

HOME PREACHER,
OR CHURCH IN THE HOUSE.

TWENTY-FOURTH WEEK.

MORNING WORSHIP.

ALMIGHTY God, who seest that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves, keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; and as we have been taught how we ought to walk and please Thee, so may we abound more and more, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

HYMN, *or Psalm xl.* 7-11.

“GOD with us!” O glorious name!
Let it shine in endless fame!
God and man in Christ unite;
O mysterious depth and height!

“God with us!” eternal love
Brought him from his courts above;
Now ye saints, his grace admire,
Swell the song with holy fire!

“God with us!” all pure within,
Free from every taint of sin;
Yet did he our guilt sustain,
Bear the shame, the curse, the pain.

“God with us!” O wondrous grace!
May we see him face to face:
Then IMMANUEL shall we sing,
As we ought, to Thee our King!

DANIEL IX. 3-19.

AND I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: 4. And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; 5. We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and

have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts, and from thy judgments: 6. Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. 7. O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. 8. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. 9. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him; 10. Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. 11. Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him. 12. And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. 13. As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before

the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth. 14. Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice. 15. And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly. 16. O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. 17. Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake.

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY God, most merciful Father! we do not present ourselves before Thy majesty trusting in our own merits or worthiness, but in Thy manifold mercies. Thou hast promised to hear our prayers and to grant our requests, in the name of Thy beloved Son Jesus Christ our

Lord: who also hath commanded us to assemble in His name, with full assurance that He will be with us, and, as our mediator and advocate, obtain all things expedient for our good. Therefore we beseech Thee, most merciful Father, turn Thy loving countenance toward us; impute not unto us our manifold offences, whereby we justly deserve Thy wrath; but rather receive us to Thy mercy for Jesus Christ's sake. Accept His life and death for all our trespasses. In Him alone Thou art well pleased, and, through Him, thou canst not be offended with us. And having of Thy compassion chosen us to be heirs with Him of that immortal kingdom prepared for us before the foundation of the world, we beseech Thee to increase our faith, knowledge, and love, enlightening our hearts with Thy Holy Spirit, that we may live in godly conversation and integrity of life.

And because Thou hast bidden us to pray for one another, we make request, O Lord, not only for ourselves, and others whom Thou hast called to the apprehension of Thy will, but for all people and nations of the world. As they know by Thy wonderful works that Thou art God over all, so by Thy Holy Spirit may they learn to believe in Christ, their only Saviour and Redeemer. But since they cannot believe except they hear, nor hear but by preaching, and none can preach except they be sent, raise up, O Lord, faithful preachers of Thy gospel, who, setting aside all

worldly considerations, may both in their life and in their doctrine seek only Thy glory. Maintain Thy cause against all opposition, and strengthen all Thy servants; let not our sins and wickedness prove a hindrance to the spread of Thy truth; but speedily, O Lord, regard the afflictions of Thy church, and make haste to save us. Arise, O Lord, and let Thine enemies be ashamed; let them flee from Thy presence that hate Thy holy name; let the groans of the prisoners come up before Thee; and preserve by Thy power such as are appointed to die. May Thy faithful servants in heathen lands ever confess Thy name, and through faith enjoy Thy presence. Let not Thy foes triumph to the end, but let them understand that against Thee they fight; behold and defend the vine that Thy right hand hath planted, and let all nations see the glory of Thine Anointed. Let Thy mighty hand and outstretched arm be ever our defence; Thy mercy and loving-kindness in Christ our salvation; Thy true and holy word our instruction; Thy grace and Holy Spirit our consolation, unto the end. Grant these our requests, O Father and all other things needful for us and Thy whole church, according to Thy promise in Jesus Christ our Lord, unto whom, with Thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. *Amen.*

THE CHURCH IN THE HOUSE.

O LORD, most true and holy, most merciful and just, who hast called us with a holy calling to inherit Thy kingdom and glory, we beseech of Thee so to help and strengthen us that we may give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, by our striving to enter in at the strait gate, and by working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, that in the end an entrance may be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour. *Amen.*

HYMN, *or Psalm xxxvii.* 34-39.

RISE, my soul, and stretch thy wings
Thy better portion trace
Rise from transitory things,
To heaven thy native place!
Sun, and moon, and stars decay,
Time shall soon this earth remove;
Rise, my souls, and haste away
To seats prepared above!

