

## NO TIME TO PRAY.

No time to pray!  
 He who so frantically with earthly care  
 As not to give to humble prayer  
 Some part of the day?

No time to pray!  
 What heart so clean, so pure within,  
 That needeth not our check from sin—  
 Needs not to pray?

No time to pray!  
 Mid each day's danger, what retreat  
 More needful than the mercy-seat?  
 Who need not pray?

No time to pray!  
 Must care or business urgent call,  
 So press us as to take it all,  
 Each passing day?

No time to pray!  
 Then sure your record faith short  
 Excuse will fall you as resort  
 On that last day.

What thought more dear  
 Than that our God his face should hide  
 And say, through all life's swelling tide,  
 No time to hear!

Cease not to pray:  
 O Jesus, as we live happy—happy die!  
 Would you live happy—happy die!  
 Take time to pray.

## The Pulpit.

## A CALL TO SEPARATION.

BY REV. ALEXANDER MACLAREN, D.D.

"Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone."—Hosea iv. 17.

These are very solemn words, whichever way we take them, but the way in which they are generally understood is distinctly a misunderstanding. They are not intended as a threatening of the cessation of the divine pleadings with an obstinate transgressor—there are no people about whom God says they are so wedded to their sin that it is useless to try to do anything with them—and they are not a commandment to God's servants to fling up in despair or in impatience the effort to benefit obstinate and stiff-necked evil doers.

They are generally read as if they were: as if here either the divine grace was threatening its own withdrawal, or as if the divine Spirit was forbidding the prophet to labor further for the rescue of Ephraim. But the context distinctly shows us that this is not the meaning; and the book in which they occur is one long pleading with this very Ephraim, just because he is 'joined to idols.'

Ephraim is another name for the northern kingdom of Israel; one of the two halves into which the nation was divided. Hosea himself was the prophet of the northern nation; and his whole activity was devoted precisely not to letting Ephraim (that is, his countrymen of Israel) alone. But it is the people of the other the neighboring kingdom, that are addressed; and what is meant by letting alone is plainly enough expressed for us in a previous verse: 'Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, let not Judah offend.' The sin of the northern kingdom in the calf-worship is held up as a warning to Judah, which is besought and commanded to keep clear of all complicity therewith, and to avoid outwelling alliances with 'backsliding Israel.' This and this only is the purpose of our text—a plea with Judah to stand apart from association with evil doers. It is in fact an Old Testament parallel to Paul's vehement, indignant questions: 'What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? or what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?' And the prophet with his 'Let him alone' is saying the very same thing as the apostle with his 'Come out from among them and be ye separate.' The teaching of both as applied to this day is—Between God's church and the contiguous world let there be a gulf; between you, Christian professor, and your neighbor who is not a Christian, let there be a great broad line of demarcation. It is an old, old saying, 'A man is known by the company he keeps.' Do you see to it that by the company you keep you are known to belong to God.

'Ephraim is joined to his idols,' bound and wedded to them in a mystical union, attached to them so closely that the two, as it were, seem to get bonded and grown together. As you will sometimes see a parasite climbing round an elm tree, having penetrated the bark with its fibre, and being fed from the sap, so the world in which you and I are living, and on which you and I have to work, has become so incorporated and interpenetrated with the evil which it is serving and worshipping, that the two are, as it were, one personality. Ephraim and the idol are fused and melted together, and the world and its idol are fused and melted together in the same fashion.

So, then, if you are joined to it, you are joined to its idols; and unless you let Ephraim alone you cannot but become tainted with the idolatry which cleaves to him.

Now translate all that into plain simple English, dear Christian friends, and it just comes to this. It is a very bad sign of a Christian

man when his chosen companions are people that have no sympathy with him in his religion. Of course, there are natural ties which we must not break. Of course, there is a great deal of neutral ground which is common to us all. Of course, there are obligations of various kinds which compel association with people altogether irrespective of the deep things of their spirits in regard of religion. Of course, if the man next me has no share in the love which lightens my spirit, the first duty that I owe to him is to try to get him to share the blessedness which Christ gives me through my poor faith.

