

Sunday Reading.

The Lord's Prayer Illustrated.

Our Father, By right of creation, By bountiful provision, By gracious adoption, Who art in heaven, The throne of thy glory, The portion of thy children, The temple of thy angels. Hallowed be thy name, By the thoughts of our hearts, By the words of our lips, By the works of our hands. Thy kingdom come, Of Providence to defend us, Of grace to refine us, Of glory to crown us. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, Toward us without resistance, By us without compulsion, Universally without exception, Eternally without declension. Give us this day our daily bread, Of necessity for our bodies, Of eternal life for our souls. And forgive us our trespasses, Against the commands of thy law, Against the grace of thy gospel. As we forgive them that trespass against us, By defaming our character, By embezzling our property, By abusing our persons. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, Of overwhelming affliction, Of worldly enticements, Of Satans' devices, Of errors seduction, Of sinful affections. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Thy kingdom governs all, Thy power subdues all, Thy glory is above all. Amen. As it is in thy purposes, So it is in thy promises, So be it in our prayers, So it shall be to thy praise.

How they Hear.

The minister sat in his study at the close of the Sabbath. As was natural, he was somewhat wearied, but he was still enjoying the mental and spiritual exaltation that had come to him as he had spoken to his people on one of the great themes of the gospel. He had moreover, the sense of relief that comes after a duty done. In humble dependence upon the Lord, he had sowed and watered the good seed of the kingdom. It was with God to give the increase. "My dear," he said to his wife, who sat with him, "it is both interesting and somewhat amusing to note how different people hear the gospel. It is strange how diversely the same message will affect different hearers." "For instance?" queried the wife. "Well, Mrs. Goodlove was waiting for me at the pulpit steps, and her first words were, 'What a sublime sermon, doctor, you have given us! Thank you.' I said, 'the theme is sublime. I hope its fulness will more and more enter into our hearts.' The good woman's love for the truth itself made her use strong language about the sermon. But I am sure she heard to good purpose. "Then Mr. Stearn came up. He is a thoroughly good man, I am sure. He is a man one can have confidence in, but he takes a very severe view of things, and intercourse with him is not always comfortable. "A good sermon, doctor," he said abruptly, as is his habit, "but you will pardon the suggestion that we ought to have the law as well as the gospel; indeed, the law ought to be the foundation of the gospel. Please don't understand me as finding fault with what you said to-night." "Oh, no, certainly not," I interjected—"I only venture the suggestion. What you said was all right, but I was wishing something might be said of what in my young days used to be called the need of a law work. "Thank you," I said, "your suggestion will be taken to heart. Only, Brother Stearn, we have to remember that the methods of presenting truth must change as the times change." "Well, I spoke to one or two others who had lingered—it is pleasant, my

dear, to have a friendly word with one and another at the close of the service—and then I saw young Alfred Thinker waiting as if he wanted to talk to me.

"O, doctor," he said, coming hastily forward when the rest had gone, "you preached that sermon for me. It showed me how I have been breaking God's great law of love as I have never been shown it before. But you did not stop there; you showed me how there is pardon for the penitent and believing law-breaker. I take Christ henceforth as my Saviour."

"Ah, my dear if Mrs. Goodlove's rather indiscriminating praise had unduly uplifted me, and if Mr. Stearn's well-meant criticism had somewhat chilled me, Alfred's confession was as meat and drink. I have not preached the blessed gospel wholly in vain."

"But then," continued the minister meditatively, "why were their not many more to make the same confession Alfred made! There were a good number of the young people out to-night, and they seemed attentive, solemn almost in some cases. Why did not the truth lay equal hold of them? Perhaps it did lay hold, let us hope that it did, but they have not been moved to give expression to their feelings."

