

PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

NEARNESS TO GOD.

"Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee;
E'en tho' it be a cross
That raiseth me."

How often is this most beautiful, touching hymn sung in public service and around the family circle; yet how many while joining in realize the depth of sentiment contained in the lines, the true meaning and force of the words? To sing this hymn and honestly mean it, to feel in our hearts exactly what the words convey, requires the most exalted piety, entire consecration of soul and body, time, talents, life, friends, and all, everything to God. We crave a nearness to God, we long for a closer walk with Him; but is the craving so intense, so earnest that we are willing in truth to gain this nearness on the terms contained in the line, "even though it be a cross, that raiseth me?" What is a cross? Are we willing for God to choose the cross? If so, how do we know what that cross may be? Are we so anxious for this nearness, is there such a yearning in our souls for the blessing, that we are willing to leave the means to His own choosing? Then indeed do we sing this hymn with the spirit and the understanding, and the blessing will be ours: otherwise to sing it is a mockery. To sing this matter is very easy. When, as is often the case, we are called to watch by the bedside of some dear loved one, tossing in pain and parched with fever, our hearts tremble in view of what God may have in store for us. Sickness itself is a heavy affliction, a cross designed it may be to bring us nearer to God; but oh! if this sickness shall culminate in death, if our Heavenly Father sees that nothing less will bring our wandering souls to that nearness to Him which He desires, are we willing for it to be so? to have the darling of our affections removed from us by death? Can we bow our hearts in weak submission and say with earnestness, and trembling it may be, "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in Thy sight?" It would seem that the goodness of God manifested in the thousand daily blessings showered upon us, ought to be sufficient to keep our feet in the narrow path close to His side. But alas! it is not so; we becoming so absorbed in worldly cares, so hedged in and around by fleshly lust that war against the soul, that we forget our God, and unconsciously drift away from Him. We forget we have been purged from our old sins, and at last landing in that miserable place for a Christian to be in where we "walk in darkness and have no light," it becomes necessary for divine wisdom to use the hand of affliction. We must "pass under the rod." A dear old sister, long gone since to her eternal rest, said to the writer on one occasion, when talking upon this subject: "My prayer continually is, that God's amazing goodness will keep me so near Him it will be unnecessary to use his judgments." "Afflictions, though they seem severe, in mercy oft are sent." How the Christian's heart ought to swell with gratitude, when reflecting upon the mercy that interposes to check his wanderings and brings him to the Master's feet. When we reach this guilty distance from God, how cold and lifeless are our prayers; how reluctantly we turn to the blood-bought mercy-seat, and what a time we have to consume in making up with God, as it were, before we can get into accord and communion with Him and ask with assurance the blessings we so much need. What a privilege we enjoy in having a mercy-seat to approach! A greater privilege and blessing to be drawn there by the Holy Spirit, and thence blessed privilege, when we bow there to have immediate and precious intercourse with God. To feel that one is talking right to God; that Jesus is interceding, and the Holy Spirit helping us to pray. A worm of the dust, a poor, sinful, needy creature in sweet communion with the true God. Can there be any pleasure on earth equal to this? Can we get any nearer to God while on earth? If every Christian enjoyed this nearness to his God in prayer, what effect would it have upon his daily life, and what effect would the combined lives of all the children of God have upon the unbelieving world! Tidings come to us of glorious revivals throughout the land. Young converts, whoever you are, and wherever you are, take the advice of an old Christian, comparatively speaking, and keep close to God. You now have precious access to the throne of grace; you are in

your first love. As you value the smiles of your Heavenly Father and the happiness of your new born souls, maintain your peace with God. In order to do this, you must keep up secret prayer; go often and with a heart of love to the mercy-seat. Seek the Spirit's aid, keep Jesus in your thoughts, and you will enjoy at all times that nearness to God which so many older, but lame, stumbling, mourning Christians are sighing to obtain.—*Christian Index.*

MARTIN LUTHER.

BORN 10TH NOVEMBER, 1483.

Can we, who know "the truth which maketh free,"
And which hath made us what we are—a strong
Free people, loving right and hating wrong—
Allow this day into the past to flee
Without remembering with grateful glee
This matchless hero, in whose praise the song
Of rescued nations soundeth loud and long?
Not so unworthy of our praises are we.
Four hundred years have rolled into the past
Since he whom God prepared to burst the chains
Which bound the old world to raging Rome
Rose from the abyss of the glittering mast
Of some welcomer. He rises still, and gains
Each year new worshippers. Rome sinks to its tomb.

WILLIAM MURRAY.

Hamilton, 10th November, 1883.

NOT I, BUT CHRIST IN ME.

One who the garb of a disciple wore,
Knocked at the Beloved's door.
And from within the voice of sweetness rare
Asked, "Who is there?"
In accents bold,
The lover made reply—
"Lord, it is I."
Then the voice did say,
"This house will never hold
Both me and thee."
The lover went away.

In thoughtful mood
He sought the desert's solitude,
Living a twelvemonth there
In fasting and in prayer
And on a certain day,
He stood once more
At the Beloved's door.
Again the voice did cry—
"Who's there?"
Humbly he made reply,
"It is thyself, O Lord."
The door, as by its own accord,
Swung open, and he entered in.