All that has to be conceded at once, and all that being remembered, and influencing our conduct, I beseech you Christian professors here, for whose souls and Christian characters in some sense and degree I am responsible, to ask yourselves these questions—whether your associations with avowedly, or, at all events, manifestly, irreligious people do not go a great deal further than that; whether some of you do not on the whole prefer company in which there is no community of faith and love with your professed faith; whether you do not feel more at ease and more in sympathy with the tone of the society in which there is never a word said about Jesus Christ and His love than with that of society in which there is; whether you do not choose your friends (and your truest friends, your books) from other reasons, and because of other sympathies than the sympathy in the love of Jesus Christ and His service?

I am afraid that a great many of us will have to plead guilty to that indictment. And it is a bad sign of a Christian man when it is so. Of course there are many things—such as differences of position, culture, and temperament which cannot but modify the association of Christian people with one another, and may sometimes make them feel more near to our Christian associates who are like themselves in these respects than to Christians who are not.

But, although all that is quite true, yet between you, if you are a Christian man, and the brother most unlike to you in all these particulars, there is a far deeper sympathy, or at least there ought to be, than there is between you and the irreligious man that is most like you in them all. You may have associates with whom you are mixed up in business, or in some common object of interest, in study, or politics, or benevolence, or even it may be that you are kind to them by kindred and affection. You feel that you are bound together by very real and worthy bonds.

You are a Christian, and he is not. Is not the gulf below the mere surface film of the unity a far deeper thing than the superficial sympathy; and should you not—would you not if your religion was the principal thing about you—feel uneasy in that society, and instinctively draw yourself apart from it? Would you not rather find that you opened out, and were conscious of having a congenial atmosphere round about you when you got with good Christian people, whether they were like you in these other matters or not?

Now, that is very plain talking, dear brethren; it is not preaching; but it is simply setting before you a very important side of Christian conduct and of duty which I have a very profound and very growing conviction needs to be drummed into the ears until it gets to the consciences of all professing Christians in this day.

For sure I am that if there is one thing more than another which both indicates and causes the deadness of so much of our professing Christianity to-day and its consequent failure as an aggressive power, it is just this, that Christian people get mixed up in utterly irreligious association with irreligious men and women, and sink their own Christianity; or at all events, hide it. And the other sad thing is that so many Christians, so-called, have so little Christianity that they never feel that they are out of their element in such associations. Alas! one has to fear that really there are more truly in it, in such company than with earnestly religious people. Brethren, these things ought not so to be; and would not be so if our faith was as strong and as all-persuasive and blended with all our life as it ought to be.

We cannot be too intimately associated with irreligious people, if only we take our religion with us; and if we have any religion worth calling so, we shall not be able to help taking it with us wherever we go.

I am urging no cowardly abstinence from duty, no unwise or unkindly shrinking from friendly and cordial association with men. The Master earned the title of the Friend of publicans and sinners, and the servants must follow His example and win confidence and affection from the degraded, and be familiar with the worldly men if they are to

do His work. You may go as often as you like to be guest of such people, if you will behave at their table as He did, or if you will carry His spirit with you.

That separate existence of the Jewish people since their dispersion, which, in one aspect, is one of the standing proofs of revelation, is, in another aspect, a lesson for Christians in respect to this matter of separation even in the act of association. They mix in the occupation of common life, they are largely amalgamated with the nations among whom they live, and yet as absolutely distinct as oil from water on which it floats.

So, bating the antagonism, and adding the effort to lighten the world which is so conspicuously absent from the petrified modern Judaism, should the church be in the world; mixing in all outward affairs, and exercising a Christianizing influence on all with whom its members come in contact; but yet, by manifest diversity of sympathies and desires and affections, keeping itself absolutely distinct from the world with which it is to blend, as the leaven that is to leaven the mass, not as the dough which is to be leavened by it. It would be a day of true revival of Christianity if that could be said in truth of us, professing Christians which Naaman said in malice of the Jews. There is a certain people scattered abroad among the people, and their laws are diverse from all people.

In the measure, dear brethren, in which we walk in this world, separate from it because we are joined to Christ, in that measure will our faith be strong and shall we be doing our Master's will. "Ephraim is joined to idols." Do you want to be united with the idols? If not, "let him alone," for if you are joined to him you are joined to them; and when they and their worshippers together are annihilated before the brightness of his coming, if you are of them you will be annihilated too.

You remember that solemn story in the history of Israel in the wilderness, about the rebellious priests for whom the earth opened up to swallow them up? Do you remember the picture of Korah standing at his tent door with his wife and child round about him, and all the congregation of Israel drawing themselves off from the doomed group, and leaving them standing there isolated, alone with their Judge, and the earth opening and swallowing them up? If anybody from out of the congregation had so far sympathized with the rebels as to have planted himself at their side, then the earth would have swallowed him too.

