

Cheap Repository.

SUNDAY READING.

THE

JUDGMENT DAY;

In which a true and just Account is given of the Manner in which the Scriptures teach that We, and all Mankind, are to be tried on the great Day of Judgment.

Shewing plainly, who shall go away to everlasting Death, and who to Life Eternal—with a few Words of Encouragement to FEARFUL CHRISTIANS.



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THE JUDGMENT DAY.

OF all the subjects in religion, there is none more deeply interesting than that of the general Judgment. That some sort of day of reckoning will come upon the world, is what few men, I believe, have ever doubted, for it is a very natural persuasion. Some new philosophers, indeed, have attempted to teach people to the contrary, but surely it is hard to believe that there will be one event to the righteous and to the wicked, and that the grossest sinner and the purest saint, the man who has indulged himself without caring how much he hurt his fellow-creatures, and he who hath both done and suffered much in order to do them good, shall each, when they die, be placed in the very same circumstances by God. No—we are all apt to agree in the general belief, that there will come a day of judgment; the point in which we differ is, the particular mode in which the Almighty will deal with us when we are brought to trial, and the sort of preparation for it which is necessary. Even those who profess themselves Christians vary much from one another in this particular, for we have our own opinions and prepossessions; and though we think that we believe the Bible, yet in fact, we all, more or less, invent a day of judgment of our own, instead of seeking light from the revealed word of God.

It is the design, therefore, of the present tract, not to attempt either to interest the feelings, or to

alarm the fears of the reader, by representing to him such a day of judgment as the writer's own imagination might paint, but rather to collect together what scripture hath said on this subject.— All human speculations will be avoided, and nothing will be introduced which may tend to lead the mind into uncertainties, for the great point is to know what we really have to expect.

“It is appointed unto all men,” says the scripture, “once to die, and after death the judgment.” What then is the nature of this judgment? There is no doubt, I think, that some trial is undergone immediately after death, and that a suitable state of happiness or misery is appointed for every one as soon as he leaves this earth. “This day,” said our Savior, to the penitent thief, “thou shalt be with me in paradise.” But what is here meant to be spoken of, is rather that public and universal judgment which we are taught to expect at the final consummation of all things, in which God will manifest his mode of dealing with his creatures before his holy angels, and before all the assembled world.

The scriptures have given us many very plain notices of what is to take place on this great day, and of the rules by which God will judge us; and it is worthy of remark, that what the scriptures teach, is very agreeable to what, if our minds were free from all corrupt bias, we might naturally suppose to be the dealings of a very wise and merciful, and at the same time, of a very righteous and holy God.

In the first place then, I would observe, that the scriptures declare it to be an universal truth, that “GOD SHALL JUDGE EVERY MAN ACCORDING

TO HIS WORKS." Jews and Gentiles, men of every age of the world, and of every sect; men of every language and nation shall be "judged, every man according to his work, for there is no respect of persons before God." Those indeed, "who have been without law," that is, those that have not had the scriptures given them, "and who have sinned without law," it is said in the Romans, "shall also perish without law;" while those it is added, "who have sinned in the law. shall be judged by the law." Christ, we may take occasion here to remark, is ordained by God to judge us in this manner, "for he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained;" and again it is said, "for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether they be good, or whether they be evil."

That we are all to be judged according to our works, is a plain and obvious first principle of religion; the scriptures, nevertheless, again and again repeat this truth in our ears; they do so, in order, no doubt, to ground us in it thoroughly, and to prevent our so misunderstanding any of the christian doctrines, as to think they justify us in departing from this fundamental truth. Thus, for instance, it is said again, "to them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honor, and immortality, he shall render eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, (that is, as I suppose, contentious against God) and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish on every soul of man that doeth evil, to the Jew first, and

also to the Gentile." "And I saw the dead," says St. John, "small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened, and the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and Death and Hell, (that is, the place of departed spirits) gave up the dead that were in them, and they were judged, every man according to his works."

When our Savior speaks of false pretenders to religion, he recommends it to us to follow this same rule of judging, by which his own conduct will be guided on the great day. "Ye shall know them," says he, "by their fruits; do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" While of his true disciples he says, "I have ordained you that ye should go forth and bear much fruit."——We will only quote one passage more with a view to this point. "Marvel not," says the Savior of the world, in another place, "for the hour cometh in which all that are in their graves shall come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation."

