

like them to be—in the midst of friends, and in circumstances of the greatest ease and comfort ; and, on the other hand, if they did not delight themselves in the will of God, without fretting, without complaining, without impatience—that in their inmost souls they did not delight to do the will of God, so that though in sickness, though in adversity, though in the most trying circumstances of any kind, though forsaken by everyone,—if the will of God was not done under those circumstances, or if they were not in a state of heart while in adversity to do it,—then it was a failure as to holiness ; that could not be called holiness to the full. It might be called holiness in degree but not holiness in its normal state, as it should be in them, and as they ought to aim at it, as the children of God.

Holiness did not consist in certain sentiments or feelings, however excellent they might be in themselves, but in doing the will of God. But if this be the true definition of holiness, then they at once saw that none of the children of God that were gone before them ever attained to the full of such holiness, but that their attainment was only in degree. Full, complete conformity to the mind of God was that held out as the blessed state for which they had been apprehended by God in Christ Jesus, and which would be their blessed portion when completely delivered from the old, evil, corrupt nature within them. So long as the old, evil, corrupt nature remained in them—though this normal state of holiness, this perfect state of holiness, was ever to be aimed at, ever prayerfully to be sought and looked for, in order that they might be more and more conformed to the mind of Christ—still, in a greater or less degree, they would have to sorrow and grieve to the end of their earthly pilgrimage, by reason of their failures and shortcomings. Just as all the other graces—faith, love, hope, patience, meekness, humility of soul and the others—were only attained to in a measure, while they were in the body, so also the perfection of all those graces—holiness—would only be attained to in a measure while they were in the body. But this was no reason at all why they should not, to the very utmost of their power, aim after further and further advancement in the Divine life.

Now as to the next point—how may we attain to holiness? He need scarcely say to his esteemed brethren that of course, in the first place it was absolutely needful, without which there could be no such thing as even the smallest degree of attainment in holiness, that they be born again ; that they be regenerated ; that they who were by nature dead in trespasses and sins should have heavenly life. If this were not the case, there could be no such thing as the smallest particle of what God calls holiness found in them. The next question was—What might help them on in holiness?

Of all the passages he might be able to bring forward from God's precious Word, regarding this subject, he did not know of one which comprised more in itself than the passage in the 1st chapter of 2nd Peter, the 5th and following verses—"Beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue." This was to be taken in the sense of courage or fortitude, implying, in the first place, a confession of Christ ; and then, having made a distinct, open confession of Christ, an endeavour to maintain their ground. "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge." Knowledge of what? They all knew it meant spiritual knowledge ; knowledge of God the Father ; knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ ; knowledge of all that which God has been pleased in the Holy Scriptures to reveal to them. On this depended a great deal as to advancement in the Divine life ; or as to further and further attaining to holiness—that they should be acquainted increasingly with God and the Lord Jesus Christ ; for the more this was the case the more they saw what a lovely being God was—what a generous, kind, bountiful being He was ; how He was such an one as they could not help loving ; and they were constrained to please Him when they apprehended the wondrous graces He bestowed on them in Christ Jesus. They were constrained to seek to please Him for all He had done for them in Christ, and then they should increasingly be conformed to His mind.