

## THE NECESSITY OF SCRIPTURE LIBERALITY.

"See that ye abound in this grace also."—2 Cor. viii. 7.

(Continued from page 508.)

2. Let us consider—*The necessity of Scriptural benevolence in the Christian character.*—When we find any duty extensively neglected, we are apt to settle down into the persuasion that it is a matter of little importance, and may be set aside with impunity. But the great question is—*not* what are the views, or the feelings, or the practice of men, whether many or few, but—*what are the mind and purpose of God.* And a little attention to His Word will convince all, who sincerely desire to know His mind on the subject, that benevolence is as indispensable a feature in the character of His people as any other grace.

(1.) In proof of this statement, consider the commands of God respecting the exercise of the grace of liberality. And whether we look to the Old or to the New Testament, we find the uniformity of the requirement to be so entire, as to show that the same spirit pervades both Testaments, and that the command respecting the exercise of benevolence is unchangeable as the character of God. The injunction to the Jews was, "Thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother." "Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy poor and to thy needy in the land." "Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." "Is not this what I require; to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring thy poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"

In the New Testament the duty is inculcated in a variety of ways. Christ exhorts us "lay up treasures in heaven" by works

of benevolence. So indispensable did he esteem this feature, that he parted with one in whom he saw something that was lovely, because he refused to exercise benevolence as required. "One thing thou lackest," he said to the young man—he was destitute of the spirit of benevolence, and in this state he could not enjoy eternal life. The writings of the Apostles abound with instructions on this subject. "To do good and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased—distribute to the necessities of the saints—put on bowels of mercy, be kind, tender-hearted—be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate." "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." Search the Scriptures, and tell if you can find many other truths which are urged on our attention by so many commands, and in so many modes of expression. We thus see that God has, from the first, been watching the workings of the human heart, and knowing the contracting, deadening influence of our natural selfishness, he gives command upon command, that all may see that this feature of character cannot be disregarded, without casting off his authority, and setting at naught his most express declarations.

(2.) The design of God by the plan of redemption is to bring all, who will be saved, to attain a character resembling the character of Christ. Man was created at first in the image of God, and the plan of redemption, which is designed not only to rescue him from the ruin occasioned by sin, but to exalt him to happiness, qualifies him for enjoying that happiness, by restoring him to that likeness to God from which