

Cherish God's Word.

BY "PURITAN"

In his essay on "Nature" the poet Emerson says: "If the stars should appear one night in a thousand years, how would men believe and adore and preserve for many generations the remembrance of the city of God which had been shown! But every night come out these envoys of beauty, and light the universe with their admonishing smile."

There is a deal of truth in the familiar adage, here illustrated, that acquaintance breeds contempt. We cannot deny that it is our experience that with familiarity and constant association come indifference and unconcern. How well we see this demonstrated in the life of the soldier, who when under fire for the first time is well-nigh overcome with fear and consternation, but as he becomes accustomed to the rattle of the musketry, faces its leaden hail with courage undisturbed. How vividly the orator remembers his first appearance upon the stage as a quaking school boy, or the minister his first attempt at preaching. How different become one's sensations with constant repetition of any act whatever!

But there is an indifference which cannot be the source of much ill and evil with one, and perhaps the most baneful of all which we see in these times is the indifference which exists with many toward the word of God, the Bible. It is a fact which cannot be denied that there is at present a tendency toward the neglect of this best of books, which cannot but arouse astonishment and dismay upon contemplation of it.

In early New England days the Bible was constantly read, by the individual as well as in the family, systematic perusal of the book from cover to cover being the universal custom. Nowadays Bible reading in the family, it is to be feared, is becoming rarer every day. Many of the early divines possessed a knowledge of the Scriptures truly astonishing. An attendant at the examinations of a well known theological seminary recently said that the ignorance of the Bible displayed by many of the students was disheartening, and offered as an explanation of the fact that in early youth is the proper time to require familiarity with the Bible; that it cannot be acquired in the three short and crowded years of a seminary course, and that the neglect of the Bible in the homes of our people was thus displaying itself among our students.

So accustomed have we become to seeing the Bible every where that mere acquaintance with it seems to have dulled our appreciation of it to some extent, in many cases. In former times, when it was a difficult matter to obtain a copy of the precious book, and still more so to retain it undisturbed, the thirst for its contents was often intense. The incident is related of a missionary in the Shetland Islands asking a young woman about nineteen years of age, who had been his guide for several miles, whether she would accept of a sixpence or a New Testament for her trouble. The question seemed to throw her into considerable perplexity; but she soon replied: "I never had a sixpence of my own since I was born, and you may be sure that I would like to have one now; but the New Testament is the book of God, and, therefore, I will choose it if you please."

Nowadays the Bible is to be seen on every hand, in the homes of the lowliest as well as of the wealthiest, even in the office and the counting room. The writer remembers travelling on a railroad the cars of which were equipped with a Bible in an iron rack at each seat. The precious book is now to be had almost for the asking; so much the more should we have a care to make good use of it.

Martin Luther's fondest wish was, "Would that that book alone might be in all languages, before the eyes, in the ears and in the hearts of all! Is there any reason to doubt that his hope will reach its fulfilment? Let us, whose good fortune it is to have the Book of life placed, as it were, in our very hands, not from indifference, or any other cause, fail to turn its pages. Let us cherish the Word of God and make much of this our priceless agency.—Presbyterian Journal.

Why Not Rejoice More?

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

Every child of God may well rejoice because he has such a Father in heaven. "I have set the Lord always before me; therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth." "In his presence is fullness and joy." This refers to the experiences of the present life, and then up at his right hand will be the "pleasures forevermore." It is a bad heart that skulks away from a loving Father in sullen distrust and dread. Then, too, what joy is kindled in our souls when we are brought into full reconciliation with God, through the atoning love and meditation of Jesus Christ! The returning prodigal's heart thrills under every kiss of his forgiving Father.

"Earth has a joy unknown in heaven,
The new-born peace of sins forgiven,
Tears of such pure and deep delight,
Ye angels, never dimmed your sight."

The assurance of a full salvation is enough to keep our

hearts aglow. "I give unto you eternal life," says our omnipotent Saviour; "ye shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck you out of my hand." All things work together for good if we love God. Even sharp pruning may make us yield richer clusters of spiritual fruit, if we will let God have his way. And when the discipline and conflicts of this earthly school-life are ended, we look upward, and see that "our names are written in heaven."

