

from the customs and the opinions of men, to be engaged with the solemn question, What hath the Lord spoken, and what do the precepts and the teaching of His word enjoin?

Much, indeed, would Joshua be grieved, had the multitudes of Israel resisted the appeal he had made; but while this would sorely wound his spirit, it would not, in the least, change the resolution he formed for himself. Thus, while every true follower of Christ would wish that all others would embrace the faith and possess the hopes which sustain his own soul; and while it is his earnest prayer that they may be brought to the knowledge of the truth; yet, should they despise that truth, and turn its sacred obligations into mockery, he must not be discouraged, nor see in this any reason or any excuse for relaxing his diligence. It is not with men—it is with the God and the Judge of all the earth—he has to do. In His presence he must soon appear. If His favor is enjoyed, and if assured that death will have no terrors, what more can he desire? With his fellow-men, what has he to do? They cannot remove his fears. They cannot deliver from death; nor can they prepare him for it. When entering the dark valley, the whole multitude of them, even the dearest friends, will start back and forsake him. Wherever true religion exists, this solemn truth has been felt, and the soul that has experienced its influence will no longer look to men, nor be content by being and acting as others do. He will earnestly desire to do what good he can to all; but to secure the interests of his soul, he must consult and follow the Word of God; and as he advances in his journey, and as his years and experiences multiply, the more earnestly does the prayer ascend, "Lord, teach me thy statutes; incline my heart unto thy testimonies."

Dear brethren, the religion that is fashionable in the community, and among the class with whom you associate, may satisfy while in health and at your ease, and while death is regarded as in the far distance; but, ah! that distance deceives you. A few steps only, and death may meet you face to face. The religion that allowed you to rest satisfied with being like your neighbors, will then be of no profit. The cold blasts from the grave will rend in shreds every false robe. That alone received from Christ shall serve as a covering in the storms of death. Whatever else you may err in, make sure of it that your religion is the work of God's Holy Spirit, the gift of Christ, the robes which He prepared for the covering of your naked and perishing souls.

But, secondly, we observe that the resolution expressed in our text not only avowed the resolve to cleave to the worship of the living God, but, likewise, the determination to be actively engaged in His service. Whatever others might do, he and his would serve.

As his faith must not be received from men; nor modified and shaped, in any degree, by the opinions and sentiments held by the multitude, so with the same care must he guard that his services, and the degree of his obedience, be not measured by the standard which prevails around him. He would do what he could, whether they did much or little, or nothing. There cannot be a better proof that a man is truly in earnest, than to see him so anxious and diligent that he has no leisure nor inclination to notice or meddle with the doings of his neighbors. When you meet, in a community composed, for the most part, of professing Christians, a man whose religion consists in following, with formal reverence, the religious customs established, and in giving to every duty the amount of attention which respectability demands; when you meet there a man who is humble and earnest, attending not only to every duty which that community recognizes, but always alive to every object that seems intended to promote the interests of religion, and appears to be happy in being told of something additional he can do;—when you see a man thus situated unweariedly laboring, weak, but not discouraged,—not indulging in railing at his neighbors for their coldness and hypocrisy; but finding, in every proof of their indifference, a reason for increased zeal and diligence on his own part,—you may safely conclude of such a man, that, like Joshua, his resolution is decided. Equally certain it must be, that he is a stranger to the feelings which prompted the words of our text, who observes his neighbors to ascertain what amount of attention and self-denial and liberality is manifested by them; and is guided in his religious duties, his observance of the Sabbath, and in his support of the ordinances, by what he thus perceives to be the standard established. Surely nothing can be more unlike the spirit and the resolution of Joshua, than the disposition to derive satisfaction and think well of ourselves, from the fact that we are not behind others. And still more glaringly is that contrary spirit manifested, when it takes the form of an excuse for not doing more, that others do less than we. But, alas! is not this the kind of religion that extensively prevails among us? Is not the Bible, in most cases, read because we saw our fathers do so, and because custom demands it? Does it not require some careful labor to discover the individual who humbly and earnestly searches the truth to know the will of God for his own guidance, and to satisfy the cravings of a soul hungering and thirsting after righteousness? And how is the holy Sabbath observed? Is it not, in the case of the largest number, just as the voice of custom and of public opinion directs? How many will you meet with who can truly say they are thankful to God for this day of rest from worldly turmoil and care? There is a certain standard established among us,