Cease ye pilgrims, cease to mourn,

Press onward to the prize;
Soon the Saviour will return
Triumphant in the skies;
Yet a season, and you know
Happy entrance will be given;
All our sorrows left below,
And earth exchanged for heaven.

LUKE XIII. 23-30.

THEN said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, 24. Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: 26. Then shall ye begin to say, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. 27. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are: depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. 28. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust

out. 29. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. 30. And behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

2 PETER III. 2-11.

THAT ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: 3. Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4. And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. 5. For this they were willingly ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: 6. Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: 7. But the heavens and earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. 8. But beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness;

but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 10. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. 11. Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.

SERMON XXIV.

“AND HE WENT THROUGH THE CITIES AND VILLAGES, TEACHING, AND JOURNEYING TOWARD JERUSALEM. THEN SAID ONE UNTO HIM, LORD, ARE THERE FEW THAT BE SAVED? AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, STRIVE TO ENTER IN AT THE STRAIT GATE,” ETC. -- Luke xiii. 22-30.

WE are not informed who that “one” was who put this question to our Lord, nor in what spirit or for what end he put it. A Sadducee, who denied the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, and the very existence of the soul after death, may have asked it, with a desire to entangle our

Lord in debate, and to blaspheme the truth: or it may have been addressed by a proud, self-righteous Pharisee, who, sure of his own salvation, was anxious, perhaps, to expose before the people what he deemed to be the unorthodox views of Jesus, regarding the number and character of those who should be saved: or some one whose conscience had been roused by the teaching of Jesus, and who was oppressed by a sense of what appeared to him to be the almost unsurmountable difficulties of salvation, may have asked, with fear and trembling, “Lord, are the few that be saved?”: -- or lastly, the question may have been prompted by a vain and idle curiosity, which desired to be wise above what was written, and to play with truth, as with a toy, for a little amusement or excitement during the passing hour.

Now, observe the way in which Christ replied to this question: “He said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate!” He did not give the answer which either the infidel, the hypocrite, the anxious inquirer, or the curious, anticipated or desired; for He did not say how few, or how many, are saved; but He gave the answer which they all needed, and which was the most profitable for them. *They* wished to know about the salvation of others; *He* wished them to attend to their own. *They* would look into the book of God’s counsels; *He* would have them look into their own hearts. As if He had said: “With the number of the saved you have nothing to do; but with your own salvation you

have everything to do. Instead of spending your precious time in asking, ‘Are there few who shall be saved?’ rather spend it in ‘striving’ to be saved yourselves.” We are thus taught, not only the folly of seeking to be wise above what is written, and of asking questions which God has not been pleased to answer; but more especially are we taught the necessity of settling this first and greatest of all questions. “What shall *we* do to be saved?” before occupying our time and attention with other questions which may pertain to salvation. There are very many questions deeply interesting *to a believer*, which are profitless to an unbeliever, nay, worse than profitless, because they may occupy his mind to the exclusion of the one thing needful; and just because those questions are *about* religion, and form the subject of much earnest thought to serious Christians, the very fact of his thinking and speaking an inquiring about them may deepen in him the delusion that he is himself religious--that they concern *him*, because they concern the people of God. But what is the settling of all other questions to us, however important they may be to others, as long as *this* question remains unsettled--our own personal interest in Jesus Christ? O! it is sad to hear men arguing about doctrines, and diving deep into the mysteries of theology; right it may be, in all their “opinions” and “views,” but *wrong* certainly, all the while, in their spirits towards God. “They have *well said* all that they have

spoken,” but O! That they had *such an heart* in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always!”

But let us consider the meaning of these words, “Strive to enter in at the strait (or narrow) gate, for many will seek to enter in, but shall not be able.” If we turn to the Gospel of St. Matthew (vii. 13, 14), we will see that Christ speaks of two roads and two gates: --Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” These are pictures of the two states of mind, in either of which we *must* be. There are not *three* roads; because it is impossible for us to be else than either good or bad -- spiritually alive or dead -- “in the flesh” or “in the spirit” -- in “friendship” and “peace” with God, or at “enmity” to Him, and in fear for Him -- “in the kingdom of Satan” or ‘darkness,” or “in the kingdom of God’s dear Son” and of “light.” Therefore Christ speaks of two roads only. The one is broad; that is to say, it is easy for the wicked to walk along it; all *they* have to do is to follow their own sinful wills in everything. The entrance to this broad road is wide, admitting every traveller while carrying the burden of the world and of his lusts with him; and “many,” accordingly, “go in thereat!”