"He is joined to his idols, let him alone." Be ye joined to your Master. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." And because you have the Spirit in you and in the measure in which you have his Spirit, you will be as he was, "separate from sinners."

The primitive and fundamental meaning of "holy" is "set apart." You Christian people are set apart for the Master's use. "Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate." Let it be every man in his own order, and every man to his own company; and let Christ's people, and you amongst them, live near Christ, and far away from those who love him not, nor know the sweetness of his love, and the freedom of his service, lest, learning their ways, you get a snare unto your souls. Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.—*Christian Commonwealth.*

## EXPECT CONVERSIONS.

We were reading a few days ago of a pastor who is now in his seventy-first year, under whose preaching, it is said, conversions are of constant occurrence. "They are expected, and prayers are offered and efforts are put forth, in the expectation that just such fruit will be gathered." This exercise of faith and hope is what is needed to-day by many a church and pastor. It is, we believe, an element of church power and preaching power. The pastor who goes into the pulpit sure of the divine help he has just been invoking, in presenting the gospel message, and full of longing for the souls under his ministry, ought to and generally does expect conversions, and an earnest, praying, spiritual church looks confidently for accessions to its membership. The late Dr. Kennard, whose ministry was so constantly and signally blessed that for years scarcely a Sabbath passed in which there were not conversions under the preaching, went home one evening in a despondent mood. When asked what made him sad he said, "Oh, there was not one soul in the congregation to-night who seemed to feel the need of salvation. Something is wrong; my preaching was in vain." "But why should you be cast down? Do you expect every sermon to produce an impression which shall carry conviction to sinners' hearts?" In sur-

prise he answered, "It ought to. It is God's message, and the fault is either with me or the people when it does not accomplish that for which it is sent." He expected conversions, and for this he labored and prayed and wept, and the Holy Spirit accompanied the Word with power, and thousands were brought into the kingdom through his ministry. Much of the success which some pastors and evangelists have in bringing sinners to repentance, is largely due to the close pressing home to the consciences of their hearers their immediate duty, preceded and followed by the prayer of faith, and accompanied by a confident expectation of God's blessing upon their labors. They "expect conversions" and their faith is rewarded.—*Baptist Weekly.*

## SUGAR-COATED RELIGION.

Bunyan speaks of religion as going in "silver slippers." In these times, to make it popular, it is sugar-coated. Its hard doctrines are smoothed down. Old-fashioned Bible orthodoxy is largely modified. The Slough of Despond is filled up or bridged over. Saints and sinners mingle in free converse; and who are the saints, and who the sinners, it were not easy to tell. The more "jolly" the minister, the more popular.

Since the time that Bunyan's Pilgrim travelled the road to the celestial city, matters have greatly improved. Were he to travel again he would not recognize it as the same. It is by no means the rough and perilous road that it was in his day. There are now no foes to be met, no battles to be fought, no chained lions even to frighten the traveller. And, instead of trudging along afoot, staff in hand at a slow and weary pace, he may speed his way in the cars, and Pullman cars, too, supplied with all desirable comforts.

But, alas, the end! It were well to consider that. Will all these pilgrims arrive at last at the "city that hath foundations"? Will they awake at the last and find themselves in heaven? Will their religion stand the test of the great trying day? When the great separation shall then be made, will these easy going pilgrims be found to have travelled the way that leadeth unto everlasting life? The Saviour teaches that that way is a way of repentance, of faith, of self-denial, of humility, of renunciation of the world, and a holy living. He also teaches that many at last will find themselves to have been mistaken. He says: "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord. And then will I protest unto them: I never knew you; depart from Me."—*New York Observer.*

## SORROW NOT AN ACCIDENT.

Sorrow is not an accident, occurring now and then—it is the very woof which is woven into the warp of life. God has created the nerves to agonize, and the heart to bleed; and before a man dies almost every nerve has thrilled with pain, and every affection has been wounded. The account of our life which represents it as probation is inadequate; so is that which regards it chiefly as a system of rewards and punishments. The truest account of this mysterious existence seems to be that it is intended for the development of the soul's life, for which sorrow is indispensable.

