

Pastor and People.

ONLY THEE.

In the neighbourhood of a German city, a few years ago, a faithful husband inscribed on the tombstone of his wife, these two words: "Only thou!" Touching words which easily persuade us that they indicate more than many a long inscription. In the passage in Psalm lxxiii. 22-26, two similar words occur, not as an inscription for the dead, but as the testimony of a life, words which ought to be impressed, not on cold marble or dead paper, but on living, Christian hearts, particularly on all hearts that mourn, "only Thee!" "Lord, if only I have Thee!" Among all the evidences of Old Testament piety this is one of the highest and most striking. It reveals such an absorbing love for the Lord, such perfect assurances of faith and certainty of consolation, such triumph over the world, that you would sooner seek these two words on the lips of a John or a Paul than on those of a singer of the old covenant. Asaph, the poet of the psalm, is a hero who not only dares to look upward when a precious soul has passed to its home, but who, in the event of the entire wreck of all his earthly happiness, the loss of every possession with his very life at stake, would face the storm and the wave, distress and death, clinging to the Lord with a faith rock-firm. From the height of His faith, His love and His consolation, He looks away over heaven and earth with all their possessions, over life and death with all their misery, and shouts with triumph, "Lord, if only I have Thee, I care nothing for heaven and earth; though my body and soul pine away, Thou, O God, are still the consolation of my heart and my portion forever." It reminds us of that other man of rock who, two and a half thousand years later, sang, "What though they take our life, wealth, honour, child and wife, seek nought to retain; 'twill bring them no gain, the kingdom must ours remain!"

Who of us can immediately follow Asaph up to the height of his love toward God, and his unswerving faith, repeating after him without reserve, "Only Thee"? Who? Probably not one! And yet this is a lesson we all must learn if the Lord is to remain our portion and inheritance to eternity. Beloved, the life of a pious Christian who has gone home to God has usually been a progress, the Lord leading step by step up to the goal, "Only Thee!" At first the poor, foolish heart clings to this world by a thousand fibres, neither seeking nor desiring only the Lord; or if it seeks Him at all, seeking, beside Him and more than Him, a thousand temporal things, but with toughest persistence itself. Then the kind, wise Lord begins His work of renewing and purifying, pruning from the top downward, now here, then there, to sever the world and transitory things from His child; who gradually becomes more indifferent to external possessions, and as they lose value the invisible possessions rise in appreciation. But he still continues to cling to this and that, to relations that have grown precious, it still seems as though without certain persons, without this or that activity, and at least without health, he could not live. Then the knife begins cutting down deeper, and with the loss of intimate friends pieces of the heart are torn away in order to let all wounds be filled with the love of the Lord. He becomes more lonely on the way, instead of the variety of staves on which he was accustomed to lean, it gradually dawns upon him that the rod and staff of the Lord is the only one on which he can rely. Out from the legion of transitory things, the unity of things eternal, the one thing needful reveals itself to the soul. It becomes more and more evident that the honour and pleasure it has so long been seeking beside the Lord, are nothing but vanity, and one by one the aims and desires of the heart withdraw. Finally, perhaps only one thing more remains to which the heart clings besides the Lord, and that is life, this also begins to pass away, the body grows weaker, and disease takes a stronger hold upon it, then the spirit begins to long to abandon its decaying hull for its new home; and at length, before the gates of eternity, everything earthly has lost value and fascination to the weary soul, and, as is often clearly revealed beside the death-bed of the pious, it no longer has any appreciation for worldly things or occupations, the whole attention is riveted on the Lord, the Conqueror of Death; forgetting all that is behind, and pressing

only toward that which is before, experiencing that human help is of no avail, it casts itself entirely upon the Lord and His free mercy. Then, at last, it is ripened so far inwardly that it can truly sigh "only Thee!" Then it fully recognizes that in order to live nothing is necessary but the Lord, when death comes nothing is necessary but the Lord, then all its aims, and hopes and love, its faith and longing, have reached the Asaph height, "only Thee!"

Sad to say, those who do learn to utter these words, usually do not learn until too late—Asaph learned earlier. Why should not we children of the new covenant learn still more easily? Only when we have learned that shall we understand life and view it in the right light. Only then shall we become really free and truly saved, only then can we obtain the victory over ourselves, the world and all its wants! Therefore, looking unto the Lord, let us endeavour to repeat the singer's "only Thee," and see how that will enable us.

1. To ascend to a height of love which regards heaven and earth as of little importance compared with the Lord; 2. And take our stand upon a rock of consolation which will endure even though our flesh and heart fail.

Lord Jesus! Thou once gavest up all, even Thy life, just to redeem us, and to win us unto Thy kingdom; therefore it is only just that we should care little for everything else, if only we have thee, and may enjoy Thee forever. Those among us, Lord, to whom as yet Thou art nothing, O seek to become something to them now, and gradually more and more! And to those who have already found Thee precious, do not rest until Thou art become their all-in-all! Amen.
—Theodore Christlieb, D.D.

FOR THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

SENNACHERIB.

BY T. K. HENDERSON, TORONTO.

And when they arose early in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses.—Isa. xxxvii. 36.
They came in legions countless as the sand,
The myriad hosts that owned Assyria's sway,
And o'er the trembling and devoted land
The thunder of their chariots rolled away,
And Asshur poured out all her chivalry!
Thousands on thousands pressed, and rank on rank,
Marched on in battle's terrible array—
As when a mighty torrent leaps its bank,
And waves exulting roll where drowning mortals sank.