We shall have now to request the reader's very careful attention, while we proceed to shew what is meant in scripture, by "doing good and doing evil, and by being thus judged, every man according to his works," for there is much room for error on this point, if we do not seek for explanation of the matter in the word of God.

Here then, first I would observe, that there are many sins spoken of in the scripture (some of them sins made very light of by men) which, if a man lives in them habitually, are considered by the apostle as at once deciding the man's character, and they are called works of the flesh. "Now the works

of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, emulation, wrath, strife, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like, and they that do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God." And again, "be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Sinners of this class, may hear read their doom as plainly as if their very names were written in the word of God. O that they would therefore repent, and flee from the wrath to come, "for hath the Lord said, and will he not do it?" The mercies of God indeed, are great to the penitent and contrite in heart; they extend even to the chief of sinners, and blessed be his name, they are also sure mercies; but so also are his judgments sure to them that live and die in their iniquity.

But there are various other marks given in scripture, whereby a man may know whether he shall come under condemnation. "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die, but if ye through the spirit, do mortify the deeds of the flesh, ye shall live." And again, "to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded, is life and peace." What is it then to be carnally minded and to live after the flesh? It is undoubtedly to follow our own natural inclinations, instead of following the good motions of the holy spirit of God; it is to live as we like, to go where we like, to say and to do what we like, to spend our time and our money just as we like, and to let our corrupt imaginations rove wherever they like—it is to live to please ourselves, instead of living to please God. I may here also remark,

that there are sins of the mind which will just as much condemn a man on the judgment day, if they have ruled over him, as any sins of the body, and it may be observed, that emulations, wrath, strife, and envyings have already been named, together with murders and adultery; I may add, that pride is often treated of in scripture as highly offensive to God, and humility as one of the best signs of acceptance, for "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace, or favor, to the humble." A readiness to judge others is also a very bad sign.— "Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged;" so likewise is an unforgiving spirit; "for if ye forgive not men their trespasses," says our Savior, "neither will your heavenly Father forgive you." And in the Old Testament it is most awfully declared, that "he shall have judgment without mercy that hath shewed no mercy." O what need shall we all have of mercy on that day, and how dreadful a crime will it then seem, to have been in our life time hard and unrelenting towards our fellow-creatures, in comparison of what it does now. The sins even of the tongue will also be enquired into, for "the tongue, though a little member, is a fire, a world of iniquity." It is inconceivable how much good or ill is done by it. The tongue indeed is an index of the heart, and therefore it is said, "by thy words, thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

We have spoken hitherto only of actual sins, and of these but shortly—but I must hasten to remark, that there are virtues which must be practised, if we would hope to enter Heaven, as well as crimes which must be avoided. Some people

are apt to think that nine-tenths of the actions of their lives are of a class that may be called indifferent. There is no good, they own, in them, but they trust, neither is there any harm. But the scriptures are far from favoring notions of this sort; and I think there is reason to suppose, that when the day of judgment comes, it will not be so much a few great crimes on the one hand, or a few shining virtues on the other, that will decide a man's character, as the ordinary tenor of his life, and the general disposition of his heart, as to what some may call the more indifferent, and the lesser matters. Our Savior, in order to impress his disciples with a just notion of the complete accountableness of man, and of the punishment due to unprofitableness, spake to them the following parable:—"A certain man went into a far country, and he called his servants and delivered to each of them his goods; and to one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one, and after a long time, he cometh and reckoneth with them." Now this is to represent God's manner of dealing with us his creatures; he has given us endowments of many kinds; a certain portion of wealth, for instance, and of other things, (to some of us more, and to others less) all which we are required to use in the service of the giver; and the day of judgment is that time of reckoning, when he will call upon us to give account how far we have done so.—Every thing we had in this world will then be considered, not as having been our own, to do what we pleased with it, but as having been our Lord's goods, and the question to be tried at the judgment day will be, whether we have been faithful in our stewardship. In the parable, we have, first, a de

scription of some servants who improved their talents for their Lord's use; and to each of these it is said, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord;' but one servant is spoken of who had 'buried his talent in the earth,' that is, who had turned it to no profit, for it is not said that he had done any particular harm with it, and on him is passed a solemn sentence of condemnation. Woe be to that person, therefore, who shall be obliged to confess on the judgment day, that while he was in this world he idled away his time, that precious talent entrusted to him by his Maker, in such a manner as to bring no honor to God and no good to his fellow creatures; as for instance, in empty talk, in unproductive work, and in needless amusements; who shall be forced to own also, that he considered his health and strength as given him only for his own enjoyment, that he exerted his abilities for no other end than to get for himself honor or profit, that he employed his influence all for the same purpose, and that he spent the wealth which God gave him in order to do good with it, in nothing else than procuring ease and pleasure, and a multitude of surperfluties for himself and his family. A man of this kind possibly may be brought in guilty of no very signal crime, but he, undoubtedly, is the person who is pointed at in the parable, and who is condemned by that sentence denounced at the end of it, 'Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.'

