

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL & GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

NEW SERIES. }
VOL. XII. No. 27. }

HALIFAX, N. S., WEDNESDAY, JULY 3, 1867.

WHOLE SERIES. }
VOL. XXXI. No. 27. }

Religious.

[Published by Special Request.]

On Spiritual Mindedness.

THE CIRCULAR LETTER FROM THE WESTERN NOVA SCOTIA BAPTIST ASSOCIATION TO THE CHURCHES OF WHICH IT IS COMPOSED.

Dear Brethren,

The cultivation of a *spiritual state of mind* is the subject to which we would invite your attention in our present annual Epistle. In our opinion there is much reason to fear that this matter does not, in general, receive that degree of serious regard, nor call forth that earnestness of effort, to which it is justly entitled. Its great importance, and happy effects, are evident from several considerations:—

1. It is a command imperative on all believers. The Saviour enjoins, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness." In like manner an inspired Apostle says, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. . . . Walk in the Spirit." (Matth. vi. 33; Col. iii. 1, 2; Gal. v. 18.) Numerous similar admonitions interspersed through the sacred Scriptures, clearly evince how needful it is to give diligent heed to this Christian duty, and to improve this exalted privilege.

2. Like all other divine precepts and injunctions it is adapted to promote the happiness of those that observe it. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace. . . . The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace," &c. (Rom. viii. 6; Gal. v. 22.) Not only does the maintenance of communion with God, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, secure present consolation, but it also tends greatly to strengthen the believer's hope of future blessedness. "Now," says the Apostle, "the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. Elsewhere he states, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom. xv. 13, viii. 14.) So the language of our Lord.—(Matth. vi. 21.) "Where your treasure is there will your heart be also," plainly teaches us that our having the affections placed on heavenly things, furnishes decisive evidence that the bliss of heaven will be ours. If, then, we would be joyful here, and assured of endless felicity hereafter, we must be spiritual.

It is to be deplored that many persons who profess faith in Christ, instead of "cleaving to the Lord with purpose of heart," soon become remiss in spiritual exercises and Christian duties, and engrossed with earthly cares and pleasures, conform to the world, and indulge in "foolish talking and jesting, which are not convenient," and consequently lose their religious enjoyment, and their confidence of hope. The deleterious effect of such a course is depicted by the devout Dr. Owen under a similitude to the following effect:—Cases have sometimes occurred in which a man has been obliged to flee out of one kingdom into another to save his life. Should such a one hasten with all speed till he judged that he had probably crossed the line between the two kingdoms, and then instead of pressing on to a fine country, where he might live comfortably and safely, he should stop, and remain on the confines, in a very barren place, where he must live in poverty, and in continued fear as to the safety of his situation, would not his folly be great? Similar to this, but still greater, is the folly of a professor of religion who does not exercise "diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." (Heb. vi. 11, 12; 2 Pet. i. 5-11.)

3. The possession of a spiritual mind is also highly conducive to the welfare of Zion. It tends to preserve her citizens from immorality of conduct, and from strife which is very liable to exist among those that are "carnal," and is exceedingly detrimental to the interests of a Christian Church. (1 Cor. iii. 3, 4; James iii. 14-16.) A spiritual believer is disposed to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem," to labor for her prosperity, to "be clothed with humility," and to "endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Ps. cxxii. 6-9; 1 Pet. v. 5; Eph. iv. 1-4.)—By such a course coupled as it is naturally is with a readiness to contribute freely for the advancement of Christ's cause, its interests must be greatly promoted.

4. It excites to earnest efforts for the salvation of souls. Many persons who entertain the hope that they are going to heaven, seem regardless of the everlasting welfare of those around them. Indeed, some professors of piety appear to imagine that it is incumbent only on the ministers of religion to use any means for the conversion of sinners. But this is a pernicious error. The first Christians when "scattered abroad" by persecution, "went everywhere preaching the word." Paul charged the members of the Church in Corinth to be "always abounding in the work of the Lord;" those in Philippi to "shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." (Acts viii. 4; 1 Cor. xv. 58; Phil. ii. 15, 16.) But whatever views people may entertain in theory, it is not to be expected that they will pray fervently for the conversion of the unregenerate, or labor earnestly for it, while they are themselves in a cold and carnal state of mind. Those, however, who are

spiritually minded feel concerned for the unconverted, and are disposed to unite their prayers and efforts for the salvation of undying souls. So the Psalmist says, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit: then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee." And Paul who was a truly spiritual man, says, "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. . . . for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." And again, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." He remarks, moreover, "I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." (Ps. li. 12, 13; Rom. ix. 2, 3, x. 1; 2 Tim. ii. 10.) The same disposition of mind creates similar desires in the hearts of all God's children, and prompts them to like efforts.