“*Strive*,” says our Lord, “to enter in at the strait gate; for many shall *seek* to go in thereat, but shall not be able.” Now, you will observe, Jesus does not say, “Many shall *strive* to enter in but shall not be able:” He says, “many shall *seek*,” teaching us that the chief reason why men do not enter the narrow gate of salvation, and obtain rest, even while they walk in the way of God’s commandments, is that they seek, but do not strive, to enter in. It is not difficult to understand what is meant by striving, and how different a thing it is from mere seeking. Only notice the conduct of any one who, in *real earnestness* of soul, desires to obtain any good; you will perceive in his conduct this striving, and not mere seeking. Look at the student, plodding over his books late and early, reading, examining, thinking, writing; he is *striving* to obtain learning. Look at the man of business, buying, selling calculating, counting his profit and loss, speculating about markets and investments, poring over his ledgers and accounts, giving his whole heart to business; that man is *striving* to get rich. Look at the sick man, consulting doctors, trying cures, swallowing the most nauseous medicines, submitting to sore operations; that man is *striving* to get health. Watch the sailor, whose ship has foundered in the great deep; look at him and his weary companions toiling at the oar in their small boat, hungry, thirsty, faint, labouring for days and nights amidst stormy winds and angry seas, to reach, if possible, the nearest

shore; those men are *striving* to save their lives. In all those cases, we recognize men who are *in earnest!* Now, be assured, that if any of us, with the same sincerity, wished to possess a saving knowledge of God's truth--to obtain the riches of Christ--to enjoy the health of the soul--and to lay hold of eternal life--we would have the same *earnest striving*. We can see quite well that mere *seeking* would not give the student knowledge, the merchant riches, the sick man health, or the sailor life; and how, then, will mere seeking, without striving, save our souls?

“Many shall seek!” Yes, who among us is so dead, so indifferent to the future well-being of their immortal souls, as not to “*seek*”--not to do *something* to obtain salvation? Some will talk about religion, or read the Bible occasionally, or repeat a meaningless prayer, or go to church; and others will trust to their morality, their high profession, their orthodoxy, and the like; all will do something in order that they may be, at least, *safe*. “Many will seek!” It may be when sudden death strikes down an acquaintance; or when a mysterious pestilence sweeps away its victims; or when sickness enters the family, and some beloved one is laid on his dying-bed, or in his lonely grave; or, it may be, when the sinner himself is arrested by a dangerous illness, and realizes the nearness of God and the certainty of judgment, and in the silence of night recalls his past life, and all God's dealings towards him, and all his dealings towards God--it

may be, in such seasons as these, that the careless sinner will look with interest and concern for that narrow gate which he more than suspects is, after all, the only entrance to a path of pleasantness and peace, and may express a wish to enter in, nay, resolve to do so, and blame himself for his off-putting and folly in not having done so long before. He “seeks to enter in!” But when he finds that entering in at the gate implies the entering into himself of a new mind and spirit, a “putting off the old man with his affections and lusts,” a putting out of iniquity, and a putting on of “the new man, created after Christ Jesus to good works;” that, in short, as a sin-loving and sin-keeping soul, the gate cannot admit him and all his burdens--then does he refuse the Cross. To “give *all diligence* to make his calling and election sure,” to “*labour* to enter into rest,” to “work out salvation with fear and trembling:” in one word, to sacrifice *self*, by accepting of Christ with his free pardon and new life--all this requires not seeking only, but striving, whereas the slothful wish to get all by seeking only. How necessary is our Lord’s solemn command and warning, “*Strive* to enter in, for many shall *seek* to enter in, but shall not be able!”

“When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door.” What means this! Christ is the Master of the house, “whose house are we, if we hold fast our confidence.” *Now* He invites and commands men to

enter into his house by the strait gate and narrow way and to sit down with himself and his many guests, to enjoy holy communion, refreshment, and repose. But the time at last arrives when the door of the house is shut, and shut for ever. This is the period of judgment--a period of solemn trial--when the righteousness of Christ's dealings towards every man will be made manifest upon evidence, before the assembled universe. Then will those who refused, during the day of peace, to enter in by the narrow door, "begin to stand without, and to say, Lord, Lord, open unto us!" The scene is now changed. Formerly Christ had been seeking entrance into their home--even the home of the hearts, saying: "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man open unto me, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me." But they were too slothful and wicked to open the door to Him. *Now* they seek admittance into his "Father's house," and to the marriage supper, as they stand without knocking, crying, "Open to us!" But Christ's door is for ever closed against them! And why? Because, unless Christ enters, and dwells in our hearts by faith now, we cannot enter heaven and dwell with Christ hereafter: for there can be no fellowship with Christ, no union or communion with Him and with his people, except the fellowship of spirit, affection, character, oneness of heart and will. To "open the door" to us without this in us is impossible; and this *character* mere seekers have not, and