Every son of man who would attain the true end of his being must be baptized with fire. It is the law of our humanity, as that of Christ that we must be perfect through suffering. And he who has not discerned the divine sacredness of sorrow, and the profound meaning which is concealed in pain, has yet to learn what life is. The cross manifested as the necessity of the highest life, alone interprets it.—*F. W. Robertson.*

## SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

A growing Christian will not be long without the discovery of his own weakness—a revelation made known to him by a power above and beyond himself. This discovery usually is accompanied with a sense of need, even that of inward cleansing from secret faults. This, as we understand it, is that work of completeness in Christ which is sometimes denominated "perfection in love," "full salvation," etc. It is seldom accomplished in the soul, if experience and observation are to be relied upon, without a previous condition of growth in the justified relationship with God. Apathetic, vacillating Christians do not occupy such an attitude toward God as will enable them to see themselves and at the same time the spotless purity of that righteousness in Christ which they may inherit. That eminent Christian, the Rev. Dr. Wilbur Fisk, enjoyed close fellowship with God, and was in the spirit of growth when his soul was awakened to the privilege of "perfect love." It is not the slothful, prayerless professor of

religion, but the hungry soul that cries out with faith:

"Refining fire go through my heart,  
 Illuminate my soul.  
 Scatter the light through every part,  
 And sanctify the whole."

The very best advances in spiritual things follow just this experience. Now is that soul prepared more and more to realize all the possibilities of light and love.

## BACKBONE.

One thing which Christians, as well as others, need at the present day is backbone. Not a backbone like a ramrod, that cannot yield or bend, but a well-articulated spinal column, which is strong enough to hold a man upright and keep him from being crushed beneath the burdens that press upon him. These are days of easy-going piety; and men are too often ruled by compromise rather than by conscience.

Says Mr. Spurgeon: "Oak has given place to willow. Everybody has grown limp. Out of the generalality of limptness has come an admiration for it. A man cannot speak a plain word without being accused of bitterness, and if he denounces error he is narrow-minded; for all must join the universal-admiration society, or be placed under ban and be howled down."

Now in such a condition of things as this there is special call, not for stubbornness and crustiness, but for a gentle, patient, unyielding conscientiousness and firmness, which anchors the soul to the everlasting rock, and causes the heart to rest on him who is the way, the truth, and the life, and who will never leave nor forsake us.—*Congregational Magazine.*

## IMPORTANT DUTIES.

The *Lutheran Observer* calls attention to the following summary of church duties which a pastor in Philadelphia had printed on the reverse side of his card under the head of "My Duty to My Church":

To pray for her pastor;  
 Attend her services;  
 Practice her teachings;  
 Pray for her prosperity;  
 Give to her support;  
 Work for her success;  
 Cordially greet her members;  
 Invite others to her services.

These are important duties, too often neglected, and so we commend them to all who have hitherto failed to practice them.

## RISEN!

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." When the heart dwells in spiritual union with our Lord, a fellowship expressed by the words "risen with Christ," how natural it is to soar above earthly cares and disappointments, and seek those things which are above!

What are some of the things to be sought by us? Wisdom is one of the things, the wisdom which is "from above." This "hidden wisdom" is to be sought. It is not given by accident, nor by royal birthright, nor by purchase of personal merit. "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God;" let him seek it with the whole heart. If he seek wisdom "as silver," and search for wisdom as "hid treasures," he shall find the "knowledge of God." "For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous."

## "HE BROUGHT HIM TO JESUS."

That is the end and aim of all Christian efforts—to bring men to Jesus; not simply to this or that particular church, to this or that denomination or party; but to Jesus.

Bring them to Jesus that they may be saved. For apart from him they are lost, and are perishing in sin; mortal beings soon to die, yet having immortal souls, alienated from God, going into an eternity on which neither you or they can see any light.

Bring them to Jesus that they may be saved from the impending woe; but not only for this, but also that they may be introduced into a new life of love and peace and righteousness, may become sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ to the heavenly inheritance.

Bring them to Jesus that they in turn may bring others to him, may become apostles and evangelists, witnessing for Jesus and spreading his kingdom.

Bring them to Jesus that they may be stars in your crown of rejoicing which you will gladly and gratefully cast at his feet.

Bring them to Jesus that thus you may strengthen and extend his kingdom of righteousness, and do what you can to hasten the time when everywhere shall be the beauty and the gladness of "the sweet reign of light and love."

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