

Prayer

Matt. 6: 5,6.

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(B.T. Vol. N5, p. 39-40.)

It is the same principle with prayer as with aims. The disciple of Christ has nothing in common with the hypocrites, whatever they say or do, or do not. The Son has made known the Father's name to us, and made it known still more intimately and deeply, in association with Himself, on and since He rose from the dead. It was not only the wondrous message through Mary of Magdala, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God;" but that resurrection day at evening the Lord came and stood in the midst, and said to the disciples, Peace to you, showing them His hands and His side. Again He said "Peace to you: as the Father sent me forth, I also send you," and having said this He says to them, Receive [the] Holy Spirit; whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them; whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.

Such is the added Christian privilege, even before the Pentecostal gift was conferred, and the special gift the apostles had as such, like prophets, teachers, etc. in their place. Oh what responsibility, not only to rejoice but to pray unceasingly, flows from such a relationship! and how apt are we to relax or forget! But if we are thus blessed and have in our measure and way such a mission, we have no place to covet; for we have Christ's. And we as His epistles know that we are called to walk in the faith of His grace that we may not shame Him before men. Having received His word, it is our constant call to pray, that, living in the Spirit, we may walk in the Spirit. And the Lord, alone perfect here and everywhere, impresses His principles on His own followers. He is their life in order that there might be an inward living relationship.

"But when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may appear to men. Verily I say to you, They *have* their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy chamber, and having shut thy door pray to thy Father that is in secret, and thy Father that seeth in secret will recompense thee."

This secrecy is still easier, and no less essential in prayer, the most constant of all relative duties. Many saints find a great incentive with others in supplication; and this has its suited and weighty place, as the Lord elsewhere urges. But here as the habitual privilege and claim of relationship to our Father, how careful He is in bidding saints like us to "enter into thy chamber, and having shut thy door pray to thy Father that is in secret, and thy Father that seeth in secret will requite thee." How delightfully simple, yet how deep and wise! It is just between the soul and God, and now His Father and our Father, as Christ knew Him and declared Him to us. Solemn and holy it is to meet our Father alone and expressly, as to every thing of need, sorrow, or joy.

What a contrast with the arrangements that have prevailed in Christendom, which press formal prayers in a public building once, twice, or oftener in the day! When the Lord enjoined the united petitions as giving ground for an answer from above, it was a specific need as the context in Matt. 18 makes plain. But nothing superseded the normal habit of individual secrecy in prayer to our Father. And it will be the comforting resource of the godly remnant in days to come, as we may trust, when things arrive at such a pass that joint public prayer is impracticable. But now, when the world's feeling is too indifferent to punish or hinder open prayer, can anything give more weight when we come together in assembly than the cherishing of individual prayer in the shut chamber to our Father that sees

in secret, as He will surely requite?

Now what can you say to this, dear friend as yet not born of God, but only God's offspring like the heathen Athenians or men of the world generally? Will you not own frankly that it sounds the most irksome bondage to you, and that you in no way pretend thus to live to God? Till you are sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus, knowing your sins blotted out by His blood, and yourselves brought nigh to God, you cannot freely cry, Abba Father. For mere profession, however requisite in the renewed soul, is offensive to God in those dead in sins, as we all were till we found life in Christ by faith. Then such prayer as this suits both our need and our blessing. For, though redeemed in soul, we as to our bodies await redemption at His coming, and meanwhile have to do with an evil world and a subtle foe on the watch to ensnare and defile us. Therefore do we need so to pray without ceasing.