All these joys our loving God provides for us, and offers them to us. We cannot create canary birds; but we can provide cages for them, and fill our rooms with their music. Even so we cannot create the rich gifts which Jesus offers; but there are others if we furnish heart-room for them.

Now, with all these pure and substantial joys within our reach, it is a sin and shame for a genuine Christian to be wretched? Is not disobedience to God a sin? He commands us to rejoice. No duty is more clear. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice!" "The joy of the Lord is your strength." You can fill your soul with inspiring thoughts and with memories of mercies; you can occupy your souls with plans of doing good to others and with acts of obedience to the inward voice of Christ, such as will kindle your soul into a glow. A noble woman of my acquaintance makes rainbows on the cloud of her widowhood by ministrations of mercy to the poor and the destitute.

There is a "godly sorrow" over our shortcomings, and over the woes and wrongs of others that every Christian ought to feel; but such sorrow must never be allowed to drown out the deep, abounding joy of the Lord down in the very core of our souls. There is a gulf-stream of God-given joy that ought to send its warm, current through the wintriest waves of trials and adversities.

The coal-beds are solidified sunshine. The love of Jesus streaming down into your soul makes the central heat; that heat generates spiritual power. So doth the joy of Jesus become your perennial strength. A doubting, ague-smitten Christian cannot do much but shake. A backsliding Christian is on his road to a cell in the castle of Giant Despair. But "he who is nearest to Christ is nearest to the fire," and, the contact keeps the heart aglow. Why not rejoice more? Count up your golden mercies, count up your opportunities to do good, count up your exceeding great and precious promises, count up your joys of heirship to an incorruptible inheritance, and then march on the road heavenward shouting!—Sel.

The Secret of Jesus.

PROFESSOR SAMUEL CHILES MITCHELL.

Matthew Arnold has somewhere pointed out two things as strikingly characteristic of our Lord. The first was his method of *inwardness* which he applied so searchingly on all occasions, and especially in the Sermon on the Mount. The second was his secret that in losing your life you find it. This truth was indeed a secret until Jesus brought it to light and embodied it in himself. Chiefly by this secret has he wrought in the world that creative change, which is in fact the light of all our seeing. He never tired of telling it, and with ever-varied imagery. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall lose it unto life eternal." As Phillips Brooks would say, here we have the throb of the Christ-life in Jesus, and the throb of the Christ-life in his church and in his individual follower.

Unselfishness is the distinctive mark of Jesus. Other men have spoken eloquent words; other men have pitied the wretched; other men have wrought miracles; other men have suffered as excruciating physical pain; other men have had a passionate love for truth; other men have been courageous in defending what they conceived to be the truth; but no other being ever gave himself so absolutely without reserve for mankind as Jesus of Nazareth. I cannot recall a single instance of concern on his part for bodily comfort or worldly good. Desire for happiness we term one of the organic instincts of the soul, but seemingly it was not found in him.

But what do we find? Struggles with wild beasts and demons in the wilderness, at the entrance upon his life-work. It is true we find him at the marriage feast at Cana, but it was to give pleasure to others by the first manifestation of his power. We find him weary at Jacob's well, yet ready to give that moment of rest to the abandoned woman in telling her alone some of the loftiest truths to which human ears have listened. We find him calling the disciples, aside for rest after their mission, yet as the multitude throng after him, he gladly turns to feed them by another display of his divine power. "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." Yet hear him calling to the fainting crowds: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." How tearful are his words as he bends over the doomed Jerusalem: "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" He

is alike the servant of men whether washing the disciples feet or calling Lazarus from the grave. Behold him led out of the city to be crucified. Surely he himself is the figure in that group toward whom your pity goes; yet hear him as he turns feelingly to the women that follow: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."

