single miner who had opened his safety-lamp to light his pipe. To that pipe of tobacco were sacrificed four hundred precious lives of fathers, of husbands and of sons; and alas! on the bodies of not a few of those who perished in that fiery blast were found duplicate keys by which, hitherto with impunity, they had done the same. Alas! my brethren, Eng-