

"God Knows Best."

If we could push ajar the gates of life
And stand within, and all God's workings
see,
We could interpret all this doubt and strife,
And for each mystery find a ready key!

But not to day. Then be content, sad heart!
God's plants, like lillies, pure and white
unfold;
We must not tear the tender leaves apart;
Time will reveal the calyxes of gold.

And if, through patient toil, we reach the
land
Where tired feet, with sandals loosed,
may rest;

When we shall clearly know and under-
stand,
I think that we will say: "God knows
the best."

—Evangelical Churchman.

THY SOUL.

Yes, dear friend, thy soul—for just the few moments it takes to run through these paragraphs—thy soul, and not another's. With the shafts of death flying so thick about us, and shadows falling on every side, and with another year of opportunity for securing right relations with God drawing rapidly to an end, it cannot seem amiss to be urged to turn the eye inward for a little, that each for himself may see how it fares with him in the great matter of things invisible and divine.

In these times there is a great deal of outcry against anything like serious and habitual introspection. Not only is the fear expressed that self-examination will make one morbid, but it is taken as an evidence that one is already morbid if he confesses, or in any way shows, much anxiety about his own spiritual state. One is looked upon as a little "off" who isn't dead sure that he is God's child, and who wants to be certain that he is doing the best he can to train his own soul into harmony with God, and into fitness for the enjoyment of future blessedness.

Then, too, it is said to be selfish and mean to be thinking about our own souls, and working and worrying over them, when there are so many others all about us needing advice and care and guidance and sympathy. This is a favorite view—a kind of stock in trade—with that whole class of men—some of them preachers, some of them writers—who refuse to fall into line with evangelical truth. It looks generous and brave for a man to toss his head in a kind of haughty disdain at the suggestion of the need of a little watchfulness touching his own inner life, and to justify his indifference to his own standing by saying he is so busy looking after other people he has no time to look after himself.

For all this, one better have a wise and watchful care for his own soul. It is not a morbid impulse for one to turn on himself and put the question to his own reason and conscience: "Is it well with thy soul?" It is not narrowness, it is not overweening conceit, it is not selfishness, for a man to turn, now and then—for a man, indeed, to have regular times when he turns and takes account of his spiritual resources to see whether he is so at one with God, and so full of the Spirit of God, and so sensitive to all the truths of God, and so under the power of the endless life, that he is in the best possible condition to help others. Habit, or the momentum derived from moral forces once active, but now spent, may keep one in the line of well-doing for a while, even though the faith be a waning energy, and the love be less warm and propulsive. But the time will come when not much will be done for other souls, especially not much of what most needs to be done for other souls, unless our own souls are in living fellowship with the Son of God. To our own Master we, each of us, stand or fall. With our own Master it becomes us to be right.

Yes, thy soul—how fares it with thy soul? At some moment that is the question of questions for each of us. At all moments it is a question to be kept in mind and ready on the tongue; how fares it with thy soul? No theory which anybody may hold of the spiritual life, no fear which anybody may express of the morbidness likely to come from introspection; no high claim which anybody may put forth of being animated by motives so lofty that all such selfish consideration as one's own personal standing with God, are overshadowed, must be permitted to shut out or override the question of our own spiritual condition.

Perhaps you are a mother, brooding with all the tender solicitude of a mother's heart over your children, and desiring nothing so much for them as that they should become new creatures in Christ Jesus, and so the children of God. If you could only see them brought under the sweet shepherding of Jesus, and safely folded in his faith, you would be supremely happy. Well might you be. But in the midst

of your prayers and anxieties and entreaties and wise counsels, do not forget to make the interrogation point inward very often, so that it shall run: "How is it with my own soul?"

Perhaps you are a teacher in the Sabbath-school. You have taught with all fidelity; you have made daily supplication for the conversion of the children or the youth committed to your charge; you have had private interviews with one and another on what seemed to you favorable occasions; and, while not disposed to overestimate your own fidelity, it seems to you there is little you could have done which you have not done to bring all these souls into the open confession of Christ. Or it may be that one by one these boys and girls, the young men and women, have found their way into the faith of the Lord, and are walking with their faces toward the Holy City. What gladness in such an outcome!

But in either case—in the case in which the effort has been crowned with success, and in the case in which the effort has not been crowned with success—it is eminently wise to take an hour—one of the closing hours of this closing year—in which all other considerations shall be excluded, and the one inquiry shall be: "My own soul; is it in the peace of God? Is it fed daily with bread from heaven? Is it growing in heavenly-mindedness?"