This may not be an improper place to add, that a man's faith will unquestionably be enquired into on the day of judgment. 'Without faith,' says

the scripture, 'it is impossible to please God.'— Faith also in our Savior, as well as in the great doctrines of the gospel, is every where required, as necessary to salvation. "Go preach the gospel to all nations, he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not, shall be damned."—'He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the only begotten Son of God.' And the reasonableness of thus condemning men for their unbelief, is also explained;—'for this,' says our Savior, 'is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil!'— When men do not believe the scriptures describe the reason to be, that there is in them 'an evil heart of unbelief to depart from the living God.' They never talk of the good heart of an unbeliever. All, all are called upon to repent and believe at their peril, and to obey God's blessed Gospel, and are taught to expect that they shall be rewarded or punished in the next life, as they have or have not done so.

What an astonishing proof was it of the condescension and goodness of God, that he should send his only begotten Son down into the world to die for us, as well as to teach us the way in which we ought to walk, and to bring life and immortality to light by the gospel; what a mercy is it that God should provide for us mansions in the heavenly world; and that he should offer up his Holy Spirit to produce all the necessary preparations of heart within us! This rich offer of God in the gospel is compared in the scripture to the invitation of a man who prepares a great feast or supper, and sends to call many guests, saying 'my oxen and

my fatlings are killed, come, for all things are ready.'—The world, in general, slight the offer of the gospel; they plead business, or amusement, or engagement with their connexions; and they are therefore compared in the same parable, to persons who when the invitation to the supper comes, 'go one to his farm, and another to his merchandize, and a third to his wife,' each of them saying, 'I pray thee have me excused.'

It is observable, that the invitation of the parable appears here to be somewhat civilly declined, and that certainly no violent insult to the master of the feast seems intended; and yet he is represented as considering it to be a sufficient affront that they merely will not come to partake of the feast which he had been at the expence of preparing for them.—'None of those men,' says he, 'which were bidden, shall taste of my supper.'—In this manner are we taught, that if we attend not to the gospel, even though we should be guilty of no intentional disrespect to God, or to Jesus Christ, we shall not be permitted hereafter to taste of the heavenly happiness—'for how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation!'

The same point may be very decisively proved from some expressions at the end of the following awful passage:—'For the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty angels in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints and admired in all them

that believe, because our testimony was believed in that day.'

And here if it should be asked, But how comes it that we are to be tried by our faith, when it has been already said, that it is by our works that we shall be judged? I answer, most evidently the word 'works' is in such places as these to be understood in the very largest and most general sense; a point which must have partly appeared already. The word is to be understood, as it seems to me, in a sense so large, that even our faith is to be included in it. The justice of this observation will, perhaps, be more fully admitted, after considering the following passages. When the Pharisees came to Christ, and said,—'What shall we do that we may work the works of God?—he answered, 'this is the work of God, that ye believe on whom he hath sent;'—that is to say, this is the first and great work that you have to attend to, namely, to believe in me, and the other good works which God would have you to do, will follow in their due order. Believing then is expressly termed, "a work that is to be done," in this passage of scripture. It is said in another place,—"This is the commandment of God, that ye believe on the Name of his Son Jesus Christ." Here then to believe in Christ, is spoken of as one of God's commandments; and to disbelieve in Christ, is, of course, to break God's commandment. Now it is plain, that to break God's commandment in this, in the same manner as in any other point, must be an evil work, and that it must be a work for which we shall have to be judged when we come to the day of judgment.

But here let it also be strongly insisted on, that

it is not a barren and unfruitful faith that will stand the test of that awful time of trial. It is not a man's having been right in his doctrines, and sound and orthodox in his creed, that will be the means of saving his soul. No—we are well warned in scripture, that all that faith which did not teach a man to depart from iniquity, will be pronounced to have been a dead faith, and utterly unavailing; 'for as the body without the spirit is dead, even so faith without works is dead also,' and 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord.'

