

being up in a blaze. Then his double inquiry was, What thanks shall I render to God, and what service shall I do for men?

The members became to Paul in Italy what the Head had been to the Eleven in the depth of their desolation at Jerusalem. When, after the crucifixion, those poor bereaved Galileans were cowering in a lock-fast room for fear of the persecutors, their Saviour suddenly appeared among them: "then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord." Now that the Head is exalted, he employs their fellow-servants to comfort mourners in Zion. The sight of a true disciple often makes a true disciple glad. While Christ alone is the Saviour of both, they hold up each other's drooping hands, and strengthen each other's feeble knees. The fountain of consolation is on high; but its treasures are distributed through earthen vessels. It is generally from the little vessel close at hand that we draw our supply; but we know who has charged it and kept it full.

Although I be, through faith, in union with Christ, as a branch is in the vine, I need the sympathy and company of my fellow-Christians. For want of a band of brothers coming out to meet him, an ancient servant of God, equal, perhaps, in heroism of character to Paul himself, was left destitute of thankfulness and courage at a grand crisis of his course. Elijah was in character and history not unlike the great apostle of the Gentiles. He was cast out of his country by a cruel persecution, and compelled to wander a solitary exile in a strange land. Elijah, in the wilderness of Beersheba, was like Paul in Italy. As Jezebel sought the prophet's life, the Jewish priesthood sought the life of the apostle. But in that wilderness, Elijah neither gave thanks to God for past mercies, nor took courage for future work. He fretted peevishly against God's appointments, and in faintness of heart endeavoured to escape from a struggle which he considered hopeless. He sat down under a juniper-tree, and desired to die there. He said, "It is enough: now, O Lord, take away my life." That took all the spirit out of the great and good man. He had faith in God, and why did he not bear up against accumulating misfortunes? He failed for want of company. In

the hour of his extremity, he obtained no human sympathy; he saw no brother's face. No brethren came forth into the wilderness of Beersheba to meet Elijah, and therefore, great and good man though he was, he could neither thank God nor take courage. He felt himself alone. "The children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and even I only, am left." How pathetically he dwells upon his solitude: "even I only!" This was the decisive stroke. It is a dreadful thing for man to be alone. God knows our frame and our need. He did not create Elijah for his frailty. It is instructive to observe what means the Lord adopted then to heal the fretfulness, and nerve again the arm of the servant. It is not, I am the Almighty God; I am thy everlasting portion. Elijah knew all that; and yet in the hour of need his heart melted and came as water. His Maker and deemer knew the ailment, and scribed the cure. What saith the answer of God unto him? "I have reserved to myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal." The balm of Elijah's wounded spirit is the assurance that he is not alone. Henceforth we hear no more of a petulant request to be released from a hopeless enterprise. In the strength of that assurance the prophet arose and prosecuted his sublime ministry.

The same watchful Father saw in Italy—a stranger in a strange land, counting himself a solitary wanderer and sinking into despair at the thought. A suitable remedy was provided and applied in time. The cure is, and yet how effectual! When he came to the Forum, certain brethren came to meet him. As soon as they came in sight, the apostle's despondency fled, and darkness before the dawn. Let us learn not only where our strength is, but also how our hope and courage come. If we are alone, or think we are alone—which, as to its effect on the spirit, is the same thing,—although we possess Elijah's massive strength of character, we shall certainly fail and fail; we shall have neither a hand to thank God, nor a hand to help the world.

2. The emotions which the me-