

the sight of God. He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Where are these Pharisees? Do not waste any time looking abroad; look within. Luther said he feared the Pope that was in his own heart more than the one at Rome. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees! Have you ever been censorious? Have you ever been tempted to look for faults in other people and overlook your own? Have you ever neglected to uplift the community and at the same time try to pray?

One member should take up the ques-

tion of extreme self depreciation, showing the distinction between that and self-reliance. Look up Tennyson's poem on "St. Simeon Stylites." The whole parable offers a profitable study on the difference between an inner religion of life-growth and spontaneity, and an external, legal, perfunctory, routine kind. It is a contrast between the cold, rational ideals of ritualism and the fervent, heaven-born ideals of evangelism. One "despises" those not of its particular brand, the other seeks all men's good, knowing that it is by the mercy of God we are saved.

the door and knock, if any man will open the door I will come in to him, and sup with him and he with Me." Shut in with God! Let us give Him good entertainment. Our love, our loyalty, our service, our all. His acceptance of our hospitality, however poor it may be, if it be our best, shall be His pledge that we shall be His guests, too. O waiter upon God, believe it. When you will, you shall partake His feast of fat things during all your wilderness-life, if you keep on terms with Him. It shall be such a ministering to your needs that whatever befalls, you shall be content. "My people shall be satisfied with my goodness," is a proclamation of His. Expect great things then; and be ready for them. Yes, let us enter our closet constantly, and be sure to shut the door. What better can we hope for than such communion with God as we shall know there. When we shall come forth from that soul-feast, it shall be demonstrated, day by day, that the Father who seeth in secret gives rewards openly. And some day, when going to, or coming from, or even when within that closet, this message will be spoken—and it shall complete our bliss:

"Ascend, Beloved, to the joy,
The festal day has come;
To-night the Lamb doth feed His own,
To-night He with His bride sits down,
To-night puts on the spousal crown,
In the great supper-room."

Thoughts on Prayer

(Third Paper.)

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WHENEVER we draw near to God in prayer we address One who has beforehand pledged Himself to hear us. Nothing that interests us is uninteresting to Him. We can have Him as the "man of our counsel" always. Many things that are of interest to us may be deemed of little real interest or importance by others, but God does not so regard them. He is our loving Father, as well as our Lord and King. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him," and so He bids us go to Him with all our affairs, whether they be big or little. Wisdom points in that direction, and we do well to take heed to her monitions.

The occurrences of our daily life make it necessary that we appeal to God for direction and help. Listen to what an ancient heathen has to say. Xenophon writes: "Pray to God at the beginning of thy works, that thou mayest bring them to a good conclusion." Good advice that, from a man who did not and could not know the Christ, who said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye ask any thing in my name, I will do it."

Now, if our works are to be brought to a "good conclusion," we must pray for divine guidance, both before we begin and while we pursue those "works," or we shall be puzzled by our difficulties and our mistakes may ensnare us. Every step we take must be "ordered of the Lord." His counsel must be followed and applied. This must be our dominant thought:—

"Not mine, not mine the choice,
In things or great or small;
Be Thou my guide, my strength,
My wisdom, and my all."

We should avoid a dangerous thing, which Christmas Evans points out, when we approach the mercy-seat. He says, "There may be dictating even in asking for spiritual blessings, when we ask for them, forgetting the channel in which God ordinarily dispenses them; there is a forgetfulness of 'according to Thy will.'" Nevertheless, we must be specific in our petitions and earnest in presenting them.

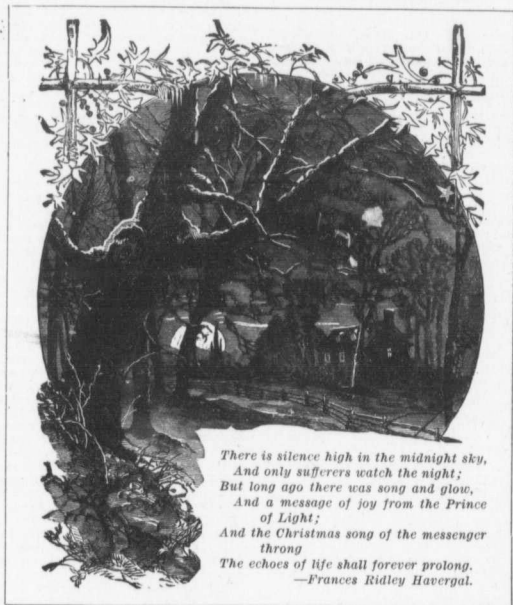
Adams, in his "Private Thoughts," helps us suggestively. Says he, "Be sure not to ask only a little from God." For himself he affirms: "I put my prayers into Christ's hands; and what may I not expect from them when I have such an advocate?" With him Matthew Henry quite agrees, for he gives us this advice: "When you send up your prayers, be sure to direct them to the care of the Redeemer, and then they will never miscarry." He knew that from experience. Do we?

We have every reason to expect great things from God. To realize our expectations we must love and trust Him fully. Half measures in soul matters are ruinous; remember that. To an earnest supplicant who asked Him for a blessing

for his suffering child, Jesus said: "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." So that we learn this—that loving, prayerful trust is a very forceful thing. Try it.

Jeremy Taylor wrote, long ago, what we may prove to-day: "Prayer can obtain everything; can open the windows of heaven and shut the gates of hell; can put a holy constraint upon God, and detain the angel until he leave a blessing."

Here is a too much forgotten precept of the Master, "When thou prayest enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door pray to thy Father." Neglect of secret prayer starves the soul.



There is silence high in the midnight sky,
And only sufferers watch the night;
But long ago there was song and gloire,
And a message of joy from the Prince
of Light;
And the Christmas song of the messenger
throng
The echoes of life shall forever prolong.
—Frances Ridley Havergal.

"Shut thy door." Double bar it against the entrance of everything that can possibly come between the Father's love and our needy life. Nothing that checks prayerfulness and hinders reverent approach to God must have place there, no, not even in our thoughts. Shut in with God! Think of it. Think, too, of His condescension to our unworthiness; of His goodness and our sin; of His greatness and our littleness. Well, what then? Why this—He is there in fulfilment of this promise of His: "Behold I stand at

The festal lamps are lighting now
In the great marriage hall;
By angel hands the board is spread,
By angel hands the sacred bread
Is on the golden table laid;
The King His own doth call.

Sorrow and sighing are no more,
The weeping hours are past;
To-night the waiting will be done,
To-night the wedding-robe put on,
The glory and the joy begun,
The crown is won at last."