

would be force in the objection, were the Christian sent to run the race in his own strength, and were he sent on a warfare on his own charges. But if shot-proof armour is provided, and he neglects to put it on; if strength is at hand, and he does not lean upon it; if, instead of following the Captain of our salvation, he hears the voice of strangers; if, Samson-like, he betrays his strength to an idle Delilah—then defeat is not a misfortune, but a fault; and a forsaken God will be glorified in the destruction of the apostate.

This is, indeed, the truth—there is no failure in the Christian life, but through unbelief or indifference. Cleaving to Christ, far more is he that is for us, than all that can be against us. He will never forsake us; and none can pluck us out of His hands. The complaint of God against his people was, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself!" If the Christian will only run, he runs not uncertainly; if he will only fight, he fights not as one that beateth the air. "We shall be more than conquerors, through him that loved us." Rise, Christians, to a due sense of the greatness of your high calling; and thus rise above the allurements of the world. Set your affections on the things above. "Take heed, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should actually fall short of it."

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN OBSERVER.]

UNFULFILLED PROPHECY.

I trust that I need not apologize to my brethren in Christ, for seeking to direct their attention to that large portion of the word of God, which relates to the future dealings of God with the church and with the world. It is often said that prophecy is not intended to be understood till after its fulfilment. In reply to this it may be remarked, that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God;" and is a revelation of God's mind and purpose towards man; but a revelation means unveiling, and not a hiding of truth. The study of prophecy is enjoined by God upon his people, and he who reads, in dependence on the teaching of the Divine Spirit, may expect to find it "as a light in a dark place until the day dawn."

The prophetic portions of scripture are sadly neglected, by a large portion of the serious professors of religion, they need yet to be convinced of its practical use. No Christian will say that any portion of God's word is to be systematically neglected; but many conceive that unfulfilled prophecies are comparatively less important and less practical than other portions of the word of God. All who are experimentally acquainted with divine truth know, that before a man can judge of the practical use of any truth, we must first heartily embrace it, and

experience something of its power. But no one, who has ever sought the Spirit's teaching, and been guided into prophetic truth, has failed to experience its power and to acknowledge its high practical value. The very fact that so much of the Bible is of a prophetic character, demonstrates its very great importance. As a warning of evil to come, and a support under present trials, it is eminently useful. The church has ever been sustained under her fiery trials, by the hope derived from prophecy. The ancient cloud of witnesses bore testimony to the truth, and were tortured not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a *better resurrection*. The early Christians, too, were sustained and animated under their trials, by the hope derived from prophecy. An acquaintance with the scope and tenor of prophecy is equally necessary, in our day, to enable the Christian to understand his position in the world, and his relation to it, as well as to sustain him, under his trials both of body and mind, by a clear and well defined hope "of the glory that is to be revealed."

The study of prophecy may dispel many cherished visions, and it may require a hard struggle to give up favourite notions; but no child of God will ever regret resigning the church into his Father's hands, or fail to find out that God's ways are the best ways.

Unfulfilled prophecies are often regarded as among "the secret things which belong to God;" but they are not. They are among those things which are "revealed, and which belong to us and to our children." A great difficulty is supposed to exist, in the interpretation of prophecy, from the frequent use of figurative and symbolic language. This difficulty exists rather in the minds of those who are unwilling to receive what God teaches, than in the prophecies themselves. The only rule, necessary to the understanding of these difficulties, is to distinguish between the figure or symbol, and the literal fact, which they are intended to teach. If a man comes to me, and tells me, that he has buried the hatchet, I at once understand that he uses a figure of speech, which assures me of the literal fact that peace is established. Or, if he bury the hatchet before my eyes, I understand this as a symbol teaching the same literal fact. In Scripture, figures and symbols are ways employed to teach literal truths; they are signs, but they represent realities. Thus, the candlesticks in the book of Revelation are symbols, but the churches signified thereby are literal churches.

Let me urge then, upon the readers of the *Christian Observer*, the necessity of seeking to understand the literal sense of the *whole word of God*. "Do not despise prophesyings;" but "take heed to them as a sure word;" they tend to confirm

faith, to animate hope, to wean the thoughts and affections from the unsubstantial things which are visible, and to fix them upon those things which are invisible, but which alone are worthy of being called realities. The truths of prophecy make the believer patient in tribulation, and beget in him a holy fear of God. The examination of unfulfilled prophecy presses practically upon us that great truth.—"Behold I come quickly;" it makes us more anxious than ever to build up one another in our most holy faith—more anxious than ever to preach the gospel everywhere, wherever there is a perishing soul that needs the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, seeing the day of the Lord is at hand. That blessed hope, for which prophecy teaches us to look, inspires us with holy fortitude, in the prospect of that dark time of trouble, which is already gathering around us, and enables us in patience to possess our souls. The love of God will triumph; and after a season of fiery trial to the saints, and of judgments on corrupt churches and a guilty world, Christ will appear the second time, without sin unto salvation, to establish his kingdom in the world. Beloved brethren, watch and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to stand before the Son of man. In the prospect of that day, we cling more closely to a crucified Saviour, and the cross appears more glorious and necessary than ever. Resting on the atonement, we rejoice, in hope of his coming quickly, and pray that we may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN OBSERVER.]

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

This interesting and instructive form of prayer was delivered by our Blessed Lord on two occasions, and under very different circumstances. The first time, whilst he was surrounded by a great multitude of people, as he sat on a mount or hill (Matt. iv. 25, and v. 1), and is a part of that admirable instruction contained in the 5th 6th and 7th chapters of the Gospel according to Matthew, and which is commonly called Christ's Sermon on the Mount; and afterwards in a more private manner, when he had just ceased from prayer, and at the particular request of one of his disciples, (Luke xi. 1).

Immediately preceding the utterance of the words of the form referred to by Matthew, our Lord cautioned his disciples against the hypocritical conduct of such persons who loved to stand praying in public places, in order that they might have praise of men; and also against using vain repetitions, like unto the heathen, who think they shall be heard for their much speaking (Matt. vi. 5, 6, and 7), by which caution he, no doubt, had reference, in the first place,