"It is amusing, dear," continued the minister, suddenly changing his tone, for he wanted some relief from mental and spiritual tension before retiring to rest, "to see how some people fish for a compliment by complimenting you. I had occasion, you remember, this morning, to make some historical allusions and to give some dates. Mrs. Gushington caught me as I came out of church with, 'Oh, I enjoyed your sermon, doctor so much! I like those historical sermons. I was on the look-out, though, to see that you got your dates all right. I believe you did.'"

"Well," I said, "I am glad that you enjoyed the sermon, and glad I had my dates right if I have such a careful listener."

"She affects literature," said the wife. "She must have thought, however, that you were very shallow if you were going to give a set of dates without knowing what you were talking about."

"Well," said the minister, "it takes all kinds of hearers to make a church, but I ardently wish all my congregation would remember the Saviour's words—'Take heed how ye hear.' The longer I preach the more am I impressed with the fact that it is the way the truth is received more than the way it is proclaimed that determines whether or no it will do good. That does not alter my duty to set it forth in the most engaging and impressive way, to be sure, but the hearers ought to think of their responsibility."—*Illus. Chris. Weekly.*

The difficulties of Gospel work in China can be appreciated only when we remember what terrible, almost fiendish prejudices, it must encounter. In Hong Kong recently, a Chinese pamphlet against the mission work of Christians was circulated, and in it the following passage occurred:

"The Europeans do not belong to the human race, but descend for monkeys. Their hearts are devilish, and for that reason, they are called 'foreign devils.' This race of wild beings worship neither the heavens nor the earth; they do not honor their parents, nor have respect for their forefathers. You say: But if this is a race of wild beings, how can they make steamships and railroads and watches, which even the sons of the heavenly kingdom cannot make? You fool! Do you not know that these Europeans, who come into our country under the pretence of preaching a religion, really come only to take the eyes and the brains of dying people, and draw off blood from the children? With these eyes, brains and blood they make medical pills, which they sell in their country, and in this manner they secure shrewdness to do all these things. But remember what our holy books say: 'The haughty enemy shall surely be conquered. Only let me go ahead, and I swear to you that I will destroy them to the last man, and not one shall return home again.'"

Christianity is sufficient for itself, and needs no adventitious aid. No preacher should so far humble himself as to seek these, nor should the people expect them.

The Intercession of the Spirit.

BY REV. S. GRAVES, D. D.

Praying with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.—Eph. vi. 18.

Paul speaks of this as the great help in our praying. "We know not what to pray for as we ought—or how to pray; but the Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered."

These intercessions are made not so much "for us" as *in us*, and these groanings are in our own souls, they are our own experience, awakened and sustained within us by the presence and promptings of the Divine Spirit, speaking in us, through the deep, unuttered yearnings of our own spirit.

Like all the workings of the Spirit, what are *his* within us we cannot discriminate from what are our own; so does he insinuate himself into our souls, so enter in and pervade and possess whatever is deepest and most personal within us, and move along the lines of thought and feeling, and become so identical with our own desires and hopes and longings, that the two, if they be two, melt into and become one.

And here we come into the central region of prayer; here we penetrate to the inner spirit and soul of prayer; here come into sympathy with God and all holy beings in our desires for the same things that they desire. This, when offered, is "prevailing prayer," the kind that never fails to be answered, though expressed in the most simple and artless and broken words, or only in the cries and groans of a soul so burdened that it can find no words of utterance; and which many a cold, formal, professing Christian might criticize as "unbecoming;" but which when so inspired is, nevertheless, the highest type of prayer.

How serious a blessing then is prayer! It is "deep calling unto deep." It comes from what is deepest within us. It is God's Spirit calling to our spirits—crying in our spirits. It takes hold of the strongest faculties and powers of the soul. It carries with it all there is of feeling, faith, purpose, will, into this one great act of the soul.

This intercession of the Spirit is especially marked by the weight of desire, the burden of anxiety which it implies and suggests—"groanings" unuttered, "unutterable."

Are we Christians of to-day called into such an experience as this—called to offer such prayer as this? Or was this altogether an ancient and Apostolic experience, which is out of date and out of demand upon us to-day?

