

and best days, for example. How do we regard these? As specimens and patterns of what all our days should in spirit be; or as substitutes for a life of daily devotion,—as days when we discharge our religious duties, and pay off our debt to God for another week? It is well,—it is most needful to have one day specially secluded and set apart for religious thoughts and acts. Our sabbaths are well nigh our only defence against the encroaching tide of worldliness. The greedy world would swallow up all our time,—the selfish world would harden all our hearts, if we had not these seasons fenced off by sacred sanctions from its intrusion. But this is done, not that the world may be left in undisputed possession of the rest of our time, but rather in assertion of God's claim to it all. Our Sundays are given, not that our other days may be more worldly, but less. They are precious opportunities for recruiting the energies and motives of our piety for the conflicts and duties of daily life,—a kind of bath where we may ever and anon cleanse our souls from the vile dust of earth,—a leverage by means of which we may lift our whole life nearer to God. Formality

“Backs to its rigid sabbath, so to speak,
Against the wicked remnant of the week,”

accounts it as a price paid to God for the right to use the other days for self. True piety regards it rather as a standard, serving clearly to indicate what ought to be the spirit and character of our whole life. We call Sunday “the Lord's day,” not as the assertion that all other days are ours, but as a pledge and confession that our whole life is his.

So, too, with our daily prayers and study of God's word. We must, if we are to maintain habits of devotion at all, have regular and carefully-guarded times for these holy exercises. But let us beware lest when we leave our closets we leave our prayerfulness behind us,—lest the day be less prayerful because we think we have done our praying at the outset of it. We should pray at stated seasons, that we may be thereby helped to “pray without ceasing.”

All, all for God!—all life, all thought, work, walking, in obedience to his will, and with a supreme reference to his glory. This is the claim which the text asserts, and which it should be our earnest and

cheerful endeavour, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to comply with.

But what of those who give none of their life to God. who squander all on self, whether they be openly vicious, grossly self-indulgent, or only careless and indifferent? Shall I bid you think from whom comes your life, and who sustains it? Who gives and who supports these powers which you spend in sin? Whose patience lengthens out your life, whose bounty feeds you day by day? And yet you waste all his gifts on self, use them against him, and not for him,—refuse him the homage of the life which he bestows.

Shall I remind you of what he has done to prove his love, to win in return your love, and your obedient trust? “God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” And shall I call upon you to remember that your life is his,—that you may refuse to recognise, but can never annul his claim upon it? And that claim will, one day or other, in one way or other, be made good. You will be made to display the justice if not the mercy of God. A life spent on self means an eternity far from God,—an eternity of irremediable disappointment and despair.

But despair is not yet. Prodigals as you may have been, aspiring after independence of your Father in heaven, self-exiled from his home, are you weary of your banishment? Do you yearn after the plenty, the warmth, the light, the love of your Father's house? Oh, arise and come to him! In his great name, and on the warrant of his truth, I assure you of welcome. He will anticipate your return by his watchful, waiting pity. He will stop your prayer for a menial's place with “the kisses of his mouth,” and the assurance of the adoption of a son. He will give you for your “filthy rags” the robe of Christ's own righteousness, and bid you sit down with him in his banqueting house, while ever you floats the banner of his love. “Let the time past suffice.” Fear not to bring to him what of your life is left. He will not spurn it, though he justly might. He will, for Jesus' sake, heal your backslidings, and love you freely. “My thoughts, are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thought, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”