Even in agony on the cross the same self-effacement is seen in his loving care for his mother's welfare, in his assuring promise to the fellow sufferer at his side, and in the plea for his persecutors: "Father, forgive them." His concern even to the last for the completion of his work, finds expression in his expiring cry: "It is finished." His whole life was "one divine flow of self-giving charity."
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How Can the Pastor Get Nearer his Sunday-School?

BY THE REV. A. T. KEMPTON.

Here is a plan which I have tried, and which I would gladly suggest to other pastors. Instead of having one class in the Sunday-school, I have them all in turns. Each Sunday I invite into my pastor's room one of the classes of the school. Usually I give them a week in advance to talk and plan about it, and get all of their number out. Then during the time for the lesson study I take them all into my own room, the teacher always with them, and talk to them a few moments about the lesson.

Then I have a direct talk about the need of being a Christian, and I ask them personally how many of them have given themselves to Christ. To my joy and surprise, this has seemed to be the part of the talk they appreciate the most. I urge upon them that all openly confess Christ; ask them questions on the Christian life-speak of any special need in the Sunday-school or church, and try and develop a stronger class spirit in the class, speaking words of appreciation of the teachers and scholars.

It is in fact, a heart-to-heart talk with that class. I get them to ask me questions. All of this has worked very well. "Pastor's Sunday" has come to be looked forward to by the classes. The last thing before the class goes out, I have prayer with them, and pray especially for them personally. This brings the pastor in close touch with the class, and if there are any members of it that are strangers, or that need special attention in any way, it gives the pastor a chance to know his opportunity and improve it too. This all helps to solve the problem which I am trying to solve, "How can the pastor get nearer his Sunday-school?" I always have a talk with the teacher, and that brings me in touch with the teachers of the school. After I have gone over the school once, I begin again. This gives me each class about once in four months.

The plan has become so popular with some classes, that, as soon as their regular teacher is absent, they ask that, if possible, they have another pastor's Sunday that day. As a token of the fact that they do appreciate this plan, at Christmas time, when the classes were making presents to their teachers, some of them remembered the pastor in the same way that they did the teacher.

I take especial care in asking the class that, for any special reason, is more approachable on that Sunday. For instance, if one or more are to be baptized from a class, I have that class that day. If two classes are represented in the one thing, I have both classes, either together or separately. If one member has died, that is, of course, the class for that day. I do not hesitate to ask a class to step aside for another when there is any good reason.

The plan is working so well that I commend it to pastors and superintendents, for I believe it will be profitable for either. It takes thought and care and preparation, but the Lord blesses such efforts.—S. S. Times.
Fitchburg, Mass.

The Power of Faith.

"We are justified," says the Bible, "by faith." If a man believes, he is saved. Why so? Not as some people sometimes seem to fancy—not as if in faith itself there was any merit. There is a very strange and subtle resurrection of the whole doctrine of works in reference to this matter, and we often hear belief in the gospel of Christ spoken about as if it, the work of the man believing was, in a certain way and to a certain extent, that which God rewarded by giving him salvation. What is that but the whole doctrine of works come up again in a new form? What difference is there between what a man does with his hands and what a man feels in his heart? If the one merits salvation, or if the other merits salvation, equally we are shut up to this—men get to heaven by what they do; and it does not matter a bit what they do it with, whether it be body or soul.

When we are saved by faith, we mean accurately, through faith. It is God that saves. It is Christ's life, Christ's blood, Christ's sacrifice, Christ's intercession that saves. Faith is simply the channel through which there flows into my emptiness the divine fullness; or to use the good old illustration, it is the hand which is held up to receive the benefit which Christ lays in it. A living trust in Jesus has power unto salvation only because it is the means by which the power of God unto salvation may come into my heart. On that side is the great ocean, Christ's love, Christ's abundance, Christ's merits, Christ's righteousness—or, rather, that which includes them all, there is the great ocean, Christ himself; and on this is the empty vessel of my soul. The little narrow pipe that has nothing to do but to bring across the refreshing water—that is the act of faith in him. There is no merit in the dead lead, no virtue in the mere emotion. It is not faith that saves us; it is Christ that saves us through faith.—Alexander MacLaren.