

before him. I have done no harm! and is this all that can be pled, supposing the assertion to be true? Are the high faculties of mind, of moral, and spiritual action, to lie buried, instead of being dug out of the lowest depths of man's nature and polished and adorned as fit for the temple of God? Is the proclaiming the glory of the Divine Being both in sentiment and action, the imitating the character of blessed benevolence in intercourse with others, the rising in attainments of the gifts and graces of a better spirit than what naturally characterizes man—to be esteemed matters of such trifling importance, that their neglect will meet with no condemnation? Such was the reasoning of the slothful servant, who, though entrusted with but one talent yet bound it up in a napkin and hid it in the earth. His reasoning that he had done no harm did not excuse him before his master; "cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness," was the judgment pronounced upon him.

Again, many flatter themselves as being righteous before God, from their having done good.

This too is a common kind of righteousness pled by many, and inasmuch as it is of an affirmative description, it is more eagerly clung to than the negative one we have mentioned; but still like the former, it indicates a mind very imperfectly acquainted with the system of faith and practice taught in the New Testament. "They have been just in their dealings with others, they have often shewn pity to the afflicted, they have been charitable to the poor, they have even assisted in the work of promoting and supporting the Gospel." But is this the righteousness of the Kingdom of Heaven? Is human justice, that which every man, being himself his own judge, considers to be sufficiently just and right to his neighbour, that justice which fulfils the will of Him who is infinite in justice and no respecter of persons? Will that pity which now and then vibrates on the iron chord of the selfish heart satisfy him, who is all merciful, full of pity and compassion? Will the profession of benevolence, with now and then an extension of the cold hand of charity, come up to the extent of the will of that being who is love, and requires man to love his neighbour as himself? Will the parting with a little of this world's abundance for the support of religion, more by constraint than by free will, not so often as a matter of the last consideration as of the first, when every other demand has been met with, appear as righteousness before him who has said "Give unto the Lord the first fruits of your increase." Besides we would ask who more correct in fulfilling the righteousness of the law than Paul before his conversion, not only living blame-

less according to the rules of the strictest sect in his days, yet so far from esteeming his righteousness after conversion as of any avail before God, he exclaimed "what things were gain for me, those I counted loss for Christ." Or what meaneth the graphic language of the prophet, "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and our iniquities like the wind have carried us away?" It is granted that the manifestation of many of the virtues which can endear man to his home, his neighbour and his country, may raise him high in the just estimation of his fellows, may shed a lustre over his name, a halo of gratitude even over his departed remains,—but what may do for earth, may not do for Heaven. To live to man and to live to God are not the same things. An epitaph on his tombstone may not prove a breast plate of righteousness before the judgment seat of Christ; and the enrolling his name in the world's history may not be the enrolling it in the Lamb's book of life. A man may be all that the world could wish him to be, may shew much of that sweetness and goodness of character flowing from an amiable temper, and yet, like the young man in the Gospel, though worthy the esteem and commendation of men, he may be mourned over as not of the Kingdom of God. If one man could by his own righteousness render himself well pleasing to God, why might not another, why might not all? Many of the Heathen shew equal goodness and kindness with many in a Christian land. If this righteousness then were enough, what was the need of the revelation from Heaven of a righteousness which is by faith?

But again, many flatter themselves with being righteous from their using the means of grace.

This is another kind of righteousness pled by many as a refuge before God—"I have been a reader of my Bible, I have maintained the form of religion in my family, I have observed the Sabbath, attended the sanctuary, and availed myself of the highest ordinances of Divine appointment." But is this the righteousness required of man by God? If so there would be less reason for the complaint of the prophet "who hath believed our report and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"—and none for that saying of the apostle "they are not all Israel who are of Israel." The various ordinances of religion are not grace, but only the means of grace; the external conductors by which the unseen life and soul of godliness may be communicated to man, the pipes by which the waters of life flow from their fountain head to supply the wants of the faithful; they are but the outside of religion and though prized by the spiritual minded as that which keeps from the view of the world, what is hidden with Christ in God, yet they will be prized