Perhaps you are a minister, and through all the round of the year you have been standing in your pulpit holding forth the bread of life; or you have been going in and out in the midst of your people, trying to help the unbelieving into belief; trying to instruct disciples and to build them up in their most holy faith; trying to comfort the afflicted; trying to keep the erring and the tempted from plunging headlong over into the pit; and doing your best in every way to make full proof of your ministry. Forced to think all the time about others—how to reach them—how to help them—carrying burdens of care all the time for others—that fumes of sorrow may not be quite so wet with tears, and that the poor may not be quite so far astray—what wonder if there should not have been so much inward looking, so much searching through and through all the chambers of the heart to see what allies of evil might have found their way—as there ought to have been. In a certain sense the need of asking the question is never any where else so great, and the question is never so pertinent on any other lip, as with the ministers of the Gospel, "My soul, my soul!" How every servant chosen of the Lord to be His messenger to a dying world, needs to say it: "Is it well with my soul?"

This is the point where we are all of us begin. This the point to which we are all of us frequently to return. Our comfort in the Gospel; our power as witnesses for the truth, and as examples before the world of the transforming grace of God in Christ Jesus, depend upon our careful seeing to it that our own souls are right with God.

"I Will Leave the Church."

BY BISHOP J. WEAVER, D. D.

"Yes, sir, I have made up my mind to leave the Church." Don't be too fast, my brother. You would better move slowly. Think it all over carefully before you go. But why leave the Church? "Well, I see very plainly that I can't have everything just as I want it, and I can't stand it." Well, my brother, do you expect to have everything your own way in that other church where you are going? "No, not exactly. But then I think I will fare better than I do now." Better be sure of it. If you expect to run that church you will be awfully disappointed; for that church was running before you were born. I tell you it is a big thing for one man to run a church. It has been tried, but somehow it did not turn out as was expected. A young man on a certain occasion took a big text and commenced pounding, stamping and yelling until he was out of breath, and then sat down with the remark that he had exhausted himself, but the text was not touched. So, my brother, if you undertake to run that church, you will simply exhaust yourself, and the church will go on all the same.

There are times and circumstances under which I suppose it is right for persons to change their church relation; but these cases are not so numerous as one might suppose. In many cases those who change are governed by some selfish motive, and in about nine cases out of ten they are disappointed in their expectations. Those who leave a church because they can not have things their own way will find the same trouble no matter where they go. They will find others just like themselves. It would be interesting to get all that class of persons together in one church. They would make things lively.

Do you expect to find everything and everybody just right where you are going? If you do you will be dreadfully disappointed unless you are thinking about going to heaven. Of course you will find everything all right there; but on this side it is somewhat mixed. Taking all in all there is not so much difference between evangelical churches. Some have one kind of trouble and some another. I suppose there are good and bad in all the churches. Furthermore, there seems to be a kind of spirit or church-life peculiar to each organization; and a man that has grown up in one church can not so readily adopt the spirit of another church. Changing furniture may seem to be very nice at first, but it is not so handy as that we are used to. Some who have tried it did not find such a delightful paradise as they expected.

Now, my brother, I do not say but some men may change for the better; but I do say that those who change just because they cannot have everything as they want it, will not only be disappointed where they go, but will be of little or no use anywhere. While they may not find the same kind of trouble where they go, they will find other troubles of equal magnitude. I have known some persons to go out of a church because some things in it did not suit them, and then join a church where the same thing was tolerated with impunity.

"But I'll leave the Church anyhow." Well, my brother, I am sorry that you can not be contented and happy where you are; but since you are determined to go, you might as well know first as last that the Church will go on after you have gone out of it, and you might as well know in advance that if you carry that spirit with you in another church you will meet with a cold reception. They will not take off their hats and bow and scrape when you step in through the door. You are not wanted over there half as much as you think. Now mind what I tell you. This is not mere conjecture. The thing has been tried, and men have reported.

Why, little John Jones got miffed at home because he could not have everything his own way, so he went to board with a neighbor. Everything went on first-rate for awhile. But by and by he was asked to submit to the rules of the family, and he began to imagine that the bread and cakes were not a bit better than those his mother baked. He also imagined that the children which had been born and raised in the family fared a little better than he did.