WHERE TO BEGIN.

In rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem, under the direction of Nehemiah, it is said of those engaged in this important work that they built "every one over against his house." In all that is done to promote the cause of God in the world, each actor should begin at home, and first attend to self-improvement. Those who profess to be servants of the Lord may talk much about His cause, and expatiate fluently and profusely upon its pressing necessities; they may deplore the prevailing declension of the churches, and the existing apathy in regard to the claims of a perishing world; they may not be noticeably backward in furnishing pecuniary aid for the advancement of religious enterprises; they may be identified with those engaged in supporting Foreign and Home Missions; they may be even prominent as Sabbath school workers; and thus they may be at work upon the wall in general, though neglecting to build over against their own houses, by keeping their hearts with all diligence, and maintaining a close walk with God.

In their declining piety, they greatly fail to receive the promised aid of the Holy Spirit, upon which all their hope of success depends, and their attendant inconsistencies of life, and improprieties, not to say criminalities of conduct, cannot fail to do much harm, and be as a gap in the wall, through which the enemy may not only rush upon them, but upon the whole city. Too many for want of more personal piety bring evil upon the cause of Christ, which they may be desirous of promoting, and for the prosperity of which they may be labouring, while having the form of godliness without the power. Their labours may not be wholly in vain. They may even accomplish much in certain directions of Christian effort in which they are active; but they might produce far greater and better results in what they do, were they to begin nearer home. With a better preparation of heart, they would be more successful in the work of the Lord.

Public Christians should also be private Christians.

Those who are seeking the progress of religion generally should not lose sight of its claims upon them personally. Nothing whatever can take the place of vital piety and spiritual religion in any who would engage in advancing the cause of Christ in the world. The heart devoted to God and filled with the Holy Spirit is the starting point of Christian efforts, such as God will own and bless. For want of a due consideration of this order of religious progress, there is much lost labour in the Church of Christ. Too many seem to prefer building anywhere but over against their own houses. Any other work in religion is more attractive to them than heart work. They are much better keepers of others' vineyards than their own. Hence they labour, to a great extent, in vain, when they ought to be successfully abounding in the work of the Lord. Unfortunately, they do not begin at the right place. Their hearts are not sufficiently enlisted. They are destitute of the best of all impulses, such as full consecration of heart affords. In the supply of what is thus lacking in the piety of many, would be found a remedy for the greatest evils now deplored in not a few churches.—*Watchman.*

THE TEACHER OUT OF SCHOOL.

In a true sense the teacher's work is only half done when he leaves the class-room. Elsewhere he must upbuild his own character, and equip his mind and soul for their work of instruction and influence; and elsewhere he often finds his best opportunities for affecting the lives of those whom he regularly meets as students.

A sound character is, of course, the basis of success in every work; without it, all triumphs must be superficial and short-lived. The nature of the output is caused by, and measured by, the nature of the cause; thorns do not produce figs, nor brambles grapes. But the teacher, because of the very character of his work, is measured by severer standards than those applied to workers out of the strong light of daily publicity. He who teaches or preaches, before a class of learners or hearers, appears before them as a man, impresses a man's force upon their minds, and is strictly measured by them in all the attributes of the noble mind. If he says, "Do this," or, "Refrain from doing that," and his own life fails to show the practice of his precepts, his scholars are swift to mark the inconsistency. Every teacher may well take heed, when he standeth, lest he fall. Chaucer's queries have not lost their force: if gold rust, what should iron do? how can we have a dirty shepherd and clean sheep? The teacher out of school should strive with all his power to make his life like that of the great Teacher of all, in purity, and self-sacrifice, and constant communion with God. In this endeavour he has need to cry, in the words of the old prayer: "From the evil that is around and within us, graciously deliver us; make the path of duty plain before us, and keep us in it even unto the end." He has need, also, to remember the exhortation: "First, last, midst, and without end, honour every truth by use."

The teacher out of school should strive by all means to develop and strengthen his character as well as his mind. Students often despise a learned but untrustworthy teacher, and respect one whose soul is large and true, though his mental powers be not of the highest. A good man is not necessarily a good teacher, but a bad man can hardly teach wisely, whatever his intellectual competence.—*S. S. Times.*

GOD IN JESUS.

When we look up to Jesus, we see nothing of which to be afraid. The invisible God, indeed, eludes our sight, but we can see Him in a gracious face we know well; with the eye of faith we can see a gentle, loving countenance looking down on us, with eyes that for us have been dim with tears! We see "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"; we can trust our souls to His blessed keeping; we can worship and serve Him "whom, having not seen, we love"—and love without a fear!—*A. H. Boyd.*

IN Mr. Spurgeon's inexhaustible fund of illustrative stories is one of a man who used to say to his wife. "Mary, go to church and pray for us both." But the man dreamed one night, when he and his wife got to the gate of heaven Peter said: "Mary, go in for both." He awoke and made up his mind that it was time for him to become a Christian on his own account.