



Continuing to Pray

Having noticed from the pulpit, for several Sabbaths, the very fixed attention of a young friend to all that I uttered in my sermons; I called upon her at her residence. She had been a gay girl; and her social disposition, the pleasantness of her manners, her taste, and the almost unequalled kindness of her heart, while they made her a favorite everywhere, exposed her, as I thought, to be drawn into temptations to volatility and the vanities of the world. As I spoke to her of religion, her eyes filled with tears, and she frankly told me, that, for several weeks, she had been thinking very much upon that subject, and had been “very unhappy” in finding herself “so far from God,—just as you described in your sermon,” said she “without God and without hope.’ That Sermon told me my heart, and I have had no peace since. I am astonished at my sinfulness, and I am more astonished at my stupidity and hardness of heart.” I conversed with her, and counselled her, as well as I knew how, and we kneeled together in prayer.

After this I saw her three or four times, within the space of a fortnight. She studied the way of salvation most assiduously, and, as I thought, with a most docile disposition; and she prayed for pardon, and for the aid of the Holy Spirit, with most intense earnestness. “I do want to love my heavenly Father,” said she; “I do pray for the Holy Spirit to show my poor heart the way to the Saviour.”

Calling upon her a few days after, I found that her appearance was very much altered. She was less frank than I had ever found her before; and though not less solemn perhaps, it was a different sort of solemnity.

She appeared to be more downcast than ever, though not so much agitated, not affected to tears, but having now the appearance of fixed, pensive thought. The impression came over my mind, that she had been led to yield up the world, and that the peculiarity which I noticed in her manner and conversation, was the mute humility of a broken-hearted penitent, now musing over the world she had sacrificed, more than rejoicing over the Christ she had found. But after a little farther interrogation, I found it was not that: she was as far from peace as ever.

But I could not understand her. Her heart did not seem to me as formerly. She had no tears to shed now; her manner was cold, and unlike herself; her words were measured and few; her misery, which seemed deeper than before, had put on an aspect almost of sullenness.

It was somewhat difficult for me to ascertain her state of mind; but after a few minutes, yielding to my urgency to tell me her feelings as a friend, she said to me, with a fixed look of despair,—

“I am entirely discouraged! I never shall be a Christian! My heart is so wicked, that it is wrong for me to pray at all, and for the last three days I have not tried! I have given up all hope of ever being saved!” She thanked me for my kindness and good intentions; but gave me to understand, that she did not wish to have the subject of religion urged upon her attention any more. I encouraged her to persevere in her attempts to gain salvation. Especially I enjoined upon her the duty of prayer, and said to her almost precisely the same things which I had said before to another friend, and which are recorded in the sketch preceding this, as eight things to be remembered.

As I was speaking to her in the way of encouragement, her look appeared to alter, her bosom heaved, she burst into tears, and sobbed aloud. Referring to this some weeks afterwards, she said to me, “When you encouraged me so kindly, that day, my whole heart melted; I would have done anything you told me; I thought, if God is so kind I must love Him, I will love Him.” She promised to resume prayer again. She kept her promise. And about a week after that, light broke in upon her darkness; she was one of the most bright and joyous creatures, and, I am sure, one

of the most lovely ones, that ever consecrated to God the dew of her youth. She has continued to be so. Her days are all sunshine. Her heart is all happiness, and humility, and love. “My dear pastor,” said she to me, (when I asked what particular truth or means it was that led her to Christ,) “I never should have found my Saviour, if you had not encouraged me so kindly, and led me back to prayer. Prayer is everything, for God answers it.”

These young persons, (mentioned in this, and in the preceding sketch,) were very much alike in conviction, in despondency, in temptation—they had the same means, the same ministry—the same truths were urged upon them in the same manner. Surely God is the hearer of prayer. If that other young woman could have been “led back to prayer,” as this happy one expressed it; who can doubt that she would have been happy, too, in ‘the kindness of her youth, and the love of her espousals.’ If this page ever meets her eye, may it lead her back to prayer.”