Now, if there were a church where every member does exactly right, and where all can see just exactly alike, and you were sure you were exactly right yourself, then I think it would be a good thing for you to join that church. But so far as I am informed I know of no such church on earth. I know a good many good people in the various churches, and then I know some who seem not to be so good. So it has been down through all the ages. God does not use a church to accomplish good because bad men are in it; but he often uses it notwithstanding that bad men are there. He does not use a church in saving souls because some wrong may be tolerated in it, but notwithstanding the wrong that may be there.

Now, my brother, if your sole object is to do good, then I advise you to move very cautiously. If you are sure that your only aim is to honor God and save souls, and if you feel that the Master bids you go, then go, and keep on going until you can find a church-home that will suit you.—*Telescope.*

DON'T TALK ABOUT YOUR TROUBLES.

Sitting by my window the other day, I saw a little fellow who was running on the sidewalk, stub his toe, and fall with a great thump. It must have hurt him severely, and I expected to hear a tremendous outcry. Instead of that, he got upon his feet as soon as possible, rubbed his head, looked around to see if there was anybody to pity him, and not discovering any one, he trotted on without a whimper. "There," said I to myself, "that is about the way we grown folks act. Our troubles are never half so serious when there is no one to whom we can explain how dreadfully we are hurt."

Whereupon I fell into a brown study upon the folly of giving voice to every little discomfort. The habit certainly develops our selfishness. The common human infirmity is for each to make himself the centre of the universe, and to look upon every event as of more or less consequence in exact proportion as it affects his interests. He glances over the newspaper account of the flood that swept a village away, and drowned twenty-five people, giving it scarcely a second thought; but he speaks again and again of the freshest that carried off a rod or so of

his fence and did sundry other small damage. He talks it over on every occasion with all its tiresome details, because forsooth! it touched his sacred possessions. He can dispose of the calamity under which another may be writhing, with some old threadbare proverb; and he fancies that he has settled the matter handsomely; but let some disagreeable thing be said of him! you'll not hear the last of it for one while! And the worst of it is, like the story of the three black crows, the grievance grows with every repetition, till, if you take him literally, you are obliged to regard him the most cruelly injured individual upon the planet.

Since this is an infirmity of the race to which we belong, it is only common prudence for us to guard against it. If it makes us selfish to demand sympathy in every little trouble, let us see to it that we avoid speaking of our trials.

By talking about discomforts, we give them proportionately more attention, and by so much we increase their power to annoy us. If we have something to take our thought, a hot, dusty day on a railway train by without seriously incommencing us; but let us give our time to fanning and fretting, constantly commenting upon the heat and dust, and the frequency of the stops, and we get all the discomfort possible out of the trip.

If one gets up in the morning with a pain in his head, and begins at once to tell everybody who asks after his health how much he is afraid that he is about to have one of his dreadful nervous headaches, and what untold agonies he suffers with them, and how he has worn out this and that remedy, etc., if it is at all possible, he will probably bring about the result he fears.

Not unfrequently a little bright, thankful talk, casting the care more fully upon God, and getting an added touch of faith, and a shining in the joy of the Lord, will help one glide over the hard places so easily that his morning headache will be forgotten long before night.—*J. F. Willing, in Christian Witness.*

THE WORD.

God's word is a wonderful lamp, because it sheds such a light. Think how long it has been burning—6,000 years since it first lighted its faint flicker when the promise was given to Adam (Gen. iii. 15). How brighter and ever brighter it grows as time goes on! Isaiah holds up a beautiful light to us. And so it shone on and on, till the Light came into this dark world. Think how far the Word of God shed its light. A light-house can only shed its light, at the farthest, twenty-five miles over the waters. But this light has come down from heaven, and, lighted up yonder, has sent its radiance quite over this dark world. The light from this lamp will enable you to see the golden gates, and the redeemed around the throne, and the Lamb in the midst thereof. Whatever objection men make to the Bible, it will light you home. Though you have to go comfortless and in the darkness of this world, "hope to the end," and this lamp in your hand, by God's grace, will light you home. This light shines athwart the wildest ocean and into the dreary spots of earth. Oh, the comfort it gives! Does this Bible comfort you when the storms pass over your soul? Do you get your comfort from this lamp? It will give comfort in trial, in affliction, in death. What a comfort to have this lamp through the dark valley, and down to the river's edge. "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanse us from all sin." Many a soul has been lighted over the river by that promise to the golden gates.—*ELIZA FLETCHER.*

WORRYING OVER THINGS.

