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Calendar.

CALENDAR WITH LESSONS.

Day & date	MORNING.	EVENING.
S. April 3. Sun. after Easter.	Num. 10. John 21.	Num. 22. Heb. 6.
M. " 4. "	1 Sam. 11. Act. 1.	1 Sam. 12. "
T. " 5. "	10. "	11. "
W. " 6. "	16. "	19. "
T. " 7. "	17. "	18. "
F. " 8. "	19. "	20. "
S. " 9. "	21. "	22. "

Poetry.

HOW MUCH I OWE.

MATTHEW VI. 12.

WHEN this passing world is done,
When has sunk yon glaring sun,
When we stand with Christ in glory,
Looking o'er life's finished story,
Then, Lord, shall I fully know—
Not 'till then, how much I owe.

When I stand before the throne,
Dress'd in beauty not my own,
When I see Thee, as thou art,
Love Thee with unshining heart,
Then, Lord, shall I fully know—
Not 'till then, how much I owe.

Chosen, not for good in me,
Waken'd up from wrath to see,
Hidden in the Saviour's side,
By the Spirit sanctified:
Teach me, Lord, on earth to show
By my love, how much I owe.

Oh! I walk beneath the cloud,
Dark as midnight's gloomy shroud;
But when fear is at the height,
Jesus comes, and all is light:
Blessed Jesus, bid me show
Doubting sinner how much I owe.

MCCHETRE.

Religious Miscellany.

A CALL TO PRAYER.

By THE REV. J. C. RYLE, B. A., CHRIST'S CHURCH,
OXFORD, RECTOR OF HELMINGHAM, SUFFOLK.

"Men ought always to pray."—(Luke xviii. 1.)
"I will that men pray everywhere."—(1 Tim. ii. 8.)
(Continued.)

Reader, I do not deny that a man may pray without heart, and without sincerity. I do not pretend to say, that the mere fact of a person praying proves everything about his soul. As in every other part of religion, so also in this, there is plenty of deception and hypocrisy.

But this I do say—that not praying is a clear proof that a man is not yet a true Christian. He cannot really feel his sins. He cannot love God. He cannot feel himself a debtor to Christ. He cannot long after holiness. He cannot desire heaven. He has yet to be born again. He has yet to be made a new creature. He may boast constantly of election, grace, faith, hope and knowledge, and deceive ignorant people. But you may rest assured that it is all vain talk, if he does not pray.

And I say, furthermore, that of all the evidences of the real work of the Spirit, a habit of hearty private prayer is one of the most satisfactory that can be named. A man may preach from false motives. A man may write books, and make fine speeches, and seem diligent in good works, and yet be a Judas Iscariot. But a man seldom goes into his closet, and pours out his soul before God in secret, unless he is in earnest. The Lord Himself has set His stamp on prayer as the best proof of a true conversion. When he sent Ananias to Saul in Damascus, He gave him no other evidence of his change of heart than this—"Behold he prayeth." (Acts ix. 11.)

I know much may go on in a man's mind before he is brought to pray. He may have many convictions, desires, wishes, feelings, intentions, resolutions, hopes, and fears. But all these things are very un-

certain evidences. They are to be found in ungodly people, and often come to nothing. In many a case they are not more lasting than the morning cloud, and the dew that passes away. A real hearty prayer, flowing from a broken and contrite spirit, is worth all these things put together.

I know that the Holy Spirit, who calls sinners from their evil ways, does, in many instances, lead them by very slow degrees to acquaintance with Christ. But the eye of man can only judge by what it sees. I cannot call any one justified until he believes. I dare not say any one believes until he prays. I cannot understand a dumb faith. The first act of faith will be to speak to God. Faith is to the soul what life is to the body. Prayer is to faith what breath is to life. How a man can live and not breathe is past my comprehension, and how a man can believe and not pray, is past my comprehension too.

Reader, never be surprised if you hear ministers of the Gospel dwelling much on the importance of prayer. This is the point we want to bring you to—we want to know that you pray. Your views of doctrine may be correct. Your love of Protestantism may be warm and unmistakable. But still this may be nothing more than head knowledge and party spirit. We want to know whether you are actually acquainted with the throne of grace, and whether you can speak to God as well as speak about God.

Reader, do you wish to find out whether you are a true Christian? Then rest assured that my question is of the very first importance—DO YOU PRAY.

