

The King's Highway.

And an Highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness:

The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. Isaiah 40:3.

VOL. XVIII. (New Series.)

WOODSTOCK, N. B., DECEMBER 16, 1907.

(Semi-Monthly.) NO. 23

THE BIBLE AS A STANDARD FOR CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

(Paper read by Rev. W. E. Smith of Cincinnati, N. Y. at Cazenovia District Conference, Nov. 23rd, 1907.)

What is character? The word is derived from the Greek verb which means to cut or engrave. Webster defines character as the peculiar quality impressed by nature or habit on a person which distinguishes him from others. These qualities constitute a person's real character, while the virtues or defects he is supposed to possess constitute his estimated character or reputation. But the reputation of one person may be far better than the actual condition of their hearts, while that of another may be greatly inferior to what they really are. Sometimes God's best men have had to wait long to receive their proper recognition. Like the Master whom they served they have been of poor reputation, but because their character was true and pure it has often happened that the children of their persecutors and maligners have in after years builded monuments to their memory and spoken their praise. After all the old definition still holds good—character is what we really are; reputation is what others take us to be.

But our topic is, "The Bible as a standard for christian character." The program committee might have made it more emphatic and made it read, "The Bible THE standard for christian character." The true child of God can take no other guide than the Bible for christian life and experience. All the rules and regulations and teachings of men can have weight with him only so far as he is convinced they are in harmony with the spirit and principles of the word of God which is to him the all-sufficient rule for faith and practise. He aims not merely to be a Methodist christian or a Baptist christian, but a Bible christian. But he is heartily glad when he finds the standards of his church as defined by its doctrines and discipline in splendid harmony with the word of God. To the word then we must go to find out what kind of christians God expects us to be, and also to ascertain what He can make us be through the abundant provision of His grace and the working of His mighty power. We need not discuss mere moralities or ethics, but must go deeper than these, to the root from which they truly spring. The world has its standard for moral action, and he who attains to it or is not known to openly violate it, is generally regarded as having a good character. The outward life is the basis on which the estimate is made. But ignorance of another's motive and our inability to understand all the circumstances and conditions that may influence their actions may make our estimate of their character very defective. Man looketh on the outward appearance and is often deceived by a fair exterior. God looketh on the heart, and "desireth truth in the inward parts." As a believer not merely in Methodist doctrines, but in the Bible itself, we find the call made by prophets, apostles and Jesus is to holiness of heart and life. Purity of heart is the Bible standard for christian character. A holy God who cannot look upon sin with any degree of allowance, could set another standard for men, and He who came to save a guilty world is able to redeem men

from all iniquity or purify unto him self a peculiar people zealous of good works. Says Dr. Lowry, "The sacrificial system and symbolism of the Jewish economy, the Twititall discipline and moral law, the burden of prophetic vision, the perceptive code, the chain of miracles, the trend of historic facts and above all the golden list of exceeding great and precious promises sprinkled all through. Both testaments are saturated with the spirit of holiness. The prophets spoke in the future tense and saw afar off the exalted privileges of God's people. We read "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean, from all your filthiness and idols will I cleanse you." Again "After that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh. And a highway shall be there and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness, and the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those and wayfaring men, though fools shall not err therein." But in the new testament all the promises and exhortations are in the present tense, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." "Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest through the blood of Christ, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit perfecting holiness in the fear of God." The provision having been so abundantly it is man's duty to accept it.

Purity within being God's standard, how low beside it seems the world's standard of morality. He who crushes down the spirit of revenge and does not lift his hand to take his brother's life, can confidently say who condemns me for murder. But God's word declares thou art condemned if thou hadst hatred in thine heart. He who refrains from impunity in act can boldly say who convicteth me of the sin. But God's word declares thou art an adulterer if lust be cherished in thy heart. We may paraphrase Paul's words and say: For he is not a Bible Christian according to the highest testament standard, who has eternal moralities or is even struggling against inward evil, rather is that holiness which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Bible Christian which is one inwardly and holiness is that of the heart, in the Spirit, whose praise is not of men but of God. Mere pride which has regard for the presence of others may hold in check the passion that otherwise would have exploded and produced a violent scene. Family pride of position, fear of social ostracism or of legal retribution serve as mighty factors to hold in check evil disposition and make people act outwardly better than they are inwardly.

