

tures, is also a great hinderance to successful running. For by such indulgence the vigour of the mind is enfeebled, and its spiritual sensibilities benumbed or rendered morbid, so that finally a lassitude is engendered, which alike indisposes and incapacitates for the effort demanded. "Take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life." Unbelief too is an impediment of common occurrence, and of the most hurtful consequences. This is a sin which easily besets most minds. The circumstances of the present life, where so many things address the senses and beguile us to walk by sight, have such a constant and powerful tendency to repress faith, that the believer oftentimes loses his sensible hold on future and unseen realities. Nothing can be a greater encumbrance than unbelief, for it causes the prize to be perceived but dimly, and, as a natural consequence, cools the ardour and cripples the energies of the soul. The race itself is pre-eminently one of faith, and therefore the absence of this principle must be fatal, and the defectiveness of it extremely dangerous to success. All who set out in this course need often pray, "Lord increase our faith."

3. The Christian must exert all his energies. The following of the prescribed course, and the laying aside of every encumbrance could go but a short way towards gaining the prize. The racers mainly depended for their success on the degree of strength and agility they were capable of exerting. Every limb and every muscle that could accelerate their swiftness, was strained to the utmost. So let us press on towards the mark. Spiritual indolence is extremely prevalent among the followers of Christ, and its influence is most bewitching. Men generally shrink from great efforts of any kind, but from none so much as those connected with their salvation. But however great may be the reluctance commonly felt to strenuous exertion, it is a fact that religion demands our greatest efforts. Indeed the very design of the apostle in speaking, as he repeatedly did, of the Christian life as a race, was forcibly to express that it was full of holy activity, and called for efforts in constant succession. Our

Saviour taught the same truth when he said, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." It cannot surely be a light labor to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. The believer is required to be active for God and his own soul, and to make progress in every grace and virtue that can honor his Maker, and adorn his own character. "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion," who accomplish nothing for their own security nor for the peace and prosperity of the community. There are some who have never put forth the full amount of their strength, and others who only do so at remote intervals; but such cannot expect to rise high in spiritual attainments. Distinction in religious worth is not to be acquired without exerting even the most latent energies. For want of striving against sin, thousands live and die whose religion is at best only a matter of charitable hope. And they are comparatively few who make their calling and election sure, and who are the living epistles of Christ, known and read of all. They in every age, of whom the world is not worthy, have risen to eminence by exercising themselves unto godliness. Hence arose the pre-eminence of Paul among the apostles—he laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not he, but the grace of God which was with him. He evidently deemed the enterprise—the contest to which he was called as worthy of the greatest zeal and ardor, and demanding unceasing exertion. For he declared of himself—"I keep under my body and bring it under subjection, lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." And again he said, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." So run that ye may obtain.

4. The Christian must persevere in the race. It is evident that no running, however fair and swift, could be successful, unless the racer held on to the end of the course. The prize was awarded to him who first reached the goal; so that victory depended on the power of endurance. So let us run with patience