If we are called to pray at all it is, I believe, after this fashion; and here, more than all elsewhere, I believe we fail—in prayer, and so fail all around, in the power and fruits of Christian life.

The cause of God is spiritual. The kingdom of heaven is spiritual. It is not to be advanced or built up by carnal agencies or worldly measures. These things it needs and uses as builders do scaffolding, which is no part of the structure that is going up. The kingdom of God is righteousness. It is saving souls; winning men to Christ and training them in all Christly ways of living, in purity and virtue and charity; in all ways helpful to men and pleasing to God, and fitting them for the great hereafter of God and glory.

And this is our work as Christian men and women; this is what we are called to; and everything else is to be held subordinate to this—or Christianity is itself a farce and a fraud! This is spiritual work; and only spiritual men can do it. And we fail in spirituality just in proportion as we fail in prayer; as we fail to reach and realize *this type of praying*, which puts us under pressures and burdens.

On our part, this work is to be done in the use of the same means that men employ to accomplish the great purposes of this life; namely, wise planning, personal devotion, earnestness, zeal, sacrifices, taking burdens, carrying weights, facing difficulties, assuming responsibilities, loading the soul down with anxieties which sometimes crush the life out of us. This is the way in which all great enterprises among men are carried up to success. So discoveries are made, inventions perfected, so nations are built and the great freedoms of mankind are won—by men of mar-

tyr souls and martyr lives. And it is by just such a spirit and through such lives that God works in building up his kingdom of grace in the earth; by the union of God's Spirit with such spirits—God's life in such lives, that this is to be done.

Look back through the ages from Noah to Adoniram Judson and you will see it has been so. And so too it must be up the ages to come; and so it must be with us to-day, in linking the two ages together. So fields are won; so souls are won; so every step of real spiritual progress in this world is taken and held.

See now, in this view of the case, the need we have for this kind of praying! The intercession of the Spirit for us—in us—awakening and sustaining in our souls those deep and strong desires which are denoted by *groans*.

God can do nothing in his cause with a lukewarm man, unconsecrated men. Such men are out of all fitness and harmony with the work they are set to do. Men of the firm resolve, men of purpose, of nerve, of cool heads and hot hearts—those are the true crusaders, the cross-bearers.

And such prayer is necessary to make such men—to rid us of besetting sins, to get the heel on them and tread them out;—prayer that is downright wrestling against self and sin, the weak indulgences, the old habits and temptations that unnerve the soul and cut the sinews of spiritual strength. The tonic that will give us the nerve of men to conquer them is this sort of praying.

The call to-day, all along the line, is for a more consecrated membership in our churches; holier men and women; for spiritual power that the world shall feel and give way to; fall before! Our help is in the helping Spirit, who makes intercession for us, and calls into exercise these qualities of soul, these exercises of heart. So far, indeed, is the Christian worker from being exempt from these experiences, because he is to rely upon the Holy Spirit, that for this very reason they are needful. These must all be worked out in Christian experience and life, because it is God who works in us.

The "Two or Three."

Christ says: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them."—Some have taken the responsibility to add to this, "and that to bless." But this added promise of men Christ has not plighted himself to fulfil. Yet He does bless the two or three when they meet for prayer, provided they gather together in His name. The conditions are very important. In the first place they must get together, which sometimes requires a good deal of effort and sacrifice of time, and relinquishment of opportunities for temporal gains. And then they must gather in Christ's name. This implies that they must meet as Christians—Christ's men and women to serve Him in prayer. If they meet in His name, it is not in word merely, but in deed and in truth. There is a clinging faith in what that name signifies. And it signifies infinite wisdom, love, power and willingness to fulfil, by the exercise of these attributes, every promise which He has made. To meet in Christ's name is to trust in His readiness to hear prayer and His wisdom and ability to answer it. It is to expect that He will do just as He has declared He will. And if such ones "shall agree," concerning "anything they shall ask, it shall be done for them," by the Father.

