

ready assistance of Him whose "ears are open unto their cry." Besides, such christian meekness and kindness will prevent the offering of many a meditated affront, and the infliction of many an intended injury ; for "who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good." ver. 13. As Scott justly remarks, "Humility takes away all occasion of insolence from the proud and haughty. Meekness pacifies wrath ; and the returning of good for evil is apt to subdue the roughest disposition, and to conquer even malice itself." And who is so rudely violent as to injure such ? Some such, however, may be met with. Some will inflict suffering for righteousness sake. "But and if ye suffer for righteousness sake happy are ye," ver. 14. The abundant consolation with which your gracious God comforts those who, for his sake, are brought into any trouble, makes you happy even then. He next supposes that the wicked may try the influence of more appalling threats, and of preparations for more terrible inflictions. But he advises Christians not to give way to undue fear towards man, but to guard against it by cherishing due reverence towards God. vs. 14, 15. Further, they may bring against you the disputers of this world, and demand a public statement and defence "of the hope that is in you." He tells you what to do : you must have "a reason," a convincing defence in readiness for such occasions. You must be able to say, with Paul : "Therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe." 1 Ti. iv. 10. And it must be presented "with meekness and fear," v. 15 ; with gentleness and respect towards man, and with humility and fear towards God, who is more deeply interested in the results of our defence than we can possibly be. And this defence of the faith should be made in good conscience towards God, and should be enforced by good works towards man ; for men will try faith by its fruits, and regard its reasons as unsound when its fruits are evil. But the manifestation of "a good conversation" out of a "good conscience" will probably cause those who bring false accusations to feel conscious shame in doing so. Another reason why they ought to submit to suffering of this kind is given in the 17th verse, "For it is better (if the will of God be so) that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing." It is better that ye suffer persecution as christians than punishment as criminals. Or, if part of the comparison has been omitted here, as is frequently done in other cases, the meaning may be, It is better as well-doers to suffer persecution, than as evil-doers to escape persecution.