Only He Knows.

Only He knows the anguish keen,
Which wraps the soul in night,
Only He knows where we have been,
Groping without the light.

Only He knows the spirit's wound,
Which bleeds afresh each day,
Only He knows the deeps profound,
We touch along the way.

Only He knows the shadowy hours,
When day is almost gone,
When fading are life's fairest flowers,
And eventide steals on.

Only He knows where we have wept,
In paths where sorrow led,
The lonely vigils sometimes kept,
By love uncomforted.

Only He knows, oh, only He,
The tidal waves of soul,
Only He readeth the mystery
Of life's eternal scroll!

—The Observer.

"Put on Thy Strength, O Zion!"

Thus did the zealous prophet seek to arouse the lethargic "holy city" in the ancient day. And with a spirit no less earnest and with exhortation no less emphatic and personal should the servants of the living God, whether of the ministry or the laity, seek to arouse the lagging and somewhat indifferent energies of the Church to day.

Two startling facts confront the careful observer of present religious conditions: the pitiful Macedonian cry that comes from every quarter for the Gospel of Jesus, and the apparent indifference of the Church as a whole to these appeals. One has but to walk about in any city of this land to see on every side open doors waiting, and entreating the Church to enter them. Then it is necessary only to make inquiry concerning the actual practical activities of any individual church to see how inadequately and feebly the church adjusts itself to these divine calls for service. On the principle that everyone who has been redeemed by the precious blood of the Son of God is in duty bound to become a co-laborer with God in the sublime work of human redemption, it is disheartening to see how few are willing to recognize the validity and the personal application of this relationship to the salvation of souls. It is not denied nor ignored that many men and women are working for the regeneration of mankind in ways that are concealed from human eyes, nor that this kind of service is efficacious and honored of God; but it will be admitted that the large majority of Christ's followers perform little or no effective service in His great and glorious cause.

Success in a battle depends in a measure upon the absolute fidelity of every individual soldier or sailor. The absence of a man from his post at the critical moment of the battle may endanger the whole cause, and result in the overthrow of government and in the destruction of human liberties. It is in a large degree so in the Church. Let one in a prominent position become indifferent, and the contagion will spread until a spirit of disregard of and recreancy to high calling will seize the entire body, and the faithlessness of God's servants will be wrought out in failure and humiliation whenever the battle against sin and Satan is joined.

There is no more pathetic picture in the career of Jesus than that of His agony in the garden. Into Gethsemane He went with His little company of disciples, and while He was in prayer and heaviness of spirit His disciples, whom He had commanded to watch, were deep in sleep. The picture is reproduced again and again. The watchers are so often faithless, the toilers so often indolent, the servants so often careless, the disciples so often indifferent. Every church, whether it has a thousand members or a score, ought to be a hive of industry; and it would be if each member had a clear and definite idea of his relation to Jesus Christ, on the one hand, and of his duty to his unsaved brother, on the other, and were brave and consecrated enough to put his convictions into operation. There is hardly a Church member but will admit that, having been accepted of Christ himself, he is in some essential sense an ambassador of Jesus, that he is thus under obligation to represent and defend Him, and to do his utmost to advance the interests of His kingdom. But how frequently do we fall short in regard to these things! and do we not sometimes ignore these sacred relations altogether?

"Put on thy strength." The Church does not know how strong it is. It may have wealth, social prestige, the culture of learning, and the glamor of great names and resplendent traditions but these are not sources of real strength. If depended upon for support these will surely fail. The strength of Zion has no earthly source. It is divine. Its strength is Christ, and in proportion as He is adored, exalted, followed, and incarnated in the hearts and lives of men will the Church become strong, aggressive, and able to perform the great mission committed unto it. The strength of the Church, therefore, lies in the fidelity of each individual member of it to the Head of the Church.

