

272. Beware of Merely Nominal Christianity.

Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter Into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which Is In heaven. *Matt. 7, 21.*

Luther once complained of the "great crowd which listens to God's Word as though it were a mere trifle, and hear the preaching of the Word of God only from custom and at the end of the year know as little of it as at the beginning." Luther here speaks of merely nominal Christians, who pay no homage to their Creator and show a great lack of reverence. Let us beware of nominal Christianity.

Let us not overlook a danger to which we are particularly exposed. Or is there no danger that the true doctrine which we have received be with us merely a matter of the memory and understanding and not a living power moving and changing the heart? We have received the true doctrine as our particular heritage. We know that in the true doctrine we have the true Christ and the true way to eternal life. In this very manner of receiving the true doctrine a danger is lurking; for what is obtained at small cost is generally little appreciated. Those who through many conflicts have come to the knowledge of the truth realize its inestimable value, whereas with their children, who received it through them, it is apt to be a dead treasure, little or not at all tasted and hence little appreciated. Do our souls also know the value of the treasure we have inherited? Unhappy the man who professes the Gospel-truth before men, but in his own heart values it not, or whose own soul is indifferent to it and loathes it!

Shall we be found as people knowing the truth and loving it not? The Gospel-truth must not be a light in the understanding only; it must burn in the heart, enlightening the soul with the hope that maketh not ashamed. We must practise it in our daily lives. Deeds speak louder than words. Vain and idle the profession which is not carried out in practise. "For if any be a hearer of the Word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself and goeth his way and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." O beware of such merely nominal Christianity!

Prayer.

Grant, O Lord, that the consciousness of being Thy child may ever be my comfort against Satan, sin, and death, and may I value it more highly than all worldly honor or temporal dignity; may I conform my life thereto and finally die a Christian death! Let me not only say with my mouth, Lord, Lord; but let me do Thy will from my whole heart, enduring in the true Christian faith unto the end. Let me not become like those who, when they hear the Word, form all kinds of good resolves for the moment, but when the sound of the Word has died away, forget their good resolves, and the picture of a true Christian which they beheld passes out of their mind, and they lose their priceless treasure. Let me be both a hearer and a doer of the Word. Amen.

Jesus. Thou art mine forever.
Suffer not myself to stray;
Let me in my weakness never
Cast my priceless pearl away.

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