III. *I ask whether you pray, because there is no duty in religion so neglected as private prayer.*

We live in days of abounding religious profession. There are more places of public worship now than ever were before. There are more persons attending them than there ever was before. And yet in spite of all this public religion, I believe there is a vast neglect of private prayer.

I should not have said so a few years ago. I once thought in my ignorance that most people said their prayers, and many people prayed. I have lived to think differently. I have come to the conclusion that the great majority of professing Christians do not pray at all.

I know this sounds very shocking, and will startle many. But I am satisfied that prayer is just one of these things which was thought a "matter of course," and like many matters of course is shamefully neglected. It is "everybody's business," and as it often happens in such cases, is a business carried on by very few. It is one of the private transactions between God and our souls which no eye sees, and therefore one there is every temptation to pass over and leave undone.

I believe that thousands never say a word of prayer at all. They eat. They drink. They sleep. They rise. They go forth to their labor. They return to their homes. They breathe God's air. They see God's sun. They walk on God's earth. They enjoy God's mercies. They have dying bodies. They have judgement and eternity before them. But they never speak to God. They live like the beasts that perish. They behave like creatures without souls. They have not one word to say to Him in whose hands are their life, and breath and all things, and from whose mouth they must one day receive their everlasting sentence. How dreadful this seems! But if the secrets of men were only known, how common.

I believe there are tens of thousands whose prayers are nothing but a mere form—a set of words repeated by rote, without a thought about their meaning. Some say over a few hasty sentences picked up in the nursery when they were children.

Some content themselves with repeating the Belief, forgetting that there is not a request in it. Some add the Lord's Prayer, but without the slightest desire that its solemn petitions may be granted.

Many, even of those who use good forms, mutter their prayers over after they have got into bed, or scramble over them while they wash or dress in the morning. Men may think what they please, but they may depend upon it that in the sight of God *this is not praying*. Words said without heart are as utterly useless to our souls as the drum-beating of the poor heathen before their idols. Where there is no heart, there may be lip-work and tongue-work, but there is nothing that God listens to,—there is no prayer. Saul, I have no doubt, said many a long prayer before the Lord met him on the way to Damascus. But it was not till his heart was broken that the Lord said, "he prayeth."

Reader, does this surprise you? Listen to me, and I will show you that I am not speaking as I do without reason. Do you think that my assertions are extravagant and unwarrantable? Give me your attention, and I will soon show you that I am only telling you the truth.

Have you forgotten that it is *not natural* to any one to pray? The carnal mind is enmity against God. The desire of man's heart is to get far away from God, and have nothing to do with Him. His feeling toward Him is not love but fear. Why then should a man pray when he has no real sense of sin, no real feeling of spiritual wants—no thorough belief in unseen things—no desire after holiness and heaven? Of all these things the vast majority of men know and feel nothing. The multitude walk in the broad way. I cannot forget this. Therefore, I say boldly, I believe that few pray.

Have you forgotten that it is *not fashionable* to pray? It is just one of the things that many would be rather ashamed to own. There are hundreds who would sooner storm a breach, or lead a forlorn hope, than confess publicly that they make a habit of prayer. There are thousands who, if obliged by chance to sleep in the same room with a stranger, will lie down in bed without a prayer. To dress well, to go to theatres, to be thought clever and agreeable—all this is fashionable, but not to pray.

Have you forgotten *the lives that many live*?—Can we really believe that people are praying against sin night and day, when we see them plunging right into it? Can we suppose they pray against the world, when they are entirely absorbed and taken up with its pursuits? Can we really ask God for grace to serve Him, when they do not show the slightest desire to serve Him at all? Oh! no! it is plain as daylight that the great majority of men either ask nothing of God, or do not mean what they say when they do ask—which is just the same thing. Praying and sinning will never live together in the same heart. Prayer will consume sin, or sin will choke prayer. I cannot forget this. I look at men's lives. I believe that few pray.

Have you forgotten *the deaths that many die*?—How many, when they draw near death, seem entirely strangers to God. Not only are they sadly ignorant of His Gospel, but sadly wanting in the power of speaking to Him. There is a terrible awkwardness, and shyness, in their endeavors to approach Him. They seem to be taking up a fresh thing. They appear as if they wanted an introduction to God, and as if they had never talked with him before. I remember having heard of a lady who was anxious to have a minister to visit her in her last illness. She desired that he would pray with her. He asked her what he should pray for. She did not know and could not tell. She was utterly unable to