

Bible truth. And as you pray for the growth of heart-piety, let no indulgent lust, no pet sin, harbored in secret places, prove your uttered prayer to be an abomination in the sight of the all-searching God. "If I regard iniquity in my heart" (that is, if I cling to it and cherish it) "God will not hear me." Nor will the Lord of holiness answer with a Yea what we are practically answering with a Nay.

II. Let us illustrate and apply this principle, in the next place, to parents who are praying for the conversion of their children. No petition is more fitting than this; none could be more acceptable to God. But what hope have you, my friend, for the renewal of your children's hearts, if you pray in one direction with the lips, and quite in the opposite direction with the life. We see constantly the two antagonistic types of parental influence. Both are nominally Christian: only one is really such. The one man pleads at the altar for the sanctification of his household—that his sons may become sons of God, and his daughters may be as polished stones in the temple of Christ. He makes religion prominent in his family; it is visible, legible, and *above board*. The books that are brought home for the children to read, the newspapers that are taken, the amusements that are chosen, the society that is sought, the aims in life that are set before those children, all bear in one direction and in the right direction. God is not asked by that father to convert his offspring to godliness while he is doing his best to pervert them to sin and worldliness. Nor is God implored to convert them while the parent uses no agencies to affect the longed for result. No more than the Lord would be asked to restore the sick boy from a typhus fever, and yet no physician is called in and no medicine administered. How much worse if the father, having prayed that his child be restored, should fall to giving the poor boy strychnine or prussic acid in large doses.

Yet professed Christians do this very thing often in morals and religion. They pray for their children's recovery to holiness, and then poison them. They pray for a son's purity, and then flash the wine-cup before his eyes. They pray for a

daughter's conversion, with a theatre-ticket in their pockets—"a family ticket" for the whole household. They go to church, look devout, and then come home to trifle, to gossip—to entertain Sunday visitors at a sumptuous feast; to talk politics, to do anything, in short, but follow up the teachings of God's minister with affectionate, faithful home instructions. The practical effect of their whole conduct and conversation, both on the Lord's day and all the days of the week, is to undo whatever good may have been done by the earnest labors of the pulpit. What must such children think of those fluent prayers that they hear every night at the family altar? What of the consistency of those parents who utter such solemn meekeries? Oh! it is better never to pray at all for the conversion of your offspring than to ask God, in solemn tones, to *save* them while you are using your whole influence to harden and destroy them. "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou unfaithful servant."

In eternity it will be a terrible thing for many a man to meet his own prayers. Their very language will condemn him; for he knew his duty but he did it not. Those fervent prayers, which the good man labored to make effectual, will be "slaying ones" in white raiment to conduct their author into the banqueting-house of the GREAT KING. But the falsehoods uttered at the throne of grace will live again as tormenting scorpions in the day of the Lord's appearing. "Be not rash with thy mouth, nor let thy heart be hasty to utter anything before God," is an injunction that forbids more than irreverence in prayer. It forbids us, by implication, to ask for that which we do not sincerely desire. Above all, it forbids the asking from God those blessings which we are hindering by our neglect, or thwarting by our selfishness and unbelief.

The Persians being invaded by the Turks burnt up all that might be of use to sustain man or beast; that those who could not be overcome by force might be awakened by famine. Not to make provision for the flesh is great assistance towards abating the strength of lust.