O Church of the living God, awake! awake! throw off indifference and distrust and cowardice! pledge thyself to consecration, fidelity, and unselfish and holy endeavor! enter the open doors of opportunity! let man speak to man concerning his soul's salvation! let the fires of sacred zeal be communicated from soul to soul! let the spirit of the Son of God and Saviour of men dominate thy spirit, and then there will ensue throughout the Church a quickening of its activities, a deepening of its convictions, and a profound unanimity in its purposes that will render it puissant, irresistible, and triumphant throughout the world!—Chris. Advocate.

Some Things a Pastor Should Avoid.

BY A LAYMAN.

Coming into the pulpit late. He should be exactly on time and not leave the platform until the congregation is dismissed.

Making arrangements for the service, or attending to details in the presence of the people. What is not done before he comes into the pulpit should be left undone.

Giving public instructions to choir, ushers or janitor. All this ought to be attended to privately prior to the service. The choir need their information in time to adjust it. The ushers ought never to receive orders or even suggestions in public. It reflects on their judgment. The janitor can decide on ventilation by his thermometer and the activity of the fan. The speaker who alone is making any exertion, is not a good judge of the temperature of the room.

Haste in conducting the service. Each part should be finished with a moment's pause before the next is begun. Running them together detracts from the devotional effect, and makes the service appear perfunctory. Deliberate movements give tone and character to the worship. The people are not in haste unless the pastor manifests this tendency. Admonitions, made in a careless manner, such as "all sing," or "sing heartily," "speak to strangers," etc, carry no weight and defeat rather than accomplish their object.

Pulpit conversation by two or more clergymen. The minister is expected to be a pattern of propriety and an example of devotion. A departure from these principles neutralizes the effect of his discourse and depreciates the service.

Arranging the sermon, opening the Bible and turning the leaves during the singing. The latter is a devotional exercise, which if not joined in, should receive the respectful attention of the preacher.

Cutting the hymns to shorten the service. The hymn contains the thought of the author. This part of the worship can be assisted by the people and they like to go out of the church with the sound of music on their ears and the thought of the sermon and the hymns in their minds.

Rapid, hurried, or loud talking. Strength of voice cannot atone for lack of soundness of matter. Shouting and violent gesticulating are offensive both to the eye and ear.

Preaching against time. When the speaker places his watch open before him the hearers lose interest in him. He ought to have a message, and stop when it is delivered.

Rebuking, ordering, censuring criticising, or instructing the people in the presence of strangers. These things are not well received by an intelligent audience.

Bringing up new matters without previous preparation. The pastor ought to know what is going to become of every new question before it is presented publicly to the people.

The use of the personal pronoun I, me, or my church, my people, can with advantage be avoided. We, our church, our people, is much more acceptable to the average listener and supporter.

Attending to details which can be left to others. The pastor cannot afford to assume responsibilities which should be borne by others.

Apologies and explanations, if used at all, must be made with great discretion.

All reference to length of sermon can profitably be omitted. "One word more," "thirdly and lastly," "bear with me," "with this thought I finish," etc., never add to the force of the sermon and often call forth comment and derision.

Frequent absence from his pulpit by exchange or otherwise. While the people are satisfied they prefer their own pastor. When they do not prefer him he should seek a new field.

Careless, monotonous reading of the Scriptures. God's Word merits the best effort of the preacher in its presentation.

Changing the hymns or otherwise altering the exercises after the service has commenced.

Complaining of pastoral duties or lack of support.

Doing outside work to the detriment of his own church.

Manifestations of displeasure. Overcome in a quiet, patient manner any unexpected difficulties.

Remaining in a pastorate when he has reason to believe his resignation would be promptly accepted.

Taking a position that will result in a division of the church. No pastor can afford to defend himself at such a cost.

Going into another parish to perform any duty, except in the absence of the pastor or at his request.—[The Standard.

Religion As A Life.

It is greatly to be feared that in the view of many people religion is regarded as a last resort, as a desperate expedient to be appealed to when all other possible hopes, joys or enterprises fail. God is put into a postscript. Eternity is fought off as long as possible. A strenuous effort is made to prolong life to the utmost limit, and death, if the thought of it ever crosses the mind, is regarded as a juncture when arrangements can be made for the long journey hence, as expeditiously as one might buy a railroad ticket or step aboard a train. Almost everybody desires to be saved; but few want to be saved now. Men hope to reach Heaven, but by the longest, most circuitous route, and with the greatest final reluctance.