The scriptures give us much reason to suppose, that the number of persons who will have had this false faith, and will have fondly trusted to it, and who will therefore, quite unexpectedly to themselves, be condemned as evil doers on the judgment day, will prove not inconsiderable; and it seems, from several passages, that among these persons will be some who had known Christ familiarly in the days of his flesh; others who had possessed great gifts in his church, and not a few in all ages who had made a forward profession of his religion, who had had a strong conceit of their being some of the people of God, and a high confidence of their salvation.

The following passage, which describes the future disappointment of the Pharisees, and it is to be feared also of many others, who will, in like manner, be shut out of heaven, is very remarkable. 'Strive to enter in,' says our Savior, 'at the strait gate, for many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and has shut too the door, and ye begin to stand without, and knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us, and he shall an-

swer and say, I know you not whence ye are; then shall ye begin to say, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are: depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. Then shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. For they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God, and behold there at last which shall be first, and the first last.'

Thus it seems that there will be numbers whom Christ will acknowledge as his saints, and will gather into his church in heaven, who were not acknowledged as true Christians by many of their brethren here below; and the reason of this error is, that here we judge sometimes too hastily, and by outward appearance, and, at other times by false marks of grace; for it is not easy to bring men to try either themselves or others by the true scriptural test. 'Depart from me,' says our Savior in like manner, in another place, to some who boasted much of their attachment to him, 'I know ye not, ye workers of iniquity.' O how much easier is it to attend the preaching of the gospel, and to be present also at the Lord's table, to talk religiously and to get credit with a religious circle, and even to persuade ourselves that we are religious, than it is to leave off iniquity. '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.' Indeed it is not impossible

at present to separate exactly the truly pious Christian from the hypocrite and self-deceiver;— ‘the tares and the wheat therefore must grow up together, until the time of harvest, but then shall the husbandman say unto the reapers, Bind ye the tares together in bundles to burn them, but gather ye the wheat into my garner.’

There are various signs to which, on the judgment day our Savior will appeal for the reality of the religion of his followers, and one of these I will now dwell upon, because it is in the evangelist Matthew very specially mentioned; I mean that kindness and condescension which Christians will have been in the habit of exercising to the poor, and to all their suffering brethren. Their alms, indeed, not like the alms of the worldly man, will have been bestowed for the Lord's sake, and with a simple and humble mind, according to that precept of their Savior,—‘Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.’ Let every man, therefore, and especially every rich man, who calls himself a Christian, try himself by this test, as ever he would hope to stand uncondemned at the great day of our Lord's appearance. That great and solemn scene is thus described by our Savior:—‘When the son of Man shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats; and he shall set his sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left. Then shall the King say unto them at his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you

from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat; thirsty, and ye gave me drink: a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me; sick, and ye visited me; in prison, and ye came unto me.' But they, being little disposed to take credit for any good works which they had done, are represented as replying, —' Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or thirsty, or naked?'—Then shall he say unto them,—' Forasmuch as ye did it to the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me'—Then shall he say unto them on his left hand—Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungry and ye gave me no meat; thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not.'—Then shall they say, (being astonished at the accusation brought against them, and quite unwilling to allow it) ' Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?'—Then shall he answer them, —' Verily I say unto thee, for as much as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.'

O, let us beware of that sort of religion which does not expand the heart in love to God, as well as in fervent kindness and charity to our fellow-creatures; and let us, I will add, beware of that sort of kindness which consists much in soft and civil words, but very little in beneficent and self-denying actions.—' For if a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you

say unto them, Depart in Peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful for the body, what doth it profit?’

The sum which professing Christians will have given in charity, will no doubt, be enquired into on the day of judgment, as well as the walks which they have taken to see the poor, the attentions which they have paid to the fatherless and the widow, the hospitality which they have exercised towards the foreigner and the stranger, the condescensions towards the prisoner, and the various comforts which they have administered to the afflicted. It is not indeed the sum given, that will, in their Lord’s sight, determine the character, for the widow’s mite will hereafter count for a larger sum than many an admired donation of the affluent;— and “whoso shall have given even a cup of cold water to one of the little ones of Christ’s flock, in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose his reward.

