



SUNDAY READING

SERMON.

Religion in Daily Life.
By REV. SAMUEL PEARSON, M. A.
Preached at the First Open Church Service at
Broughton Park Congregational Church,
Manchester, England.

"Whoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."—
I. Co. 10:31.

The best of such a subject as this is, that we are obliged to consider what daily life is. We begin religion at the end of the chain which we can all understand. If we began it with definitions of God, with schemes of salvation, with theories of atonement and inspiration—we might be very much puzzled about daily life. For we all know what it is. A day brings different duties to each; and yet there is such a likeness between our duties that we can describe them all in much the same terms. The servant and the mistress have different duties, but they live in the same house; and the kitchen is not essentially different from the dining-room. The man and his master have different functions, but they go to the same warehouse, mill or shop, and one part is not essentially different from another. What is it, then, that binds all together? Work. That is the key-word of daily life. Work. He that does not work knows not the meaning of life. He is a drone. To him religion brings a simple and elementary message: "If you want to eat—work." Besides things to do there are things to resist in daily life. It is not all gold that glitters. It is not easy to do one's duty and to avoid sin. We carry seeds of evil within us, in an irritable brain, a quick temper, an evil imagination, a cold heart, a censorious tongue, an unwillingness to co-operate heartily with others. There are also temptations to relax our efforts, to sink asleep in the lap of luxury and our locks shorn, to get gain at the expense of justice, to fall into the snare of evil comrades, to go into places of temptation. All these things haunt us like our shadow. We have to watch, to be on our guard. Then, if daily life consists of things to do and things to resist, how is religion to be brought in? Religion is to be brought in if God can be brought in. If our work can be done as His appointment, if our temptations can be resisted by His strength, then we can, indeed, live the religious life in the midst of our common circumstances. Religion consists of things to be done for God. If it be possible to do common service for God, religion is not in the things done, but in the doer of them. O man! it is not time action but thyself that is religion. We all need to pray, therefore, "Create within me a clean heart, and renew within me a right spirit." Two carpenters are at the same bench, both engaged at the same work: one looks out of the window at one end of the shed toward self; the other looks out toward God. The work seems to be the same—the wages, the workshop; but the men are different.

The Heresy About Work.

Can we find out, then, how this difference is brought about? Yes; it is brought about by a friendly talk with Jesus Christ. This was brought about in a singular way with regard to a very small man. He was in a tree looking down at Jesus; and suddenly he heard his name called. It led to a friendly talk. The man's business remained. Zacheus still carried on his work at Jericho, and kept his books, and received his customs. But there was a change in the man. Everybody saw it. Henceforth he carried on business for God's glory, and regarded himself as a servant of Christ. What was done in the home at Jericho can be accomplished in any home in Manchester, if only the man goes through a similar change. It is the man that makes the work religious, not the work the man.

A few days ago a member of parliament was complaining in the house of commons that some Welsh ministers did secular work. At which he was interrupted by the exclamation, "Like the Apostle Paul." "Yes," said the speaker, "but if Paul had not done so much secular labor, he would have had more time to work for his Master." Here is the heresy of many people about work. The M. P. was so ignorant that he thought that tent-making was not work done for the Master, and that preaching was. As well might you say that the designer in some mill works for the master of the mill and that the girl at the loom who carries out the designs does not. They both work for the same master, though they work in different departments. Paul at his tent-making is serving Christ, and is accepted of Christ as much as when he stands on Mars Hill to argue with the Athenians. What we want is the new man, regenerated by the Holy Ghost. Then the work is new; the temper of it is new; the results of it are new; the workshop and the house are new.