It may be remarked, last, but not least:—

5. A spiritual state of mind disposes believers to glorify God. The obligations to this, and the injunctions to it, must be manifest to all. (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20, x. 31.) But it is "the love of God shed abroad in our hearts" that leads us to love him in return, cautiously to avoid dishonouring Him by sin, and earnestly to strive, by a life of holy obedience, to "show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light." (Rom. v. 5; 1 Jno. iv. 19; 1 Pet. ii. 9.)

Seeing, then, that the possession of a spiritual state of mind is of vast importance on many accounts, we would earnestly and affectionately entreat all the members of our Churches, as well as the ministers, to cultivate it with great diligence and assiduity. But here the question naturally occurs. By what means is this highly desirable blessing to be obtained and retained? We would suggest as appropriate means:—

1. The exercise of faith. Believers "receive the promise of the Spirit through faith;" and "without faith it is impossible to please God," and consequently it must be impossible to hold communion with Him. (Gal. iii. 14; Heb. xi. 6.) He that would "walk in the light of the Lord," must be "looking unto Jesus," who is the "Sun of Righteousness," and must "live a life in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God." (Isa. ii. 5; Heb. xii. 2; Gal. ii. 20.)

2. Careful avoidance of sin. Indulgence in that which Jehovah forbids, as also disobedience to what He enjoins, necessarily causes Him to withhold the tokens of his favor. So it is written, "Your sins have hid His face from you;" and the admonition is given us, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." This caution includes, not only the avoidance of all external immorality, but also that of every wrong temper of mind, as "all bitterness, and anger, and wrath, and clamour, and evil speaking, with all malice." So the Psalmist says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." (Isa. lix. 2; Eph. iv. 29-31; Ps. lxxvi. 18.)

3. The devotional study of the holy Scriptures. Some men are required, for the benefit of others, as well as themselves, to study the inspired Oracles critically; and all should strive to obtain as correct and full a knowledge of their true import as they can; since none can profit by that which they do not understand. But it is the devotional reading of the sacred word which is especially conducive to spiritual prosperity. Our Lord who bade the Jews to "search the Scriptures," prayed for his disciples, "Sanctify them through thy truth," and added, "Thy word is truth." So God enjoins on believers, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom;" and Peter says "As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." (Jno. xvii. 17; Col. iii. 16; 1 Pet. ii. 2.)

As "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable," the whole should be attentively and repeatedly perused by every person; but the devotional parts are peculiarly adapted to promote the spiritual welfare of believers. Religious books that accord with the teaching of the Bible, may also be read with profit.

4. Regular attendance at public worship. Paul cautions us against "forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." Asaph was almost overwhelmed with temptations to repining, and even to infidelity, "until he went into the sanctuary;" and there he obtained relief and consolation, and found it "good to draw near to God." So Thomas sustained great loss, remaining in doubt and darkness for a whole week, by reason of his neglecting to meet with the other disciples, who were glad when they saw the Lord;" and he too became spiritual and joyful when he met with them. (Heb. x. 25. Ps. lxxiii. 2, 17, 24, 28. Jno. xx. 24, 26-28.) If believers would be spiritual, happy, and useful, let them reverence and improve the Sabbath, attend meetings for preaching, prayer, conference, and devotional exercises in general, as frequently as may be in their power. Let them never, under any pretext, absent themselves from the Lord's table.

5. Unremitted and earnest prayer. Our heavenly Father speaks to us in His word, and we speak to Him by prayer; and thus we hold communion with him, through the influence of the Divine Spirit, by faith in Christ. (2 Pet. i. 21. Rom. viii. 26, 27. Jno. xiv. 13.) The idea of living a spiritual life without prayer is as preposterous as that of living a natural life without breath. If we would prosper in the ways of piety, fervent prayer, both in secret and in

the family, must be constantly maintained. Indeed we should "pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." Our dependance on His aid should be ever recognized, and emotions produced by His influence should be always regarded. (Matth. vi. 6. Danl. vi. 10. Eph. vi. 18. 1 Thes. v. 19. Jude xx. 21.) Constant watchfulness, also, must attend prayer. (Matth. xxvi. 41. 1 Pet. iv. 7.)

