

There may be some of you who have too much cause to think that the work of the Lord has already been forsaken by you. If it be so, your case is indeed deplorable. Your guilt is aggravated; your depravity is confirmed. It would have been "better for you not to have known the way of righteousness, than after you have known it, to turn from the holy commandment." Deplorable, however, as your condition may thus be, we have no reason to say that it is beyond remedy. The way of escape still lies open. The door of mercy is not yet shut. We know not how it was with Demas in this respect. His after history has not been transmitted to us; and we are unable to ascertain whether he ever recovered from his relapse. But there is *another person* mentioned in the next verse, of whom we do know that eventually he was restored, although he had sinned after the same example. That person was Mark, who is spoken of in the Acts of the Apostles as one of the companions of Paul and Barnabas in their mission. He, like Demas, forsook these devoted men in a time of danger, and "went no more with them to the work." So culpable, indeed, was his temporary apostacy, that even after he had been rescued from it, Paul was unwilling to place much confidence in him, and separated from Barnabas, rather than consent to associate once more with them in their labours one who had so shamefully deserted them in the hour of trial. At length, however, by a course of consistent adherence to the faith, Mark seems to have completely regained the apostle's confidence. And, accordingly, we find him spoken of in the context as one whom Paul wished to have sent to him, "because he was profitable to him for the ministry." Now, even as it was with Mark, so may it be with others who resemble him. The Lord is very Merciful to all who choose to seek an interest in His mercy. He still says, even to those who have most basely and criminally forsaken Him, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backsliding, and love you freely."

But what if there should be some who cannot be said to have ever come to the Saviour at all, or to have been in any sense His followers or adherents? Such persons are certainly free from the charge of being unsteadfast in the faith, inasmuch as they have hitherto shewn themselves to be only too steadfast and consistent in their unbelief. They may even be ready to boast that they are no hypocrites,—that no man is able to charge them with inconsistency,—that they never have practised, or promised more than they have carried into effect. But can they seriously take credit on such a score? Can they suppose that the *cordiality and consistency of their ungodliness will excuse them for the guilt of it?* Will they dare to approach the awful bar of judgment, and to plead there, "Lord, we never forsook thee, because, indeed, we never sought thee; we never thought it worth

our while to do thy will, or court thy favour; we loved our sins so constantly, that we lived altogether without thee in the world?" Deceive not yourselves in such a matter. Answer this question if you can, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" If inconsistent professors of religion be chargeable with much guilt, and exposed to much danger, so also are they who wilfully, habitually, and (if you like the word) *consistently* despise religion. For woe be to those who, living in a Christian land—a land of Bibles, and preachers, and ordinances—refuse to hear Him who speaks from heaven, and "will not come unto Him that they may have life." Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that so iniquity may not be your ruin. Receive not the grace of God in vain; but seek Him while He may be found, and call upon Him while He is near.

### General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

THE General Assembly of the Church of Scotland commenced its sittings on Thursday the 21st May at Edinburgh. In the morning the Lord High Commissioner (Lord Belhaven) held a Levee in the Picture Gallery of Holyrood Palace, which was largely attended. Thereafter his Grace proceeded to St. Giles' Church, where a sermon having been preached by the Rev. Dr. Bisset of Bourtie, the retiring Moderator, from Rom. viii. 16, the Lord High Commissioner proceeded to the Assembly Hall for the purpose of opening the Assembly. He was accompanied to the throne by the Lord Provosts of Glasgow and Edinburgh.

#### ELECTION OF A NEW MODERATOR.

The Assembly having been constituted by prayer.

Dr. Bisset, the retiring Moderator, said—Fathers and brethren, before quitting the chair, to which, by the kindness of the last General Assembly, I was called, there is a duty which by use and wont still devolves upon me. I will not, however, proceed to that without first acknowledging, as I best can, the high honour conferred upon me, the uniform forbearance which I experienced in discharging the duty of my office according to that ability with which God has favoured me, and, at the same time, the many great courtesies which, because of my office, I have experienced during the past year from all ranks and orders of my brethren. To thank my reverend fathers and brethren is beyond my power, I must therefore revert to the language of our great epic poet when he says, "The grateful heart by owing owes not but pays it all." And now, reverend fathers and brethren, let me propose for your acceptance, as my successor in office, a gentleman who,