

Our Cottage Home

by John G. Paton

The sermon highlights the importance of family worship and prayer, and the impact of a devoted Christian father's example on his family.

Scripture: Psalm 112:1, Proverbs 22:6, Matthew 6:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Hebrews 10:25

Topics: "Family Prayer", "Faithfulness To God"

Description

John G. Paton shares a touching account of his father's devout prayer life and unwavering commitment to God, creating a sanctuary of prayer in their humble cottage home. His father's consistent practice of family prayer, devotion to attending church, and discipline rooted in love rather than fear, left a lasting impact on their lives. Despite challenges and obstacles, his father's faithfulness to God and dedication to prayer influenced not only his immediate family but also the community around them, earning him respect and admiration in Christian circles.

Transcript

The Fruit of a Father's Prayers

Our cottage home consisted of a "but" and a "ben" and a "mid room" or chamber, called the "closet." The one end was my mother's domain, and served all the purposes of a dining-room, kitchen and parlour, besides containing two large wooden beds. These were big airy beds, adorned with many-colored quilts, and hung with beautiful curtains, showing the skill of the mistress of the house. The other end was my father's workshop, filled with five or six "stocking frames." The "closet" was a very small apartment between the two, having room only for a bed, a little table and a chair, with a small window shedding light on the scene. This was the Sanctuary of that cottage home.

Three times daily, generally after each meal, we saw our father retire, and "shut the door;" and we children understood by a sort of spiritual instinct that prayers were being poured out there for us, much like the High Priest within the veil in the Most Holy Place. We occasionally heard the pathetic echoes of a trembling voice, pleading as if for life, and we learned to slip in and out past that door on tiptoe, not to disturb the holy communion. The outside world may not have known, but we knew, where that happy light came from dawning on my father's face. It was a reflection from the Divine Presence of God.

Never, in temple or cathedral, on mountain or in glen, can I hope to feel that the Lord God is more near, more visibly walking and talking with men, than under that humble cottage roof. Though everything else in

my Christian experience were by some unthinkable catastrophe to be swept out of memory, or blotted from my understanding, my soul would wander back to those early scenes, and shut itself up again in that Sanctuary Closet. I can still hear the echoes of those cries to God, pushing back all doubt with the victorious appeal, "He walked with God, why may not I?"

Somewhere in or about his seventeenth year, my father had passed through a crisis in Christian experience, and from that day he openly and very decidedly followed the Lord Jesus. At this time, he began that blessed custom of Family Prayer, morning and evening, which my father practiced without one single omission till he lay on his death-bed, at seventy-seven years of age. Even to the last day of his life, a portion of Scripture was read, and his voice was heard softly joining in the Psalm and his lips breathed the morning and evening prayer. None of us can remember that any day passed without family devotions. No hurry for market, no rush for business, no arrival of guests, no trouble or sorrow, no joy or excitement, ever prevented at least our kneeling around the family altar, while the High Priest led our prayers to God for himself and his children.

Our place of worship was the Reformed Presbyterian Church at Dumfries, a full four miles from our home. The tradition was that during forty years my father was only prevented three times from attending the worship of God. Once by snow so deep that he was baffled and had to return; once by ice on the road, so dangerous that he was forced to crawl back on his hands and knees; and once by a terrible outbreak of cholera. All travel between the town and the surrounding villages was publicly prohibited. The farmers and villagers, suspecting that no cholera would make my father stay at home on the Sabbath, sent a deputation to my mother on the Saturday evening, and urged her to restrain his devotions for once! Each of us, from very early days, considered it no penalty, but a great joy, to go with our father to the church; the four miles were a treat to our young spirits, and occasionally some of the wonders of city life rewarded our eager eyes. We had special Bible readings on the Lord's Day evening, and the Shorter Catechism was gone through regularly.

Oh, I can remember those happy Sabbath evenings; no blinds drawn and shutters up, to keep out the sun from us, as some scandalously affirm; but a holy, happy, entirely human day, for a Christian father, mother, and children to spend. There were eleven of us brought up in a house like that; and never one of the eleven, has been heard, or ever will be heard, saying that the Sabbath was dull or wearisome to us. But God help the homes where these things are due by force and not by love! The very discipline through which our father passed us was a kind of religion in itself. If anything really serious required to be punished he retired first to his closet for prayer, and we boys learned to understand that he was laying the whole matter before God; and that was the severest part of the punishment for me to bear! I could have defied any amount of mere penalty, but this spoke to my conscience like a message from God. We loved him all the more, when we saw how much it cost him to punish us. And in truth, he had never very much of that kind of work to do upon any one of all the eleven. We were ruled far more by love than fear.

His long and upright life made him a great favorite in all Christian circles far and near within the neighborhood. At sick-beds and funerals he was constantly sent for and much appreciated. This appreciation greatly increased, instead of diminishing, when the years whitened his long flowing locks, and gave him apostolic beauty. His happy partner, "Wee jen," died in 1865, and he himself in 1868. In this world, or in any world, all their children will rise up at the mention of their names and call them blessed!

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