Do you want to have religion in daily life? See to it that it exists in your heart, that you love God with your whole soul, and you will not fail to render daily sacrifice acceptable to your Maker. There is a reason why religion is possible in daily life. It is that daily work brings out the christian temper, shows the christian character and develops it. Christianity is like a beautiful tree, with the branches of sturdy virtue growing on it, and healing leaves quiver on those branches, and occasionally it is covered with the blossoms of kindness and gentleness; and in the summer-time of the soul it is laden with the fruits of generosity and self-sacrifice. Where shall we plant that tree? To put it in some close courtyard, where neither scorching sun nor biting wind can reach it, would be to make it languish and die. No! out in the open, among other plants and trees, where broad sunshine is felt and winds are blowing—there it must be reared if it is to be healthy. It is not here in the sanctuary that we show forth the praises of God. Here we tune the harp; in

the home and in the shop, we sound forth the music. It is not here that we walk the hard road. Here we rest our weary limbs preparatory to the journey of another week. Christians must live christianity in the world if the world is to become christian.

Things to be Resisted.

There are things to be resisted in daily life which show how necessary every-day religion is. Every man takes a lower self with him which stands like a demon at his elbow. You hear its cynical laugh and its hissing whisper, "Take care of number one." That lower self has to be resisted by young people at home, by older people in shopping, by business men in dealing with other business men. There is injustice standing with a stiletto before us with threatening mien; a coward at heart but a bully in manners. He crosses all our public thoroughfares; attends political meetings; meets us at the ballot box; frequents the lobbies of both houses of Parliament; and makes rich men his slaves. Resist him. There is impurity sliding stealthily along the pavement; writing in the chambers of imagery, leaving a snail-like trail on our novels; writing with his lecherous pen for our daily papers, undermining home, destroying young manhood, and blasting woman's moral beauty. Resist him. Intemperance destroys with its poison tens of thousands. He spreads his nets far and wide on Sunday and week-day, and will do so until an enraged people resolve that man-traps and woman-traps be removed. He draws his victims from the mansions of the rich and from the hovels of the poor with fiendish impartiality, and bids his myrmidons dig, dig incessantly, graves for the drunkard through the length and breadth of the land. Oh! when will the horrid carnival cease? Not till with might and main we resist him. Indifference, too, is our enemy; though dressed in purple and fine linen, we seldom recognize him as such. We invite him to our homes and let him loiter on our couches. But he is there to breathe a hot wind over us, which takes nerve, principle and power out of all our actions. Through him great causes lack leaders, through him sanctuaries are neglected, through him the family altar is thrown down, through him the faith is forsaken and loves grows cold. When I see his sickly smile and hear his honeyed platitudes, I think him the worst of the devils with whom we have to deal. For like the sorcerer of old who entrapped Merlin in the forest tree and imprisoned him there for ever, he, too, can weave his spell of sleep over cities and nations, until the slumber turns to death. Nothing, then, but the judgment can rouse such a people. Oh! in the name of all that is noble and powerful in God's truth, resist him.

Doctrines and Practice.

It is said that we do not lay enough stress on the doctrines of christianity in this teaching, as we so often do, the necessity of a practical religion. But I think we shall see that the two cannot be divorced from one another. You cannot have religion in daily life unless you have Christ in daily life. To have Him is to have His teaching, and the truths which explain His mission and character. Nothing can put the doctrines in the clear light which ought to shine through them, but a close application of them to practical duty. Unless we can apply them, they may be truths fit for angels and for philosophers, but they are not fit for the common run of mankind.

Take some of the principal ones, and we shall see how they illustrate and enforce our subject. The Incarnation.—This teaches us that God was in the flesh, that the very God came to our common duties. What could be more inspiring than the knowledge of this fact? Why, it at once brings God down to be our Guide and Helper. The young apprentice in some foundry handling molten iron and steel, watching the fierce furnace, is in the midst of danger; but he is protected as long as he looks up to the foreman, who is stronger and more skillful than he. The three young men in the fiery furnace are safe and fearless when they find the Son of God with them. Our common life is no longer common when we find ourselves side by side with the very God who undertakes our work for us and with us. Side by side He works and watches and prays: "I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil" which is in the world.

