

£7.50

THE
GOSPEL MAGAZINE

AND

PROTESTANT BEACON.

“COMFORT YE, COMFORT YE MY PEOPLE, SAITH YOUR GOD.”

“ENDEAVOURING TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND OF PEACE.”

“JESUS CHRIST, THE SAME YESTERDAY, AND TO-DAY, AND FOR EVER, WHOM TO
KNOW IS LIFE ETERNAL.”

VOL. XV.—NEW SERIES.

LONDON:
W. H. AND L. COLLINGRIDGE, ALDERSGATE STREET, E.C.

1880.

P R E F A C E .

“HAVING therefore obtained help of God,” said the Apostle, as he stood before King Agrippa, “I continue unto this day;” and so say we to our readers whilst taking up the pen once more to address them by way of Preface.

Words would utterly fail were we to attempt to express all we feel in the review of the Lord’s most marvellous mercies and His astounding goodness, long-suffering, and forbearance, during our connection with this work for the last forty years and six months! We say nothing of the previous years of our pilgrimage, but merely limit our contemplations to the afore-named period.

In the review, we can only say that we are, as it were, lost in amazement, astonishment, and surprise, as we consider what the Lord has been and what the Lord has done. We wish to emphasize, and therefore we adopt words which may be deemed tautologous. Such is our deep sense of the Lord’s infinite goodness and mercy, that we wish to lay all the stress we can command, in order as best we can to express what we feel in the review of His loving acts, wonderful condescension, and tender compassion.

Let men ignorant of God, and unobservant of His leadings and dealings, say what they may; we are bound to testify of His goodness. Sit in judgment as they may, and dispute His wisdom, His love, and His authority as they do, from the very depths of our

heart we cannot but exclaim with the prophet of old, "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which Thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old" (Micah vii. 18—20).

Ah! it is because men in general are ignorant of the Lord God Omnipotent, and because they remain in nature's heathenism and hatred of that Almighty One "in whom they live, and move, and have their being," that they speak of Him as they do. How different would be their conclusions were they made the recipients of His grace, and did they know personally and experimentally what adopting love and forgiving mercy are!

Here, however, some may turn upon us and ask, "Then how is it that any who profess to have this personal knowledge, and to have enjoyed these wondrous benefits, should so often belie their profession by the betrayal of fear, and ingratitude, and distrust?" Such cavillers and objectors may say, "Did *we* realize what *you* profess to have done, we should treat the common occurrences of life and the every-day circumstances of the world with a becoming contempt and indifference, as being utterly unworthy of consideration, when set in contrast with that eternity, its security and its enjoyments, of which you speak."

That such objections should be raised, and that contradictions so palpable should become a matter of surprise, is readily to be accounted for. Were there no

such scruples, and were no such objections raised, the surprise would be greater.

The answer, however, to all such objections and arguments may be given in a very short and summary way, by a simple reference to what Moses said to Israel, when he was taking a review of their wilderness wanderings. Said he, in the eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, and second and third verses, "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live."

During their sojourn in Egypt, and upon the marked and marvellous manner in which they were delivered therefrom, they knew nothing comparatively of the patience, forbearance, longsuffering, forgiving love, and restoring mercy of Jehovah. They knew something of His condescension, somewhat of His compassion, and a little of His power and authority; but of these attributes of His character—His patience, longsuffering, and pardoning grace and mercy—they knew, as it were, nothing, until they were led in and through the wilderness, there to test and to tempt the Lord Jehovah in an altogether new, distinctive, and most astounding way.

Now, it is precisely upon these selfsame principles that the untowardness, and the thanklessness, and the fears and distrust of the people of God are to be explained and accounted for.

Moreover, in their first Adam relationship, or in their fleshly minds as united to and descending from a fallen head, they have no more to boast of or glory in than the most depraved or notorious sinner. All taught of God are prepared to testify, as did the Apostle, between twenty and thirty years after his conversion, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing;" and, in proportion as such are taught of God, and have a still deeper and deeper insight into the weakness, wickedness, and abomination of their own hearts, are they prepared to dispute the point with the selfsame Apostle, who said, with respect to sinnership, "of whom I am chief."

Furthermore, the feeling which these very persons possess, amounting to the utmost self-loathing and disgust, arises from the very fact which, in the eyes of the worldling, renders them objects of perplexity and astonishment. This self-hate springs from a consciousness of their want of gratitude; their sense of the coldness of their affection; the lack of faith and trust for the future in One who has been so good and so gracious in the past.

It is, however, in this way, as slow and most forgetful learners in the school of Christ, that such have to learn, little by little and step by step, the momentous lesson, "By GRACE are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast."

THE EDITOR.