So swept they on, the horsemen of the east!
Fleet as the wind, with banners wide outspread;
The flying foe before, behind, the waste
And howling wilderness their footsteps made;
And the long train of weeping captives led
In haughty triumph at the warrior's car!
While in their track gleamed luridly and red
The flames of burning cities lit by war,
Where the fierce birds of prey their horrid banquets share.

In vain the humbled and repentant king
Flung all his treasures at the conqueror's feet;
In vain the temple's sacred gold they bring
To turn aside his wrath too late, too late!
The gathering clouds rolled on, and in the fate
Of distant empires Judah read her own,
And saw the armed battalions at her gate,
And heard dismayed, the victor's vaunting 'one,
Who had the puny gods of many lands o'erthrown!

And round her ramparts swarmed the leag'ring host,
Rider and chariot surging to and fro,
As the unquiet seas in mountains toss,
And heaving wave-like on their march below!
With sword upon the thigh, and bended bow,
Like eagles to the prey that gathered there—
Their spears far-flashing in the noon-tide glow,
And taunts that rang on the oppressed air—
That to the laugh of scorn bore back the cry of prayer!

It was Judea's monarch bowing low
Within the splendid shrine he late despoiled
To glut the triumph of the ruthless foe!
With dust upon his head, in sackcloth robed
He sent a cry for succour up to God,
And craved for vengeance on the accursed horde
That darkened all the land, bearing the rod
Of steeped in wrath, when Retribution poured
The cup of fury out, and whet her glittering sword?

The prayer was heard, the hour of vengeance struck
With hollow knell upon the slumbering host;
And sounds of fear the dense array o'ertook,
As armies on the whirlwind rushing past!
None stayed to gather up the spoil, but cast
A shuddering look behind and fled away—
For Death was in the camp, riding the blast,
And with hot shafts struck down his destined prey
And wrapped their rear in clouds thick as the ocean's spray!

Baffled, bewildered, blind, they staggered on,
A boundless sea of sand around them spread;

And morn'ning, desolate and wan,
Flung its gray light upon the stiffening dead
In ghastly mountains heaped, rider and steed—
Corses on corses piled in death's dull glare!
No warrior bent his bow, nor captain led
In that wild rout of terror and despair—
They looked upon the slain, and wished they knew not where.

Away, away, from the avenging arm
Outstretched in fury on the race abhorred!
Swift are their steeds, but swifter still the storm,
And keen the edge of the archangel's sword
That mowed them down like grass upon the sward!
Tempests around the death devoted sweep,
And none are left to tell Assyria's lord,
Thus storm struck squadrons slept their bloodless sleep,
In one huge grave engulfed, and mingled heap on heap.

THE INDIFFERENT.

There are all around us people who seem to be perfectly indifferent to the promises of God, or of His requirements. They seldom, if ever, go into a church, and only then when some noted speaker or some unusual event has happened to arouse their curiosity to see for themselves. These people are not immoral people. This class is found to be the hardest to arouse from the consciousness of moral security and see no necessity for attending church, where their spiritual natures may be fed; while immoral persons can often be readily shown the results of their conduct and may become true servants of God. Specialists of insanity will tell you that the raving maniac is more often restored to reason than the quiet, indifferent victim of melancholy. How to reach these indifferent, moral classes of people is a problem not easily solved, and yet one that should be carefully studied by every one interested in the welfare of mankind. The interest of these people must first be aroused. This cannot ordinarily be done by a pastor, for people of this class seem to think that it is the duty of all clergymen to do such things and will good-naturedly listen to them, but rarely is any impression made upon them. Who then is to do the work of reclaiming these people? Members of the Church, it must be done by you. Few members of a church have so little influence upon friends who, though indifferent to religion, would not accept the kindly-given invitation to attend with them the sanctuary; who would not fail to appreciate the warm welcome to the circles of Church people, if given heartily and meant to be just what was given. It is a mistake to preach a sermon upon the sinfulness of such a person to him, for in nine cases out of ten, offence would be taken and all opportunity lost for doing good. But if he can be aroused to see the beauties of religion, to feel an interest in the service of the sanctuary, and in the company of those who attend, caused by the constant, courteous and Christian kindness extended during the week-days, not from officiousness, but from real interest in the work of such a person, he will rarely fail to be won to the cause of Christ. If Church members would try to interest this class by personal association and make them feel a welcome in their midst, which would not appear to be affected but felt to have the ring of true metal, the preaching of the pastor and the silent exhortations of conscience would lead them to an examination of themselves which would ultimately make them members of Christ and of His Church. The coldness of those who attend church, the lack of sympathy with those about them, the failure to extend the hand of fellowship to this man because he may not socially be the equal, all do much to extend the indifference of the age, but we have yet to see the Church which has put in practice the opposite methods but what has been filled with seekers after righteousness. We do not mean that a church shall be made a club room, a place for gossip or social enjoyment, "for Mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people," saith the Lord. Reverence for God's house should restrain people from making it a place of social enjoyment, and few people would wish or expect other than dignified and decorous conduct in the house of God. The member of the church must do his part on the outside. If the winning of souls is the Church's mission, her members should do all in their power to awaken the interest of those who are indifferent to the loving call of the Church's Master and endeavour to lead them to Him.

THE adherents of the religion of Jesus Christ to-day outnumber the followers of any other faith in the world. Christian missions number more than 2,000,000 adherents on heathen soil, and at the present rate of increase will include 20,000,000 before this century closes.—Rev. Judson Smith, D.D.