



FAMILY PRAYER.

A PIOUS tradesman, conversing with a minister on family worship, related the following instructive circumstance respecting himself.

‘When I first began business for myself I was determined, through grace, to be particularly conscientious with respect to fa-

family prayer. Accordingly, I persevered, for many years, in the delightful practice of domestic worship. Morning and evening, every individual of my family was ordered always to be present; nor would I allow my apprentices to be absent on any account. In a few years the advantages of these engagements appeared manifestly conspicuous: the blessings of the upper and the nether springs followed me—health and happiness in my family, and prosperity in my business. At length, such was my rapid increase in trade, and the necessity of devoting every possible moment to my customers, that I began to think whether family prayer did not occupy too much of our time in the morning. Pious scruples arose respecting my intention of

relinquishing this part of my duty; but, at length, worldly interest prevailed so far as to induce me to excuse the attendance of my apprentices; and not long after, it was deemed advisable, for the more eager prosecution of our business, to make a prayer with my wife, when we arose in the morning, suffice for the day. Notwithstanding the repeated checks of conscience that followed this base omission, the calls of a flourishing concern, and the prospect of an increasing family, appeared so imperious and commanding, that I found an easy excuse for this sin, especially as I did not omit prayer altogether. My conscience was now almost seared as with a hot iron; when it pleased the Lord to awaken me by a singular providence.'

‘ One day I received a letter from a young man, who had formerly been my apprentice, previous to my omitting family prayer. Not doubting but I continued domestic worship, his letter was chiefly on this subject. It was couched in the most affectionate and respectful terms; but judge of my surprise and confusion, when I read these words: ‘ Oh, my dear master, never, never shall I be able sufficiently to thank you for the precious privilege with which you indulged me in your family devotions. Oh, sir, eternity will be too short to praise my God for what I learnt there. It was there I first beheld my lost and wretched state as a sinner; it was there that I first learnt the way of salvation; and there that I first experienced the precious-

ness of Christ as the hope of glory. Oh, sir, permit to say, never, never neglect those precious engagements; you have yet a family and more apprentices: may your house be the birthplace of their souls.' I could read no further; every line flashed condemnation in my face—I trembled—I shuddered—I was alarmed at the thought, that the blood of my children and apprentices might soon be demanded at my hands!

‘ Filled with confusion, and bathed in tears, I fled for refuge in secret—I spread the letter before God—I agonized in prayer to him—but you can better conceive than I can describe my feelings: suffice it to say, that light broke in upon my disconsolate soul, and I obtained a sweet sense that there was mercy and pardon,

even for such a wretch as I. I immediately drew my family around me, presented them before the Lord, and from that day to the present, I have never dared to omit family prayer. I am determined, through grace, that whenever business becomes too large to permit family prayer, I will give up the superfluous part of my business, and retain my devotion. Better to lose a few shillings, than to become the deliberate murderer of my family, and the instrument of ruin to my own soul.

While it is our duty personally to dedicate ourselves to God, our families also should not be neglected. But, alas! how much degenerated are we in this respect. 'In the days of our fathers,' says good Bishop Burnet,

‘ when a person came early to the door of his neighbour, and desired to speak with the master of the house, it was as common a thing for the servants to tell him with freedom, ‘ My master is at prayer,’ as it is now to say, ‘ My master is not up.’

The old Duke of Bedford used to say, ‘ I consider the prayers of God’s ministers and people as the best walls round my house.’

It is said of Col. Gardiner, that he had always his two hours with God in a morning. If his regiment were to march at four, he would be up at two.

Sir Thomas Abney kept up regular prayer in his family during all the time he was Lord Mayor of London ; and in the evening of the day he entered on his office, he without any notice with-

drew from the public assembly at Guildhall, after supper, went to his house, there performed family worship, and then returned to the company.

Dr. Doddridge used frequently to observe, that he never advanced well in human learning without prayer, and that he always made the most proficiency in his studies, when he prayed with the greatest fervency.

The great Dr. Boerhaave acknowledged, that an hour spent every morning in private prayer and meditation, gave him spirit and vigour for the business of the day, and kept his temper active, patient, and calm.