6. Pious conversation. The Psalmist says, "Talk ye of all His wondrous works." Malachi informs us, that the godly conversation of the Lord's ancient servants was very favorably regarded by Him. When the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, were conversing in sadness respecting the Saviour, "Jesus himself drew near, and went with them," enlightening their understandings, and cheering their hearts. (Ps. cv. 2. Matth. iii. 16, 17. Luke xxiv. 13-32.) While "the talk of the lips [vain discourse] tendeth only to penury," great benefits result to believers, and in many instances to those around them, from a diligent improvement of opportunities for edifying religious conversation. (Prov. xiv. 23. x. 21. Eph. iv. 29. 1 Thes. iv. 18. v. 11.)

7. Devout meditation. Of the "blessed man" it is written, "His delight in the law of the Lord, and in His law doth he meditate day and night." The Psalmist says, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul;" and again, "My meditation of Him shall be sweet." (Ps. i. 1, 2. xciv. 19. civ. 34.) Believers are often placed in circumstances that deprive them of some of the means adapted to promote their spiritual welfare; but the delightful and highly useful privilege of religious meditation may be almost invariably enjoyed. It should be diligently improved.

Not to extend this Letter beyond due bounds, we would in conclusion, affectionately entreat every member of each of our Churches to consider this subject attentively, and to strive earnestly for the attainment and the retaining of a spiritual state of mind. An attentive examination of the texts cited above, with their respective contexts and parallel passages, may be a profitable exercise, conducive to the furtherance of this desirable object. May "the Father of mercies" graciously enable every one of us to know from our own happy and continued experience, that "To be spiritually minded is life and peace!"

Perseverance of the Saints.

BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON.

"They shall never perish." Certain gentlemen who cannot endure the doctrine of final perseverance manage to slip away from the next sentence, "Neither shall any pluck them out of my hands," and suggest, "but they may get out themselves." No, no, no, because the text says, "They shall never perish." Our present sentence which we have now in hand puts aside all suppositions of every kind about the destruction of one of Christ's sheep. "They shall never perish." Take each word. "They shall never perish." Some of their notions may, some of their experiences may, but *they* never shall. That which is the essence of the man, his true soul, his inward renewed nature, shall never be destroyed. See, then, Christian, you may be deprived of the promise. The promise is not that the ship shall not go to the bottom, but that the passengers shall get to the shore. The promise is not that the house shall not be burned; the pledge is that you who are in the house shall escape. "They shall never perish." Take another word: "They shall never perish." They shall go very near it perhaps. They shall lose their joys and their comforts, but "they shall never perish." The life in them shall never be starved out, nor beaten out, nor driven out. If you once get leaven into a piece of bread you cannot get it out; you may boil, you may fry it, you may bake it, you may do what you like with it, but the leaven is in it and you cannot get it out. Get the soul saturated with the grace of God, and you can never eradicate it. The man himself shall never perish. He may think he shall, the devil may tell him he shall, his comforts may be withdrawn, he may go to his death-bed full of doubts and fears about himself, but he shall never perish. Now, this is either true or it is not. You who think it is not true tell the Lord so; but I believe it is a most sure and intangible fact, for Jehovah says it. I do not know how it is that they do not perish, it is a wondrous thing; but they it is all a marvel from first to last. Now take the word "never." We have shown how long the preservation endures: "They shall never perish."—Oh! but perhaps they may be assailed in quarters where they least expect it, or they may be beleaguered by temptation. "They shall never perish." "Well but a man may be a child of God and yet go to hell." How so, if he can never perish? Why, that "never" includes time and eternity it includes living and dying, it includes the mount and the valley, the tempest and the calm. "They shall never perish."

In every state secure,
Kept by the eternal hand"

Beneath the wings of the Almighty God nigh with its pestilence cannot smite them, and day with its cares cannot destroy them; youth with its passions shall be safely passed; middle age with all its whirl of business shall be navigated in safety; old age with its infirmities shall become the land of Babel; death's gloomy vale shall be lit up with the coming splendor;