A holy life is made up of a number of small things; little words, not eloquent speeches or sermons; little deeds not miracles or battles, nor one great heroic act of mighty martyrdom, make up the true Christian life. The little constant sunbeam, not the lightning; the waters of Siloam "that go softly" in the meek mission of refreshment, not the "waters of the river, great and many," rushing down in noisy torrents, are the true symbols of a holy life. The avoidance of little evils, little sins, little inconsistencies, little weaknesses, little follies, indiscretions and imprudences, little foibles, little indulgences of the flesh; the avoidance of such little things as these go far to make up, at least, the negative of a holy life.—*Bonar.*

Sunday in France.

When the true notion of the Lord's day yields, everything religious, seems to glide away down stream with it. A curious mixture of laxity and levity perverts even names and things into grotesque forms of presentation. In France there is one city street called the Rue de Paradis, the street of Paradise; and there is another called Rue d'Enfer, the Street of Hell. On every Lord's day both of these are thronged with miscellaneous hosts of thoughtless people who have apparently just bought their gay garments at a store called A l'enfant Jesus, The Infant Jesus, or at the rival store opposite, called Au bon Diable, The Good Devil. There they promenade, and exhibit themselves, and laugh, drink and sing, while the four-cent candles that they furnish to do their Sabbath worship in the vacant churches burn and flare and smoke before the image of the Virgin Mary. Does anybody want this hollowness and confusion brought over here for ourselves and our offspring?

A gentleman once asked the late Professor Agassiz the question, 'What was the thing above all others which most arrested your mind in coming to this country?' The thoughtful man replied, 'It was your observance of the Lord's day.' Now if foreigners who come here do not know the benediction of peace there is in this way of obeying God, it will not harm any one of them to be compelled to discover it for a little, under the helpful pressure of law, and he need not fret at all.—*Dr. Robinson, in Sunday School Times.*

Rev. C. P. Sherman, a missionary to the Jews at Damascus, writes:—"A few days ago papers were found posted upon several churches, calling upon the Moslems to rise, as 'we could not enjoy the feast of Biram except we kill all Christians.' May our Heavenly Father protect us, and avert such a terrible catastrophe! That something is going on in the Moslem mind, and that our safety, humanly speaking depends upon a serious defeat of the Mahdi, I can state most solemnly. I have a good many Moslem friends, and as far as I can gather from conversation, I can say that we must be on the alert, and prepared for any eventuality. There are those who have set eyes on the fertile plains of Syria, and as a priest told me only the day before yesterday, that the lives of a few thousand persons are nothing in comparison to the glorious rule of a European Power. I write these lines in the hope of stirring you up for special prayer on our behalf. We in Damascus will have to bear the brunt and the burden of all. If God once permits a massacre to commence we cannot 'flee to the mountains'; we must either stand on our defence which, after all is next to nothing, or must permit ourselves to be slaughtered, as was the case in 1860. Pray for us, and think of us!"

Not long ago a man considerably under the influence of drink entered one of the city omnibuses in Glasgow. On being seated he soon became troublesome and annoying to the other passengers, and it was proposed to eject him. That would have been done instantly, but a genial and kind-hearted reverend doctor, who was also a passenger, interposed and soothed him into good behavior for the remainder of the journey. Before leaving, however, he scowled upon the other occupants of the bus, and muttered some words of contempt, but shook hands cordially with the doctor and said, 'Good day, my friend; I see ye ken what it is to be drunk.'

The *Netherlander*, a Dutch newspaper published at New York contains the following advertisement:—"We wish to let the public know that on December 2 a domestic feast was celebrated in our home near the church, at the corner of Erie and Noble Streets, the sixth anniversary of my teetotal-ship. I have remained faithful to my promise, notwithstanding the first year I was invited no less than 711 times to partake of spirits. I always said 'No,' and with God's help I hope to do so always.—P. FISCHER, wife and children."

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1884.

FOURTH QUARTER.