The older I grow the less I feel like worrying over things. I am essentially optimistic in my tendencies. Worry makes people gray, and wrinkled and bald, and I cling tenaciously to my youthful looks. I often wonder why some men will help their wrinkles to deepen and increase their baldness by flying into such tantrums when their meals are a trifle late, or the buttons are off their shirts. I know a Christian man, a "professor," a deacon in the church, who makes his wife's life a burden to her because of his ceaseless complaining and scolding about trifles. Do other readers know such husbands? Heaven forbid that one such has fallen to the portion of any reader of this. I call such men vicious. We allow too many trifles to fret and vex us. I saw a man, famous for his mental vigor and great learning, swell up and grow purple with rage because—he couldn't find his hat. How easy it is for a man to make a family wretched by this habit of whining and complaining and scolding. Life is too short to waste any of it in such useless mouthings.

A WRONG WAY.

It is mistaken piety to berate those who are present at a religious meeting because others are not there. It is mistaken piety to lament—especially in public—the low condition of a church when there are not a few in it who are striving to do their duty. A retired Swedish sailor whom we once knew, used often to begin his prayer in the prayer-meeting: "Lord, we thank thee that it is as well with us as it is." That seems to us to express the true attitude of the Christian heart, save when there have been manifest declensions in spiritual zeal and flagrant derelictions in religious duty. Even if one feels called upon in private to mourn what seem to him declensions and derelictions, let it be in private, as between himself and God. But it is impolitic, to say the least, to make these lamentations public. They have a depressing rather than a quickening effect. True piety does not habitually wear a mournful countenance. It confesses its short comings, to be sure; it deeply laments them. But it does not consider that its essence consists in either confession or lamentation. The highest type of piety is that which sets its face toward the future and presses on to new attainments. It does not wall, but puts "a cheerful courage on." If lamentation would lead to future faithfulness we might well lament. But generally it leads to no such good results. It contents itself with its jeremiades. It is therefore, however pure in motive, mistaken.

Under Pressure.

That which is most precious in character, and which is of most service to others as an outcome of character, is never made manifest except under pressure. The Arabs have a proverb: "Nothing will get oil out of an olive, but crushing it." And this is only another phrasing of the thought of Bacon: "Virtue is like precious odors, most fragrant when they are incensed [burned] or crushed." Only when the alabaster vase of perfumed oil was crushed, by Mary of Bethany, did that possession of her's rightly honor her Master; and only then did its fragrance fill the house, and begin its filling of the air of all the world beyond. It is not pleasant, but it is good, to have one's character brought under that crushing pressure of adversity, or of other trial, which shall force out its best influence—as a means of gain to one's self and to one's fellows. As wise Seneca said: "The good things which belong to prosperity are to be wished for; but the good things which belong to adversity are to be admired." Chastisement from God is a sure evidence of the love of God; but, at the first, God's loving chastisement seemeth not to be joyous, but grievous.—*S. S. Times.*

A Minister's Faults.

Mr Spurgeon puts into the mouth of "John Ploughman" the following homely bit of wisdom, which we commend to any reader that may have magnified his pastor's imperfections:—"I never knew a good horse that had not some odd habit or other, and I never saw a minister worth his salt who had not his crotchets or oddities. Now these are bits of cheese that cavillers smell out and nibble at; the first is too flowery and the second is too dull. Dear me, if all God's creatures were judged in this way we should wring the dove's neck for being too tame, shoot the robins for eating spiders, kill the crows for swinging their tails, and the hens for not giving us milk. When a man wants to beat a dog, he can soon find a stick, and at any rate any fool may have something to say against the best minister in England."

A BOOMERANG COMPLIMENT.

Before Willie K—'s cousin Bertha arrived at his home with her parents on a visit, his mother had told him to observe how graceful and polite her manners were, especially at table. When she came, Willie observed her, therefore, with admiring interest. One day his mother said "Do you see how nicely Bertha conducts herself, Willie?" "Yes, mamma." "Don't you think her manners are rather better than yours?" "Yes, mamma, and I think I know why!" "Why is it, my dear?" "Probably Bertha has been better brought up than I have."

I may do little, or I may do much. That matters not. It must be my own work. And by doing my own work, poor as it may seem to some, I shall better fulfil God's end in making me what I am, and more truly glorify his name, than if I were either going out of my own sphere to do the work of another, or calling in another into my sphere to do my proper work for me.

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