the time for obtaining it has passed away. "I know you not," is his reply. "We are not friends--we are not one. I am holy; ye are workers of iniquity." In the first chapter of Proverbs, verse 28, we have the same solemn picture presented to us, of the sinner's calling on God" when too late, but getting "no answer" -- "seeking Him, but not finding him;" and being permitted to "to eat the fruit of his own ways, and to be filled with his own devices," *because* "he hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord." God saves us from hell, by saving us from sin; He gives us heaven, only by giving us the knowledge and the love of Himself. And when men at the last day cry to God, it is not the cry of children seeking a parent, but the cry only from those who have "a fearful looking for of judgment" -from those who seek deliverance from the terrible *consequences* only of their walking in the broad way of sin; but who, nevertheless, hate the holiness and self-denial of the narrow way as much as ever. They are not "born again;" they want the right mind and heart; and so "they cannot enter the kingdom of God."

"Then ye shall begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets." Such is the pleading of those lost sinners -- such their reasons why the sentence of condemnation should not be pronounced against them. As if they had said, "We are not astonished that thou shouldest shut out those infidels who never

acknowledged Thee; but we ever called Thee what we call Thee now -- ‘Lord.’ We wonder not that those who never heard or never would listen to thy word, should be rejected by Thee; but ‘we have heard Thee teach,’ and have regularly attended to a preached gospel. They who would not remember Thee at thy sacramental feast on earth, may well be refused admittance to thy marriage feast in heaven; but we have eaten and drunk in thy presence-- “Lord, Lord, open to us!” Does the Lord deny all this? Does He say that they spoke untruth? By no means. All this they could truly say, and even more than this; for, as we read in another Gospel, many, like Judas, will come at that day, and say, Have we not cast out devils in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful works.” But what will all this prove? It will prove that they had gifts but not that they had grace; it will prove that they were *seeking*, but not that they were *striving*, to enter in at the strait gate. O, what a solemn warning is here given to the ministers and professing members of the church of Christ! What profession may exist without principle! How much we may *do*, and yet never *be* right with God! What good may be done *by* us, and yet no real good be *in* us! How much *seeking* may there be without any earnest *striving*! For observe, those who could say, and, for aught that appears, say with truth, that they possessed such privileges, made such a profession, and performed such works, were,

nevertheless, known to Christ *as workers of iniquity* only. “I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.”

“There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” The broad way which began with “eating and drinking, and making merry,” thus ends with “weeping and gnashing of teeth;” for “there is a way that seemeth good to a man, but the end thereof is as the ways of death.” What is the immediate cause of this sore agony? It is “seeing Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and themselves thrust out.” But why should such a sight like this produce such overwhelming and bitter sorrow? Because every patriarch and prophet there will be a witness against the sloth, self-indulgence, and indifference of the mere *seekers* after salvation. All those had entered in through the narrow gate--all had obtained the promises “through faith and patience” --all had “come out of much tribulation,” and “endured a great fight of afflictions,” and had carried their cross and despised the shame. In one word, they had been *striving*, and not *seeking* merely: and the very sight of those men of God, and the remembrance of all they had been and had done while on earth, carries home to the hearts of the vain and wicked “seekers” the stern conviction that their condemnation is just; that those holy men had resisted temptations to which mere seekers yielded; and had overcome difficulties by which they were

repelled; and had pushed on in spite of those obstacles from which they had shrunk; and with fewer means and opportunities, and, it may be, with greater temptations and difficulties, had entered that gate of self-denial which they, in their miserable sloth and wickedness, thought so narrow, that they turned aside from it for the broad and easy way of fleshly self-indulgence.

