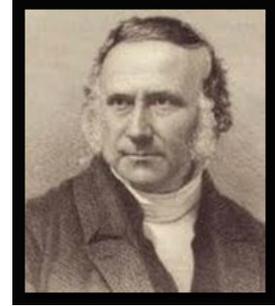


Family Prayer



A man of my congregation, about forty years of age, after quite a protracted season of anxiety, became, as he hoped, a child of God. There was nothing in his convictions or in his hopeful conversion, so far as I could discern, of any very peculiar character, unless it was the distinctness of his religious views and feelings.

But this man did not propose to unite with the church, as I had supposed he would deem it his duty to do. One season of communion after another passed by, and he still remained away from the table of the Lord. I was surprised at this, and the more so on account of the steady interest in religion, and the fixed faith in Christ which he appeared to possess. I conversed plainly with him, upon the duty of a public profession of his faith. He felt it to be his duty, but he shrunk from it. He had a clear hope, was constant at church, was prayerful, but he hesitated to confess Christ before men. All the ground of hesitation which I could discover as I conversed with him, was a fear that he might dishonor religion, if he professed it, and a desire to have a more assured hope. What I said to him on these points appeared to satisfy him, and yet he stayed away from the Lord's table, though he said, "I should feel it a great privilege to be there."

In aiming to discover, if possible, why a man of such clear religious views, of such apparent faith, and so much fixed hope in religion, should hesitate on a point of duty which he himself deemed obligatory upon him; I learned to my surprise, that he had never commenced the duty of family prayer. He felt an inexpressible reluctance to it—a reluctance for

which he could not account. He wondered at himself, but still he felt it. He blamed himself, but still he felt it. This cleared up the mystery. I no longer wondered at all at his hesitation on the matter of an open profession of religion. I had not a doubt, but his fears of dishonoring religion, and his waiting for greater assurance of hope, all arose from the neglect of family prayer. I told him so, and urged that duty upon him, as one that should precede the other. His wife urged it; but yet he omitted it. Finally, I went to his house, and commenced that service with him. He continued it from that time, and from that time his difficulties all vanished. Before he united with the church, he said to me, “it was a great trial to me to commence praying with my family, but now it is my delight. I would not omit it on any account. Since I have commenced it I find it a joyful duty. It comforts and strengthens me.” He had now no hesitation in coming out before the world, and openly professing his faith in Christ.

Neglect of one duty often renders us unfit for another. God ‘is a rewarder,’ and one great principle on which he dispenses his rewards is this—through our faithfulness in one thing he bestows grace upon us to be faithful in another. ‘To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance.’