

a word, that you can do good to yourselves and to others, without the loss of any one comfort or pleasure; that you can make the passing employments of a day or an hour, contribute to your permanent good, and that by everything you do, you can train your minds, and ought to train them, for the duties of life, and for its stern realities, as well as for its enjoyments. And when you become older, it will tell you, in a way which we trust you will not mistake, that the true object of reasonable beings is right employment, and assure you that the end of right employment is true happiness.

If there were nothing more than this, would it not be a great deal, and would not wisdom, even in such a case, be far beyond all price? But there is more, and what you will soon see, is more important than anything of which we have spoken. Let us now tell you what it is. You know that neither you nor I can live forever in this world. Some of your parents are dead, and some of your brothers and sisters too. You can hardly go to the street any day, without seeing a hearse, and a train of mournful followers, accompanying to their last home the remains of a departed friend; and when you go to the churchyard, you find it crowded with graves, some of little children, some of fathers and mothers, some filled but yesterday, and some holding for years the ashes of their dead. Well, then, you and I must die; it may be this year, it may be next, or it may be years hence, but die we must. What is to become of us then, after death? When our bodies are carried to the grave, whither do our spirits go? These questions may perhaps not strike us now, but on the bed of sickness, when about to part with all that we had and loved in this world, the thought will arise and force itself upon us, "What is before me?" "What am I to do?" "Who can help me?" At that time all the pleasures of the world will be fast fading away, and the mind, left to itself and in near contact with eternity, will be darning through the darkness which broods over the future. Who, at such a moment, would not give thousands and thousands of worlds for one ray of light to guide his spirit on its lonesome journey? Well then, heavenly wisdom gives us, not a few scattered rays of light, but all the splendours of the noontide. It shows us, with all the clearness which, as immortal beings, we can wish for—what we ourselves are, whither we are going, on whom we can depend, and what we may expect: and showing us these things, it can remove every doubt, strengthen every hope, and brighter every prospect, so that when all earthly supports fail us, and our eyes are closing on all earthly scenes, our souls may be inwardly sustained and carried forward to enjoyments that are for ever pure and perfect.

Wisdom tells us, then, "that we are immortal; that there is a God who judgeth righteously; that there is a heaven and a

hell; and that, after death, our souls must appear before God to be judged of, and that according as their character is then found to be—good or bad—we shall be made eternally happy or eternally wretched; and it tells us, too, that seeing these things are so, this world can be intended only to prepare for another, and that death, therefore, leads to glory or to shame—to happiness without alloy, or to suffering without alleviation."

But the same wisdom which tells us this, tells us, too, that the God before whom we must appear loves us now, and that he pitied us from all eternity—that he gave his own Son to redeem us from punishment, guilt, and sin; and that, *if we believe on that Son*, even the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved, and pass into another world only to inherit eternal life.

But how, he asks, under the second head, does God give wisdom? You remember, we already said, that to prepare for eternity was to believe on Christ and obey him. Now, in order that we may believe on Christ and obey him, our wills—our whole hearts must be changed. The Holy Spirit alone can bring about this change—and the Holy Spirit, you are aware, is God, even as the Father and the Son are. This Spirit then is present in every place, and is always working. And pray what is he doing among men? He is seeking to do them good. He works on their minds, and they feel it, though it may be they do not know who is working; and in everything he does he tries to take them away from what is bad, and to make them holy and happy. Don't you remember, when you forgot to do what you were told, or when you did anything wrong, that after your anger, or your fear, or your pride, went away, you were sorry, though you would not confess it, and perhaps cried when you were alone, though you would not like any one to see that you did so. And what, at such a time, made your mind tell you that you were naughty, and who caused you to feel sorry, and why did you say to yourself that you would never do the like again? It was the Holy Spirit who was then working on your mind, and striving to make you good. If he were not with you, or, if you were to force him away, then would you grow worse and worse, and go on until every good thing had left your heart, and then truly you could have neither hope nor comfort for earth nor heaven.

The Spirit thus is always turning your mind to what is good, and always trying to make you love and do it. Now, if you follow what the Spirit thus tells you, then, in due time, even when God sees it right and good, he will impart special power to your mind that you may believe on Christ and obey him. He says that he will do so, and he never did and never will break his promise. And when that power comes, it will make you *alive*: it will open your eyes, it will strengthen your hands, and enable you to lay hold on Christ as your only Saviour. Then he is yours and you

are his, and neither the world nor hell can ever part you more.

In showing how we ought to seek for wisdom, Dr. Macintosh assures us that before we can pray aright, we must feel our wants—at least the wants which we wish to be supplied—and we must, moreover, have faith or confidence in Christ as our Saviour, and as the Mediator. Because, if we do not feel our wants, it is plain that we are asking what we do not care about getting, and, if we have not faith on Christ, we equally plain that we are asking in such a manner as that God, cannot and will not hear us. Faith in Christ, then, as the Being through whom and for whom we can give us any blessing is—and let us beseech you to bear this in mind—of the very last moment. If when you pray, therefore, you find yourselves not thinking of Christ, or feel that he is not present in your minds, and that you are not founding upon him, you may be sure that the prayer which at such a time you offer, God will not hear nor answer.

In order, however, that you may have good hope of your prayers being answered, see that they be accompanied first by *sincerity*. In other words, see that you be careful to tell God only the real wishes of your heart. He knows everything—even the most hidden thought—and no one can deceive him. If you ask, therefore, for what you don't care about, you may be quite sure that he will not give it, and there is reason to fear that he will leave you to your own folly.

Now, this sincerity must extend not only to your words but also to your actions. Supposing that you pray to God to forgive your sins, and at the very moment when your prayer is over you begin to sin again, does your conduct not prove that you do not value forgiveness of sin, and will your own mind not tell you, that in such a case God has just cause to be angry with you for your deceit and impiety.

Prayer, again, must be *earnest*. Your whole soul must be thrown into it. If you ask carelessly or heedlessly—if your feelings flow not forth strongly in asking, you cannot with reason expect an answer. A few words spoken by way of prayer now and then—a few wishes feebly expressed to God morning or evening are not prayer. If you were asking any great favour from a friend—a favour without which you would be wretched, would you not be earnest enough in asking it? And when you ask life—eternal life—from your Maker, can you be too earnest in asking it, or can you allow any indifference without shame and confusion of face.

Prayer must be persevering. If you faint or give up, that is a proof that you are not in earnest. Bear in mind, that God can know the proper time to answer you, and till that time comes you must wait. Moreover, God only knows what to give and in what manner to give it. You may remember a little ancient fable to the following