Alas! how little is true christianity as yet understood in the world. There is a slight and superficial religion, which, in its fruits, is hardly to be distinguished from infidelity, and by which, nevertheless, men contrive to quit their consciences while they are in this world. To expose all this false christianity to shame and contempt, will be one effect of the day of judgment, for that is the great day in which the hearts of all men are to be searched, and their several actions weighed; the motive to them examined, their truly good works ascertained, and all their secret sins brought to light. What sacrifices did we here make to God and a good conscience? That will be one part of

the question. How far did we resist the world? 'The world,' we were told in Scripture, 'lieth in wickedness.' We were warned to take heed, 'lest we be condemned with the world.' We were commanded 'not to be conformed to it.' It is in this manner the reality of faith and grace that were in us will be enquired into on the judgment day.— It is the reality of our repentance that will then be tried, the reality of our love to God, and our simplicity and sincerity in his sight. Vain excuses will no longer serve. The various pleas which we here have made for indulging ourselves in sloth, or sin, for giving way to our evil tempers, for conforming to the evil customs around us, for omitting unwelcome duties, for profaning the sabbath, or for neglecting prayer and the worship of God, will not bear to be urged on the day of judgment. No—our mouth will be stopped just as the mouth of some poor criminal sometimes is in this world, who, before he was brought to the bar, insisted on his innocence, but when forced to give in his evidence, finds it no longer possible to make, before his judge the same shuffling excuses, by which he had justified himself among his fellow criminals.

'Verily, it is a small thing to be judged by one another, or of man's judgment, for he that judgeth us is the Lord.' What will it matter whether we had more or less character while on earth? The day of judgment will declare to the assembled world what we really were. The day of judgment will rectify all errors: the day of judgment will find us out.

There is no circumstance, perhaps, in our description of this day, more calculated to strike ter-

ror into many a heart than this: I mean that the most secret things shall then be laid open. Oh what discoveries will then be made! What secret robberies and adulteries, and deeds of darkness will be revealed! All the crimes perpetrated in the world from generation to generation; all the cruelties and oppressions which have been ever committed under the sun, and which there was here no one to redress, and all the violences and murders under which the world has groaned, but which, by some means or other, have gone unpunished, and many of which have been entirely concealed, shall be brought to light. 'For the earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.'— For now 'That great and terrible day of the Lord is come' on which also 'the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open.' It is the 'day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God,' when the sentence against evil workers, which has been so long delayed, shall be executed; when the triumph of the wicked shall be over, when 'the Lord shall repay fury to his adversaries,' and when he shall 'reward the faith and patience of his saints.'

I ought here, lastly, to add, that we shall all be judged, undoubtedly, according to our opportunities of improvement, and our means of grace. 'The servant that knew not his master's will, shall be beaten with few stripes; but the servant who knew it, and yet did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.' What awful threatenings did our Savior denounce on the cities that heard his gospel, and yet would not attend to it.—'Woe unto thee, Chorazim! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which have been done in thee,

had been done in Sodom and Gomorrah, they would have repented; wherefore it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for thee." Those, therefore, who in this world were long hearers of the gospel, and yet profited not by it, those 'who had line upon line, and precept upon precept; those who had Christian parents to direct them, and Christian friends to reprove them, and Christian pastors to instruct them, and Christian examples set before them! those who had seasons for reflection afforded them by their parents on the sabbath, and had religious books put in their hands, and had abundant opportunities of becoming acquainted with true religion; those who, moreover, had alarming providences sent to awaken them; who were often warned by God's own afflicting hand of the approach of death, and heard addressed to them many an awful representation of their own future judgment, and who, in spite of all these advantages, still continued to be hardened—these are they that shall receive the chief condemnation.

But who are the persons that will be justified, and that will have reason to rejoice at this great day of their Lord's appearance? I answer, in the words of our Savior, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.—Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.—Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.—Blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be called the children of God.—Blessed are they who shall have been reviled and persecuted, for righteousness sake, for now they shall rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is

their reward in heaven." "The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law."

And now, before I close this tract, I wish to add, a few words in the way of comfort and encouragement, as well as with a view to some further explanation of the subject; for I am afraid it may be said, that the qualities which have been spoken of as necessary for heaven, are high and difficult to be attained, insomuch that some fearful reader may cry out, "who then shall be saved?" ¶ Let it therefore, in the first place, be observed in answer, that the scriptures no where say, that these qualities must have been possessed from the very beginning of life, nor ever during any part of life in complete perfection.