There is, however, one very serious objection to this method of procedure, and that is that this thing cannot be done, or can rarely be done. God refuses to be put into a postscript, nor will He hold back a large number of reserved seats in Heaven for late comers. The Pearly Gates will not open after sunset, after the shadows of evening have settled over the vales of Hinnom, that shade off down into the unlighted darkness of the under world. Such delay is perilous. Procrastination is the thief of more things than time, since in many instances it also thieves the soul.

And yet if final salvation were assured beyond doubt to all procrastinators, such delay in entering upon the service of the Lord would represent the height of meanness. It would be a wholly illogical and fairly imbecile way of doing things. For religion is not just an interest for final, dying hours, but as well a blessing for present living days and years. If religion is good for anything, it is good for everything, both here and yonder, both now and hereafter. It is not a force that only begins to operate beyond the confines of this present life. It is a thing for present possession.

Childhood might well teach us a lesson on this point. If a toy be held before the face of a babe, instantly the little fist will shoot out to grasp the trinket. It is the instinct for appropriation. The child wants that thing at once. Childhood lives in the present tense, and will hear nothing of postscripts, postponements, denials, and delays. If its joys are postponed it cries, its heart is broken.

Man is but a child larger grown, with whiskers in place of dimples, and books in his hand instead of toys, but he carries with him through life this instinct for instant appropriation, this craving for undelayed possession of the things that he thinks are good. There is every reason then why religion should be regarded as one of these good things, indeed as a fairly superlative thing, which may best be had at once.

The argument for religion as a life may, however, be shifted from the idea of man's need of religion to the thought of man's obligation to be religious. Religion is not optional in the sense that it can safely be declined. We believe in free will, but woe to the man who abuses his free will! God says: "Choose ye," but He does not contemplate with favor any election of evil.

God rightfully demands man's allegiance and service now. He has created the race; His power sustains it. When men invest capital they expect interest on it, and so does God with His capitalized creation. There is a law of spiritual interest running against all powers and possessions, with which the Almighty has endowed man, whether those loans are of one talent, two talent, or five talent dimensions.

Religion is for life. There is no better time to serve the Lord than in the morning and noontide of the day of grace. Now, while the pulses beat strong, while the nerves are steady and the energies unabated, when the brain is clear, the tread elastic, and hope bright, while mere existence possesses a charm and zest, and it seems impossible for one to think otherwise than of continuing to live, is the time to enter into fellowship with the Creator, and to take up that greatest of all businesses, the cause of God in the world. God can never be more necessary to the soul than He is now; and godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.—N. Y. Observer.

Discouragers or Encouragers.

In many ways we may each discourage or we may encourage. To discourage is always to weaken; to encourage is to strengthen.

To notice from the teaching of some scripture passages some ways in which we may discourage will serve as a warning, and help us to do the opposite. We may discourage others by withholding ourselves. The children of Gad and the children of Reuben made the request that they might not go over Jordan, but Moses said unto them, "Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit still? Wherefore discourage or break the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the Lord hath given them?"

They were charged with the same sin as their fathers at Kadesh barnea.

We may think that if we simply do nothing or say nothing we do not discourage, but in that very lack we may discourage those who are disposed to enter into what God has promised. I think that the utter indifference to duty or practical refusal of many who ought to take their part and fill their place in the ranks of God is one of the most discouraging things in our church and societies. How much better to encourage by active service and to inspire by example.

Another way of discouraging is to present and magnify obstacles in the way of success. When Israel stood at the very threshold of their promised possession they murmured and said, "Whither shall we go up? Our brethren have discouraged our hearts, saying, The people are greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to heaven; and moreover we have seen the sons of Anak there," and the descendants of those "brethren" live among us. They have a remarkable sight for the "tall people," the "high walls," and the "sons of Anak," and you never mention any advance step that may be taken, any new land to be possessed, but what all possible obstacles in the way are made to loom up in magnified proportions. In fact, they appear so great that they shut out from their vision God himself. How much better to encourage as Joshua and Caleb did, and say that in spite of all these things which stand as opposed to God and the accomplishment of his purpose, "Their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not." Let us go up at once and possess it.

