

let them remember the Master's words, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."—*Sunday at Home.*

### PRAYER AND PAINSTAKING.

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."—*Psa. lxxvi. 18.*

"Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."—*Mark xiv. 38.*

It is a great mistake to imagine that prayer will avail, without corresponding exertion. God has connected the end with the use of the means; and if we neglect the one, it is presumptuous to hope for the other. Will praying to be enabled to understand the Scriptures give that understanding, without studying them and meditating upon their sacred contents? Will praying that our faith may be strengthened, strengthen it, while we neglect to make use of the instruments of spiritual stability? Will praying for holiness make us holy, while we deliberately walk in the paths of unholiness? Can a parent hope that his prayers for his children will be of any benefit, if he is not adding his exertions to his wishes; if he is not bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, guarding them from the snares of youthful life, and setting before them a Christian example? Is it to any purpose that we entreat to be kept from temptation when we are voluntarily running into it; or that we pray against worldly mindedness when we choose worldly minded companions; or that we seek for the guidance and consolation of the Holy Spirit in words, when in our conduct we are grieving him by wilful impenitence and inconsistency?

The truth is, that care, and vigilance, and self-control, and self-denial and examination, are as necessary as prayer; neither without the other is sufficient. We readily allow this in our temporal concerns. When we pray for our daily bread, we do not expect to procure it without corresponding exertion. "Prayer," remarks a pious writer, "will not plough one's field, nor fence it, nor reap the grain, nor thresh it; but prayer may procure strength to labour, and a blessing to accompany and succeed our prudent industry." And it is thus in re-

ligion; God does everything that is good for us; but he expects us to make use of the appointed instruments of spiritual blessing as much as though we did every thing for ourselves. He graciously preserves us from many an unseen peril; but if, instead of using the means of prevention, we wilfully put our foot into the snare, we cannot hope that he will interpose to prevent our being entangled. We are to watch as well as to pray that we enter not unto temptation; we are to keep at a distance from it: we are to employ every effort to resist it; and if we neglect to do this, are we to wonder if we fall? Moses, and the people of Israel, did well to cry unto God in their extremity; but they did ill in neglecting the means of escape which he had set before them; and their supineness was accordingly rebuked by the Almighty: "Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward," *Exod. xiv. 15.*

When Luther first set himself against the torrent of idolatry and corruption, in the year 1517, assuming a task, to human view, as hopeless as for a man to set his shoulder to a mountain to remove it, he communicated his intentions to a wise and prudent friend, who had as deep a sense of Romish corruption as himself. But that friend advised him to abandon his design, and retire to his cell, and pray, "Lord have mercy upon us!" Had he done so he would have brought himself into a state of despair, unbelief, and inaction. But Luther more effectually prayed, "Lord, have mercy upon us," when, believing the promises of God, he put forth efforts corresponding with his prayers. The one prayed and did nothing, because he believed that God could or would do nothing. The other acted and prayed, and in faith took hold of God's strength, and the work was done. He put his shoulder to the mountain, yea, to the seven hills on which Antichrist had set his throne; and, weak as he was, yet in God's strength he made the mountains tremble, shook the foundations of the throne of the Beast, and gave him a deadly wound, from which he never has recovered, and never will. When we pray that prayer, "Lord, have mercy on us," we profess to believe that, however desperate our case