It may tend much to our purpose of encouraging the well-disposed reader, if we here digress a little, in order to consider the case of Christ's own apostles.

In the history of them which is given us by the evangelists, they appear to have been at one time very weak in faith, to have labored under much prejudice and ignorance, and to have been often led, through the worldliness of their minds, exceedingly to misunderstand their divine Master. They sometimes discouraged those whom Christ was willing to heal; they were apt continually to wonder at his words, and they were half disposed to blame some of his actions—they could not believe that he was about to die for them, and they slept when he was agonizing in the garden. Were not these proofs of weakness in them? And yet, even at the time of their having these infirmities,

they had that degree of simplicity and integrity, and of unfeigned attachment to their Master, which already entitled them to the name of true disciples. For when some of the followers of Christ cried out, 'This is a hard saying, who can bear it?'—And when others are said to have walked no more with him, they seem all, with the exception only of Judas, to have joined in that saying of Peter, 'Lord, to whom shall we go but unto thee, for thou hast the words of eternal life.' They continued therefore to hear his words, and thus they had their minds gradually opened by his instructions, and except only when he was led away to be crucified, they sided with him in his several trials and temptations. On the whole, therefore, they even in the season of their infirmity, were in favor with God; and, as a testimony of it, they had that glorious promise made to them by Christ himself, just before his death, 'Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, and ye shall sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'—Which means, as I presume, that they should be exalted on the day of judgment, as the twelve heads of the church, and that they should join their voices to that of Christ, when he should judge his people.

We see then from the examples of the apostles, that a man will be accepted by God on the judgment day, even though he has had much imperfection, but I would also add, that imperfect as these apostles for a long time were, both in their faith, their knowledge, and their goodness, they were in due time led on and strengthened, as well as comforted by the good Spirit of God, to whose guid-

ance they committed themselves; and almost every one of those who, once through their worldly fear, forsook their Master, are believed to have died martyrs.

I say therefore, let us encourage ourselves by these examples, and let us not be deterred by the difficulties of the way, but 'let us press forward in our course, and let us be followers of them, who by faith and patience inherit the promises.'

And let me now also bring another point to my readers comfortable remembrance, which is, that a man's past sins, even if ever so great, will, when they are repented of, be no obstacle to his salvation, for such is the merciful appointment of God in the gospel, 'Who are those,' it is said in the Revelations, 'who are clothed with white robes, and have palms in their hands?' the answer is, 'these are they that have washed their garments, and made them white in the blood of the lamb.'—'Christ is that Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world, and by him all who believe shall be justified from all things.' Heaven, as we have reason to suppose, will not be peopled by those who were innocent from their youth, and whose spotless lives will form their title to admission—for an adulterous, though penitent David, will be found there; a once persecuting Saul, a converted Mary Magdalen, a thief, who repented even on the cross, and a Peter, who once denied his Master. These, and many more, in point of sinfulness, not unlike to these, shall, through the all powerful grace of Christ, obtain a glorious resurrection; for these all repented of their sins, they all, as they had time and opportunity, 'brought forth fruits meet for repentance,' and these fruits, which are called in scripture, 'the

fruits of the spirit,' being produced by the Holy Spirit's influence on the heart, are those very works which we have been so largely describing.

Let us then lay our foundation for good works in repentance and deep humility. The tempers which have been spoken of, such, for instance, as forgiveness of injuries, and a dread of judging others, as well as an overflowing love and pity to our fellow-creatures, arise naturally and easily from a heart broken with the sense of our own iniquities; for the qualification for Heaven which God requires in us, are not those of a sinless being, but of a penitent and humbled sinner that has been taught in the school of repentance, and has thus learnt to walk in the newness of life; and even that love of God, which is so leading a part of true religion, is not a little excited and encreased by the sense of God's forgiveness of us, according to that remark of our Savior.—“ Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, therefore hath she loved much.”

Let it be our great fear, however, lest professing to admire the grace of the gospel, and to believe its truths, we should not be found, on the Day of Judgment to have been walking in a manner worthy of it, and let us treasure up in our minds the many warnings given us in scripture, that it is by our works that we shall be called upon to prove that we have been true disciples. “ Behold,” says the blessed Savior of the world, “ I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as HIS WORK shall be.”

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