We may all encourage, and be mutually helpful. In Isaiah we read of the idol-makers. "They helped every one his neighbor; and every one said to his brother. Be of good courage. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the soldering: and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved." This was in a fruitless endeavor, but does it not suggest that in the way of Christian effort we may become members of the "Society of Encouragers," to say every one to his brother, "Be of good courage?"

It is stated Rev. Dr. Parker of London says that for himself he makes encouragement the burden of his preaching, and every one who knows about the man and his work knows the mighty hold he has upon the people.

Let us go in for a life membership in the "Christian Encouragers Society."—R. L. Duston, in Morning Star.

Family Prayers.

One who had taken pains to inquire as he went around through the quarterly conferences of two presiding elders' districts in one of the New England Methodist Conferences, recently made the public statement that of the limited number who attended the class-meetings of those two districts, less than one-third had prayers in their families. If this be the case among those presumably the most devout and faithful, if only one-third even of such have family prayers, how smal must be the proportion of our members generally! Shall we call it one-tenth? It certainly cannot be more than one-fifth.

There seems to be but very little conscience in regard to the subject. Heads of households content themselves with the lame excuse that it is difficult to get the family together, that there is no convenient time, that the pressure of work makes it impossible, that they no not like to pray before others. All of which simply goes to show it seems to us, that either the importance of the practice is not appreciated, or else that there is a sad lack of willingness to face unpleasing duty. In the latter aspect it is a very alarming symptom. As to the other point, it is difficult to see how any thoughtful person can regard the habit in question as of little consequence. What parent can help feeling, if his children do not grow up as they should, but that they might have done otherwise had he himself brought them to God morning by morning or evening by evening in stated devotions to which they at least sometimes listened if they did not actively join therein?—Zion's Herald.

Light Keepers.

It is as though you were a lighthouse keeper set to do your duty on your bare rock. Can any life be more unpraised or insignificant? Why sit through weary nights to keep your flame alive? Why not sleep on, all unobserved, and let your little light go out? Because it is not your light—that is the point. You are not its owner, you are its keeper. That is your name. You are a light-keeper. You are set there with this as your trust. The great design of the power you serve takes you thus out of your insignificance, and while you sit there in the shadow of your lonely tower ship after ship is looking to you across the sea, and many a man thanks God that, while lights which burn for themselves go out, your light will be surely burning.—F. G. Peabody, D. D.

Just Filling Our Own Place.

We often think that, if we had that man's means, or that man's ability, or that man's opportunity, we could do something worth doing, but, as we are, there is no possibility of any great thing. Yet God does not want us to fill another man's place, or to do any other man's work. God wants us to improve our own opportunity, with the possessions and the powers that he has given us. It is a very great thing for us to do the best we can do, just where and as we are. God asks no one of us to do more than this, nor has any one of us a right to do less.—Sunday-School Times.

Random Readings.

The man who never did succeed at anything himself is usually the one who thinks he is capable of telling other people how to succeed.

The heart of a Christian should be a well of living water, a fount of holy and blessed influences, whose streams flow in all directions, carrying comfort, cheer, encouragement, help and gladness to every other life they reach. Much orthodoxy of belief does not make one a Christian, nor does attention to ecclesiastical rites and rules; a Christian is one in whom the life of Christ pulsates and the love of Christ glows and burns.

The record book of every Christian's life has some pages in it which were written at the bidding of that severe teacher, Disappointment. Tears may have blotted and blurred the page at that time, but as we turn over that page now, and read it in the light of experience, we can write beneath it, "Thank God for these losses; they were my everlasting gain. Thank God for these bereavements; they have saved my soul from being bereaved in heaven." All things work together for good to them that love God; to them who are called according to his purpose.—Ex.

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