We heard an eminent preacher say he would rather lose his right arm than do anything that would grieve the heart of his mother in heaven. He said his mother's apron strings reached clear down from the throne of God. It was a pleasing thought for regard for family feelings has held many a one to the course of honesty and purity in the hour of temptation. But holiness gives one a far more powerful motive. It makes the soul live as in the presence of God. Christ is crowned within, and at the door of the heart the tempter is met by the stern protest "How can I do this and sin against God?" The object of God's redemptive grace revealed in Christ is to restore to man the Divine image which has been polluted and defiled by sin. He works a miracle of trans-

formation. Reformation emphasizes the power of the human will and magnifies what a man can do by his own efforts—the Keely cure and other natural means. Ethical culture shuts its eyes to men and women rolling in sin and poverty and shame. It magnifies the inherent goodness of the human heart, and with its gospel of rose water makes good character altogether a human product.

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LEAVE TOMORROW WITH GOD.

Would it not be better to leave tomorrow with God? That is what is troubling men—tomorrow's temptations, tomorrow's difficulties, tomorrow's burdens, tomorrow's duties. Martin Luther, in his autobiography, says; "I have one preacher that I love better than any other on earth; it is my little tame robin, who preaches to me daily. I put his crumbs upon my window-sill, especially at night. He hops onto the window-sill when he wants his supply, and takes as much as he desires to satisfy his need. Form thence he always hops to a little tree close by, and lifts up his voice to God, and sings his carols of praise and gratitude, tucks his little head under his wing, and goes fast to sleep, and leaves tomorrow to look after itself. He is the best preacher I have on earth."

Remember this: If that bit of work which you have undertaken is for the love of God—and it must be that—and for the glory of God, then it cannot fail. There is no such thing as failure in real Christian work. We may make mistakes, but it cannot fail for it is God's work; and if it is done for God, when we have done our best, He will take it and make use of it, perhaps so that we can see it; if not, we shall see it in the light of the world to come. He will take us as we are and our work as it is, and in the time to come perhaps make use of our very mistakes, and build upon the work which we began in humble faith and quiet hope—the very work we wanted to do, but we were too clumsy. There never has been yet a work for Him that failed.—Lord Bishop of Thetford.

PRAYER.

Man is God's aeolian harp. The human-taught finger skill can bring some rare music, yet by comparison 'tis at best a monotone. When the instrument is set to catch the full breathing of the breath of God, then shall it sound out the rarest wealth of music's melodies. As the life is yielded fully to the breathing of the Spirit we shall find the peace of God which passeth all understanding, filling the heart; and the power of God that passeth all resisting, flooding the life; and others shall find the beauty of God, that passeth all describing, transfiguring the face; and the dewy fragrance of God, that passeth all comparing, pervading the personality, though most likely we shall not know it.

Prayer brings power. Prayer is power. The time of prayer is the time of power. Prayer is tightening the connections with the divine dynamo so that the power may flow freely without loss or interruption. Prayer wonderfully clears the vision; steadies the nerves; defines duty; stiffens the purpose; sweetens and strengthens the Spirit. The busier the day for him the more surely must

the morning appointment be kept, and even an earlier start made, apparently. The more virtue went forth from him, the more certainly must he spend time, and even more time, alone with him who is the source of power.

Not work first, and prayer to bless it. But the first place given to prayer and the service growing out of such prayer will be charged with unmeasured power. The greater the outward pressure on his closet life, the more jealously he guarded against either a shortening of its time or a flurry of its spirit. The tighter the tension, the more time there must be for unhurried prayer.