What worker of iniquity, what slothful and unprofitable servant, in these days of gospel light and privileges in which we live, dare attempt to excuse himself for his impenitence, when he beholds those servants of the Most High God in his kingdom? Had those patriarchs more light than we now possess? They lived during the dawn, we beneath the meridian splendour, of Revelation! Were they called to an easier life than ours? Or to the performance of labour which required less faith, less self-sacrifice, less crucifying of the flesh, than those which God has assigned to us now? Was it thus with Abraham, who left his country, and lived a stranger in the land amidst idolaters, and at God's simple command offered up his only son, whom he loved? Was it thus with Moses, who preferred to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season? Was it thus with Daniel, who accepted the lions' den with God rather than the palace without him? Was it thus with that cloud of witnesses mentioned by Paul in the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews? Reading that chapter, we

must even now, if we are slothful, be silent, and find no excuse or our indifference! Even now we might weep with shame and sorrow at our want of likeness to those faithful servants, with whom we vainly hope, in our present state, to live for ever! No wonder if there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth hereafter, in seeing such men in God's kingdom, if we are thrust out; for this conviction must overwhelm our spirit--that if they found the gate in the morning twilight, we might easily have seen it and found it in the noon-day brightness; that if they carried such heavy crosses, and pursued their solitary but patient journey, for so many years along the narrow way, we might have carried our lighter cross, and pursued our easier and shorter journey, amidst the companionships of the Christian church and the manifold blessings of the latter day, if only, like those men, we had loved God, and had been in earnest! But we were slothful, and "workers of iniquity;" so we must feel that we deserve to perish!

They shall come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God." Not in vain has the gospel been preached by faithful missionaries! In spite of the slothful, who would not enter the gate themselves, and who, consequently, cared not though the whole world should follow their example; in spite of all the arguments and opposition of the enemy, "a multitude greater than any man can number, of all nations,

and kindred, and people,” shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. The redeemed “from the east” --that mighty host which will have been gathered to Christ, from the days of “righteous Abel” down to the last convert in Hindostan or China--will all mingle with the multitude who will pass to glory, from the west,” throughout succeeding ages -- the increasing millions of the vast American continent. “They shall come from the south!” The South Seas have already furnished many guests; and many more from those clustered and far-spread islets and island-continent will mingle with the African negro, and with the cultivated European, and with the lonely Esquimaux and Greenlander, who will “come from the north:” and the “one family” will sing with one heart the new song of praise to the Redeemer-- “Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests.” Let the redeemed of the Lord say so whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and gathered them out of the lands from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.” And when we read, even now, the history of God’s work among the heathen, and “see what He hath wrought,” and what has been accomplished in them and by them--what battles have been fought, and victories won, over long accumulating ignorance and superstition--what agonizing

partings with kindred have been endured --what sacrifices of body and soul have been made in holding fast to duty--what steadfastness amidst opposition has been manifested by them; and when we contrast this earnest and laborious striving, among those who have been “last” called to the knowledge of Christ, with the sloth and indifference, the carnality, covetousness, prayerlessness, and hardness of heart, among those who have been “first” called; who cry, “Lord, Lord,” and “hear Christ teach,” and “eat and drink in his presence,” yet are, after all, mere seekers, and, in God’s sight, “workers of iniquity:” then do we already understand how those who are accounted last *now*, will be first then; and how those who vainly think themselves first now, will be *last* then; and how our Capernaums, where Christ teaches daily, may, because of their unbelief in the midst of their boasted privileges, receive at last a more dreadful condemnation, and though now “exalted to heaven, be then thrust down to hell!”

Let us learn, then, from this passage, to be *in earnest*, if we would possess true religion or any good! Let all mere formality, empty talk, outside profession, and pretence, be banished from us, as a lie; for whatever else shall stand at judgment, all that is false must surely perish; and whatever else commands a blessing, certain it is that no blessing can possibly rest upon insincerity and want of earnestness. Let us never forget that we are, truly, just what God knows us

to be; and that having a name to live will not save us (though it may deceive us), if the heart-searching God, who cannot be mocked, sees that we are cold formalists, empty pretenders, slothful hypocrites, dead! May God quicken us more and more through the Spirit of life which was in his Son! May He breathe on those dry bones that they may live! May He deepen on our souls a sense of our responsibility, increase our faith in the reality of things unseen, awaken in us a more abiding conviction of the necessity of solemn earnestness in making our calling and election sure; that in *his* sight we may all, not only seek, but “strive” to enter in at the strait gate, and to walk along the narrow path that leadeth unto life! -- EDITOR.

THE CHILDREN'S SERVICE.

HOW A GREAT PERSECUTOR BECAME A GREAT PREACHER.