O! Son of Man; Thyself hast proved
Our trials and our tears,
Life's thankless toil and its scant repose,
Death's agonies and fears.

The Atonement is a cardinal doctrine. How can we understand and apply it? Apply it to daily sins; to common guilt; to the transgressions which we ourselves have committed. It is an awful struggle, this fight against sin. One in which we are sure to be worsted if we are alone. But then, like the serpent-bitten Israelite turning to the brazen serpent, we look to Him who died for our sin, and who rose triumphant from the grave, a conqueror over every enemy. It was said that Constantine saw a flaming cross in the sky on the night before his battle with Maxentius, and that thenceforth he gave his soldiers the sign of the cross on their shields. This is a parable of what we must do. By the blood of Christ we conquer. In the power of the cross we can go forward. Pardoned through His death we have strength to fight with fierce temptations. There is no power, beside this, none higher, none so high, none that suffices. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." There is the doctrine of inspiration. We see a book before us which professes to tell us how to live, how to work, how to believe, how to die, how to enter eternal felicity. "Holy men spake as they were moved by the Spirit." We might discuss that statement and define it, and refine upon it for years, and get no nearer any valuable truth. But if once we turn to the book, and seek to guide daily life by its precepts all becomes clear. We get inspiration in actual experience, and our souls are lifted

near to God. The man who looks over a large steamer is interested. He can describe it and admire it. But it is the man who braves the dangers of the deep in it who comes to the sunny land. Launch forth! Trust yourself to this wonderful vessel, prepared through the ages for your help. Take the book as your daily guide. Write its laws on your business, your home, your very soul, and its inspiration will have in you its best because its living witnesses.

A glory glides the sacred page,
Majestic like the sun;
It gives a light to every age,
It gives, but borrows none.

Nay, the very Godhead is best understood in the light of every-day life. How can we ever penetrate the great mystery of the Trinity—three in one and one in three? Not by our speculation, not by our intellectual inquiry. But the Father loving us and watching over us, "Thou God seest me;" the Son of God dying for us and interceding on high on our behalf, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee;" the Spirit of God dwelling within us, fortifying us for our work, and breathing holy desires into our very souls—

And His that gentle voice we hear,
Soft as the breath of even,
That checks each doubt and calms each fear,
And speaks of heaven.

Yes, it is there that we understand who God is and what He may be to us. Every breath tells of His power, every blessing points to His kindness, every incident witnesses of His Providence, and death itself is the door that admits to His Presence Chamber.

Oh! how glad and solemn, how beautiful and responsible your life may be; redeemed from triviality and sin, you are now a child of God by faith in His Son, and heir of immortality and marching forward to glory! Remember, then, whose you are, and whom you serve; by whose blood you are bought, by whose mighty Spirit you are being sanctified, and go forward with humble heart, and erect bow, and ready hand, and obedient feet, until by His great grace He shall greet and meet you with His words of welcome: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

SALVATION ARMY SELF-DENIAL.

A Week of Abstinence from Butter, Milk, the Barber, and Other Luxuries.

Marshal Ballington Booth of the Salvation Army has announced that the self-denial week for the army this year will be from May 7 to May 14. This is the third year in which the Salvation Army has kept a week as a sort of Lent. The custom has been established in England for six or seven years.

Even since the announcement of the time for this year the *War Cry* has devoted a part of each issue to urging all Salvationists to their duty, and to the telling of stories of strange or tragic self-denials wherein some member of the army has shown the true spirit. The Salvationists do not think much of the ordinary Lenten sacrifices, because these sacrifices are indefinite and general, and often mean the giving up of things in which the salvation army never indulges. For instance, giving up dancing or public amusements would mean nothing to a Salvationist. He is never much of a leader of Germans, and attends the theatre very little.