Jesus knew where to find rest and sweet fellowship, and calming presence and wise counsel. He sought the solitude of the mountains for meditation and prayer, and as he prayed and listened and talked without words daylight gradually grew into twilight and that yielded imperceptibly to the brilliant Oriental stars spraying down their lustrous firelight. And still he prayed while the darkness below and the blue above deepened, and the stilling calm of God wrapped all nature around and hushed his heart to a deeper peace. In the fascination of the Father's loving presence he was utterly lost to the flight of time, but prayed on and on, until, by and by the earth had once more completed its daily turn, the gray streaks of dawnlight crept up the east, and the face of Palestine, fragrant with the deep dew of an eastern night, was kissed by the sun of a new day. And then, "When it was day"—he called the disciples and chose from them twelve, and a great multitude of the disciples and people came and he healed all—and he opened his mouth and taught them. For power came forth from him! Is it any wonder after such a night?—From Gordon's "Quiet Talks on Prayer."

PRAYER AS A POWER.

It is one thing to philosophize, and another thing to be a practical force and power in the world. It is one thing to discuss the subject of prayer and argue about its difficulties, and it is another very distinct thing to pray to God, our hearts full of spiritual desires and our mouths voicing the earnest petitions of our souls.

Those who pray as God invites and directs us to do, will never have any difficulties over the theory and philosophy of prayer. They will know for themselves the benefit and blessings of prayer. They will know from personal experience that God does answer prayer. The one who has learned this has come to know that all infidel objections to prayer are mere chaff and rubbish.

Those who are content to theorize and question as to the possibilities of prayer being answered, will never pray, because they will remain doubters, and doubt unfits one for prayer. Only those who have faith can pray in any real sense. So long as one does not believe that God can hear or answer him, he will make no prayer that God will be pleased to hear.

Prayer is a power. It is to be used as such. Christ used such illustrations as the removing of mountains and the plucking up of trees to impress the fact that he who prays may expect to see results accomplished. There are some tremendous obstacles to the cause of Christ rearing their heads like mountains, but they

may be swept away if Christian people will unite in prayer. There are some deeply-rooted evils in this world, fastened like mighty trees into the very life of man, but before the prayer of faith these things must give way.

It is a fact that God directed us to pray. Scarcely any other thing is spoken of more frequently by him. He invites and encourages us to pray. He even says that men ought to pray, thus speaking of it as a moral obligation resting upon us. He gives us a form of prayer to be used by his disciples. He himself prayed very often. By precept and example he taught us to pray. He meant for us to pray. If there is nothing in prayer, then the example and teachings of Christ are misleading. We will never believe this. Guided by him, we will pray, knowing it to be one of our very highest duties, and one of our most delighted privileges.

One praying person will be a great power in any church. Two such persons will insure divine blessing for their community. A company of such persons will be the earnest of perpetual revival in any church. If we would see great spiritual results, we must unite in earnest and continued petitions to God. If we would have God to fill our hearts, we must at least come to him with our mouths wide open.—Christain Standard.

"A DAY WITH THE LORD."

Mr. Gladstone and his friends were discussing the interesting question, one day, in Hawarden Castle, of when they would rather live.

Mr. Gladstone, without any hesitation, decided from the intellectual point of view, and expressed the opinion that he would describe it as the greatest day in the world's history a day in ancient Greece, when Athens was at the summit of its glory.

Another member of the group chose the Day of Pentecost.

The effect on Mr. Gladstone is still remembered vividly by those who were present. The intellectual, gave way at once to the spiritual, and the aged statesman, "seeming rather ashamed of himself," asked leave to withdraw his former choice and to say, "A day with our Lord."

NOT "GIVEN," ONLY "LEFT."

"So Mr. Jones gave \$500 to missions at his death, did he?" was asked a minister the other man. The answer was: "I did not say he gave it, but he left it; perhaps I should more explicitly have said that he relinquished it, because he could no longer hold it." The distinction needs to be kept in mind; one only "gives" when living; he "relinquishes" at death. There is plenty of Scripture commendation for giving, but none for relinquishing what the stiffened fingers of death can no longer hold.—Selected.

You may exalt the love of Jesus till it becomes the most sublime passion the world has ever known, yet, if it be not linked with the power of the great throne, that love has in it no more saving virtue than the nestling of a baby to its mother's breast.—Dr. D. J. Burrell.

I find it impossible to avoid offending guilty men; for there is no way of avoiding but by our silence, or their patience; and silent we cannot be because of God's commands; and patient they cannot be, because of their guilt.—Martin Luther.