AMONG those who were standing by when the good Stephen was stoned to death, there was a young man who was in after years to do a great work in the world. He was one of the Jews of that time who had not been born in their

own land. There were a great many of these: for owing to various causes, a vast number of families who belonged to the stock of Abraham, had come to live in Gentile countries. When God chose his own people and made them dwell in Canaan, he meant that they should be like a great lamp in the midst of the earth, drawing nations to its light. But when the Jews allowed the light to burn dim, he scourged them for their sin, by letting them be taken captive into a foreign land, and at the same time prepared for a time when those who have the light are not merely to keep it burning, but to carry it out into the darkness. After the Jews were brought back from Babylon--though a great many of them did not return--other things happened which led or drove numbers of them away into western cities, taking their Scriptures and their manners with them, and coming to be small lamps of truth, shining more or less clearly in heathen places. When the great Roman empire spread, the Jewish emigrants spread also, and were found in almost every town of note. Among these towns, one well known was Tarsus in Cilicia. The young man who was present at Stephen's martyrdom was born there. His father held a good position, and was a citizen of Rome--one of those who for some good service (some had it for a good price) had been made a Roman, so as to have the same advantages and protection as were enjoyed by those who had been born in Italy, or the great city itself. The youth, accordingly, was a free-born

Roman citizen. In his boyhood he had got a good education, and had been sent afterwards to Jerusalem to be in the school of a great doctor there, whose name was Gamaliel. He proved a very clever scholar; and when after going home, he came back a young man full of learning and zeal, all the older rabbis said he would be a great man, and would defend the views of the strict sect of the Pharisees nobly: so they made him a member of their great council, and perhaps he was one of the very court that saw Stephen's face shine like an angel. He certainly was present, whether he was one of the judges or no, and he made himself forward to take the saint's life: for next to the witnesses that were to be the first to stone a person condemned to die, there ranked the person that watched over the clothes they threw off when they prepared themselves to cast the stones. Now when Stephen was killed, the young man I speak of, and whose name was Saul, kept the clothes of his murderers, who had laid them down at his feet. So he must have heard and seen all that happened that day when the first Christian martyr died. Perhaps he heard his prayer to Jesus to forgive those who slew him. He was to be a great part of God's answer to this prayer. An old writer says something like this:--

If Stephen had not prayed
Paul had never preached.

Prayers are often like seeds cast into the ground. They seem to go out of sight, and to be lost for a time; but they are not lost. They are where they must be, in order to their springing up and bearing a rich harvest of answer. They are with God; and he is making them grow, to be seen in due time. Thus, after Stephen's death the young man Saul seemed more mad against the Christians than ever. But the prayer of the dying martyr was not forgotten, as we shall see. The Lord whom Stephen saw before he died is going to show himself again to the eyes of a man, and to bring about a change for which a world shall be glad. Saul, as well as Stephen, is to see Jesus; and to go forth into many lands, with a double portion of the departed saint's spirit on him.

The change came to pass in this way. Saul, being very full of zeal against Christ's disciples and wishing to rid the whole earth of them, asked the high priest to give him letters of introduction to the Jews that were in Damascus, that with their help he might find out the Christians there, and bring them back to Jerusalem, bound like prisoners. He had done this already in some other towns, being, as he said himself, "exceedingly mad" against all who loved Jesus. So the high priest gave him the letters he wanted, and with a company of attendants, he set on his journey to Damascus. How long he took on the way, we do not know, but at length at mid-day he came in sight of the famous city, which

was the capital of Syria. It is said that the view which he must have had of it is a very lovely one. But as he looked on it, I suppose he was more taken up with the thought that he would soon be there, searching out the people who had been so bad as to believe in Jesus. Perhaps, though, he could not at times help thinking if they are all like Stephen, who prayed the other day for those who were stoning him to death, they cannot be so very bad after all. If such a thought, however, did at times come into his mind, he did not allow it to stay there, but was eager to go on and be at his persecuting work. But in a moment all is changed. A light so wonderfully bright that it put the sun out of sight, more than you have seen the sunshine make a lamp burn dim, shone suddenly round about him, and he and all his company fell to the ground. As Saul lay there, a voice which the rest heard like a sound, without catching the words, named him twice and said, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? He was able to answer, but he felt at once that he was before One far greater than himself, and he said, Lord, who art thou? The voice said again, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. These words Saul never forgot. They came from one whom he saw quite plainly, though the sight struck him blind. He found out, in that awful but blessed moment, what a glorious person he had been fighting against, and he gave up fighting at once. He could only say, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? His heart