Self-denial week means for the salvationist some real and material mortification of the flesh. One gives up butter on his bread all the week. Another gives up vegetables, another gives up meat. Some wear their old clothes another season. Some quit getting shaved for seven days. In fact, they make all sorts of curious and, often, from the secular standpoint, ludicrous personal denials. The results of these self-denials, the week's shaving money, the week's butter, the week's eggs, the week's meat, are turned into cash by the person making the denial, and the cash is handed over to the army to be used in some way which the marshal shall appoint.

Last year the 10,000 salvationists in this country made an aggregate self-denial of \$6,000, one-half of which was used for the memorial fund. This year's self-denial fund, which will probably be much larger, is to go toward the work of the army in the slums of New York, unless Mr. Booth changes his present intentions. In Great Britain, where the salvationists are so much more numerous, the collection for 1889 by self-denial was about \$100,000, in 1890 it was about \$150,000, and last year it was about \$200,000.—*N. Y. Sun.*

THE CHURCH AND ITS WORKERS.

A presbyterian church in Lancaster, Pa., gives a medal to every person who does not miss a church or a Sunday school service during the year. Last year the sexton carried off all the honors.

Archdeacon Farrar says that, "when we look back to the state of society in England fifty years ago and compare it with the present condition of things, we may thank God and take courage."

Father Dillon, a well-known preacher of Paris, recently declared himself a believer in the doctrines of socialism in the course of a sermon delivered in the Madeleine. The announcement, it is said, produced a sensation.

The *Jewish Tidings* speaks contemptuously of those "long-bearded Jews who believe that the touch of the christian is defiling, and that our conduct in life should be patterned after the habit and whims of men who lived before the art of printing was invented."

Rev. Lydia Sexton, a regularly licensed preacher, who moved from Kansas to Seattle three years ago at the age of 90 years, has since conducted many revivals and other religious meetings, but her eyesight is beginning to interfere with her activity. She had hoped to go on till she had reached the age of 100 years.

The Critical Period.

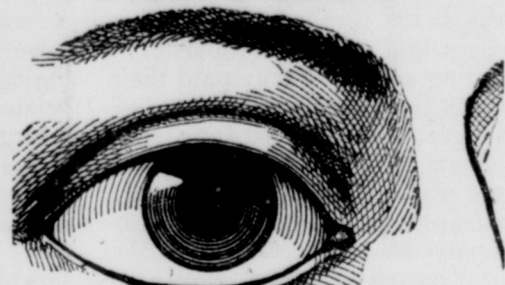
There is a time in a young man's life when he thrusts his fingers in the armbolts of his vest and tosses his head and gives a Byronic laugh at Christianity, or asks Tom Paine's question about the Serpent in Eden, or the miraculous conception of the Lord Jesus Christ. But it is a good deal easier to get lost in the jungles than to get out of the woods. Skepticism mauls a man to death. It is a Hindoo hook thrust into his flesh to swing its victim in the air. Take my right eye, take both eyes, and leave me in the midnight all my earthly days,

rather than blast my vision of that gospel which is my comfort for the time and my hope for eternity. Will not some of these parents be comforted in the loss of their little children when they read of those who have grown up to reject Christ, notwithstanding early religious training? Better for us to put the forms of our little ones down where the infernal archer cannot strike them. How softly lies the sod on the breast compared with the pressure of a destroyed spirit. Better have the little hands closed in death around the flowers that the playmate sends than to have them open for pulling down the hope of a ruined world.—*T. DeWitt Talmage.*

A Passport to the Immortal City.

A curious custom of the Greek church was illustrated at the funeral the other day of the young Grand Duchess Paul of Russia. Before the coffin was closed the metropolitan placed a written paper in the right hand of the corpse which read: "We, by the grace of God, prelate of the holy Russian church, write this to our master and friend, St. Peter, the gatekeeper of the Lord Almighty. We announce to you that the servant of the Lord, her imperial highness, the Grand Duchess Paul, has finished her life on earth, and we order you to admit her into the kingdom of heaven without delay, for we have absolved all her sins and granted her salvation. You will obey our order on sight of this document which we put into her hand."—*Hebrew Standard.*

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