Lesson VIII.—NOVEMBER 23, 1884.

PROVERBS OF SOLOMON.

Proverbs i. 1-16.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 8-10.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge."—Prov. i. 7.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

M. Solomon's Wisdom. 1 Kings iv. 29-34. F. The Lesson. W. The way of Wisdom. Prov. iii. 1-12. T. The Value of Wisdom. Prov. iii. 13-18. F. Wisdom the Principal Thing. Prov. iv. 5-18. S. The Call of Wisdom. Prov. viii. 1-17. S. The Reward of Wisdom. Dan. xii. 3. ANALYSIS.—I. The Design and Value of the Proverbs, Vs. 1-6. II. The Ways of Wisdom, Vs. 7-9. III. Warnings Against Evil, Vs. 10-16.

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 1-6.—What is a proverb? How many proverbs is Solomon said to have spoken? Is he the author of all the proverbs in this book? What design of these proverbs is stated? Define the terms in verse 2.

Vs. 7-9.—What is meant by *fear of the Lord*? What is the first step in the way of wisdom? What is the special mark of fools? What is the second step in the way of wisdom? What do the Ten Commandments say about obedience to parents? What is the only restriction to obeying them in all things? See Eph. vi. 1.

Vs. 10-16.—Do we dare to tamper with temptation? How shall we resist it? To whom, specially, do wicked men come with suggestions to join in evil courses? What is the best plan to keep from walking in evil ways? How about taking the first step?

Lesson Proverbs.—Where, in this lesson, do we find—1. The Scripture idea of the wise man and the fool? 2. The Scripture idea of what true knowledge is? 3. The road to the highest wisdom?

Proverbs are short, "pithy expressions, which embody some moral precept, or admitted truth."—*Worcester.* We are told, in 1 Kings iv. 32, that Solomon "spoke three thousand proverbs." From these he doubtless selected such of his as are found in this book; for the book contains less than one thousand proverbs. And not all in it were the product of Solomon's mind. It does not detract from his work to believe that many of his proverbs originated among the people, and that his part was that of putting them into terse and compact form. The Book of Proverbs is of great value. Prof. Stuart speaks of it as a "manual of ethics, sobriety, chastity, industry, and economy," and says, "In it is virtually contained the history of the mental and moral state of the Jewish nation, more minute, more graphic, and more extensive than all the external histories of the nation." The book was written before Solomon was beguiled by his wives into idolatry. Though not having the spiritual tone of the Psalms and the Prophets, it gives the philosophy of practical life.

Notes.—Vs. 1.—*The Proverbs of Solomon.* See Introduction. Though the book is not entirely from Solomon's pen; he is the principal author. Dr. Arnot notes a marvel in these writings of Solomon: "Not a line of them tends to palliate Solomon's sins."

Vs. 2-4.—These verses give the design of the Proverbs. That design is: 1. That men may know wisdom and instruction. Wisdom is not mere worldly sagacity; but implies the use of the best means for the best ends, and is generally employed in this book for true piety. Instruction refers to discipline and moral training. 2. Also, that they may perceive the words of understanding, or may have true discernment between right and wrong, truth and error. 3. Still further, that they may receive instruction of wisdom, etc., or attain discretion, and know their whole duty to God, to others, and to themselves. The words, *justice, judgment, and equity*, "bring before the reader the whole domain of moral propriety and fitness."—*Stuart.* 4. That the simple may have subtlety, or shrewdness, in a good sense, such as enables one to detect evil and avoid it; and that the young man may have knowledge and discretion.

Vs. 4-6.—Three classes of persons are mentioned, to whom, especially, these Proverbs are addressed. 1. The simple, or inexperienced; the simple hearted, who are willing to learn. 2. The young man, who, on account of his youth, lacks experience and acquired moral power. 3. The wise man who will hear, and increase in learning, because he is a wise man, and desires to know more. The wiser he is, the more he is anxious to learn. *Wise counsel.*