was changed--what he had hated he now loved, as he never loved anything before. If he live now, he can only live for Christ Jesus. So, when the Lord who had appeared to him in the way told him to rise and go into the city, and wait till it should be told him what he was to do; he obeyed at once. But poor man, or rather happy man, he was blind--blind to the sun's light, because he had seen Christ's face. The people that were with him had to lead him by the hand, and bring him into the city. There he lodged three days and nights, seeing nothing, eating nothing, drinking nothing. But he was with Christ, learning what only Christ can teach. After that the Lord bade a disciple go to him, and restore his eye-sight, and tell him that God had chosen him to go and preach the gospel to all nations of the earth. At first this disciple, whose name was Ananias, was afraid to go, he had heard so much of Saul's fierceness and hatred of Christ's people; but Jesus told him what a great servant of his Saul was yet to be, and the good man went and put his hand on Saul's head, and called him, Brother, and said, Receive thy sight. Then there fell from Saul's eyes what looked like scales, and he looked up, and could see quite plain. Then he was baptized, as a disciple of Jesus, and began at once to preach salvation by the very name he had wished to make all men forget or curse. How he preached, and what happened to him as he preached Jesus in a great many places, I shall in part relate hereafter.

In the meantime, let me ask you, have you seen the Lord in the way? Christ does not now show himself to the eyes of your body, as he showed his face to Saul. But he makes souls to see him, shows his glory to their thoughts and their love. Sometimes he does this very suddenly, as if a flash of lightning came. Sometimes the light grows slowly, like the dawn of morn brightening into day. I do not ask how you have come to see Christ, but have you seen him? Do you love that name more than any other, more than all names besides? If so, Jesus has work for you also to do; ask him, as Saul did, to tell you what it is.

QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLE STORY.

1. What text in the Gospels refers to the scattering of a number of the Jews among heathen nations?
2. Can you name a young man who was chosen of God to do a great exploit, which all older people were afraid to attempt?
3. What great prophet was it that was granted to a weeping woman's prayer?
4. Can you find me a seed-prayer in the Psalms which has sprung up, but has not yet come to bear full fruit?

5. Where do we find the proof from Paul's own words that Jesus really was seen by him?

6. Who was it that in one hour changed from a trembling heathen to a happy Christian?

7. Can you name a man who was surprised to learn that God was going to answer his prayer, after he thought that it had been refused?

8. Who saw Christ's face shine like the sun, while he was yet a poor man on the earth?

9. Who tells of his seeing Christ's face as bright as the brightest sunshine, after he had risen from the dead?

10. Where does Paul speak of himself as not a whit behind the chief of the apostles?

11. Where does he speak of himself as less than all the others?

ANSWERS to the foregoing questions will be found by consulting the following chapters.--John vii; 1 Sam. xvii.; 1 Sam. i.; Ps. lxxvii. and lxxviii.; 1 Cor. ix and xv.; Acts xvi.; Luke i.; Matt. xvii.; Rev. i.; 1 Cor. xi. and xii.; 1 Cor. xv.

Prayer.

O Lord, we thank Thee for changing the heart of Saul of Tarsus, and making him an apostle. We thank Thee for what we know of his life, and what Thou hast written to us by his pen. We praise thee that Thou didst send him to the

Gentiles, and that the Lord Jesus, whom he saw, and loved, and preached, is a Saviour for the world. We pray Him to call us to the work He would have us to do, and to give us hearts to love it, and to urge us to do it, whatever it may be. And, O, at last may we see Jesus as he is, and be like him.
Amen.

EVENING WORSHIP.

WE beseech thee, Almighty God, look down upon the hearty desires of Thy humble servants, and as Thou hast enlightened us with the knowledge of Thy truth, so enable us to walk as children of the light, and to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, that bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit, in all goodness, righteousness, and truth, we may be ever under Thy divine protection, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

HYMN, *or PSALM* xci. 1-6.

ABIDE with me, fast falls the eventide:
The darkness thickens: Lord, with me abide.
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpers, O abide with me.

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day:
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see:
O thou who changest not, abide with me.

Not a brief glance I beg, a passing word,
But as thou dwell'st with thy disciples, Lord:
Familiar, condescending, patient, free,
Come not to sojourn, but abide with me.

Come not in terrors, as the King of kings,
But kind and good, with healing in thy wings;
Tears for all woes, a heart for every plea;
Come, Friend of sinners, thus abide with me.

I need thy presence every passing hour:
What but thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who like Thyself my Guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me.

I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.
Where is Death's sting? Where, Grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.

Hold Thou thy cross before my closing eyes,
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies:
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

HEBREWS X. 16-31, 35-39.

THIS is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; 17. And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. 18. Now, where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. 19. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20. By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; 21. And having an high priest over the house of God; 22. Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. 23. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) 24. And let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works: 25. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. 26. For if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, 27. But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. 28. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three

witnesses: 29. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace? 30. For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth to me, I will recompense saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. 31. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. 35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. 36. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. 37. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. 38. Now, the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. 39. But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

JEREMIAH XVII. 5-8.

THUS saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord: 6. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall

inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. 7. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is: 8. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of draught, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

Prayer.

OUR Father which art in heaven! We draw near to Thee with assured confidence through Thy beloved Son, earnestly beseeching that Thy great and holy name may be glorified in every place. Extend Thy dominion over all the earth, leading Thy people by the sceptre of Thy word and the power of Thy Spirit, and confounding all Thine enemies by the might of thy righteousness and truth. Be pleased to rule over and guide us, that we may daily learn more and more to submit ourselves to Thy Majesty, as our governor and king. Destroy every power and principality opposed to Thy glory, until Thy kingdom be perfectly established, and Thou appear for judgment in the person of Thy Son. Great

God! make us able and willing to render Thee true and perfect obedience on earth, as do thy heavenly angels, that seek only to execute Thy commands. Thus may Thy will without contradiction be fulfilled and all men submit to Thee, renouncing their own purposes, and all the affections of the flesh.

Grant also, good Lord, that we, walking in the fear and love of Thy holy name, may through Thy goodness be nourished day by day; and receive at Thy hands all things expedient and necessary for us, that we may use Thy gifts in quietness and peace. And observing Thy care of us, may we better acknowledge Thee to be our Father, expect all benefits at Thy hands only, and withdrawing our confidence from creatures, place it wholly in Thy favour and Thy love.

And because in this mortal life we are prone to wander from the right way, and do continually come short of our duty, we beseech Thee, Lord, forgive our faults, by which we have deserved Thy chastisement; deliver us from that everlasting death unto which we are justly exposed; impute not unto us the evil that dwells within us; and even so may we, according to Thy command, forgive the trespasses of others, and do good unto our enemies, rather than seek their hurt.

Finally, O Lord, vouchsafe to uphold us henceforth by thy power, lest we fall through the weakness of the flesh. And since of ourselves we are frail, and beset with foes, the

world, the flesh, and the devil, that cease not to war against us, be pleased to fortify us with Thy Spirit, and arm us with Thy grace; may we withstand all manner of temptation, and gain full victory in our spiritual warfare, so that at last we may triumph eternally in Thy kingdom, with our sovereign Head and Captain, Jesus Christ Thy Son. *Amen.*

MORNING AND EVENING MEDITATIONS.

MONDAY.

Morning.

For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.

I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil. I the Lord do all these things.

Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together: I the Lord have created it.

Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioned it, What makest thou? Or thy work, he hath no hands?

Isa. xiv. 4, 7, 8, 9.

Evening.

And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor, of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there.

And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me.

They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble: for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.

And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

Isa. lxxv. 9, 10, 23, 24.

TUESDAY.

Morning.

In those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.

And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.

And then, if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, Lo, he is there; believe him not:

For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.

Mark xiii. 19, 20, 21, 22.

Evening.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren.

Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

Rom. viii. 14, 29, 30, 31, 33.

WEDNESDAY.

Morning.

When Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac:

(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand,

It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.

As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

Rom. ix. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15.

Evening.

So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.

Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?

What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?

And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.

Rom. ix. 16, 18, 20, 22, 23.

THURSDAY.

Morning.

I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

God hath not cast away his people which foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying,

Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.

But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.

Rom. xi. 1, 2, 3, 4.

Evening.

What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for: but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded

(According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear) unto this day.

I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?

Rom. xi. 7, 8, 11, 12.

FRIDAY.

Morning.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

Having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

Eph. i. 1, 4, 5.

Evening.

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace:

Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth; even in him.

Eph. i. 7, 8, 10.

SATURDAY.

Morning.

For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.

The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; (for ye were the fewest of all people;)

But because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bond-men, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy.

Deut. vii. 6, 7, 8, 9.

Evening.

In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion.

Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me.

Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress.

For thou art my hope, O Lord God: thou art my trust from my youth.

By thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels: my praise shall be continually of thee.

I am as a wonder unto many: but thou art my strong refuge.

Ps. lxxi. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7.