

thies of every age, whose faith we are exhorted to follow, considering the end of their conversation. "Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience are inheriting the promises,"—who ran so as to lay hold on eternal life, the prize on which their heart was set. Jesus Christ is however our great fore-runner in the heavenly race—he has left us an example that we should follow his steps. To him it behoves the Christian at all times to look while pressing on towards the mark, because he is the author and finisher of the faith—he too is the way, the truth and the life. Thus the race is set before the believer, in as clear a manner as precept and example could by their united light render it. A fool, a person of feeble capacities, cannot err therein. While, however, the Bible proposes a course, which all who obey the heavenly calling must run alike, it mentions others which are more peculiar, which particular persons must run owing to the peculiarity of their condition, the amount and kind of talent they may possess, and the part they may be called to sustain in the grand drama of Providence. In the games of old, the foot race was not always one and the same; it was indeed always performed on the stadium, but sometimes it consisted in running that length but once, and sometimes twice that length, in making to the goal, and returning from it. Some had to run the stadium seven or eight times over, while others ran in heavy armour. There are varieties also in the Christian race, though all must proceed upon the same hallowed and prescribed ground. Thus John the Baptist had a peculiar race set before him—he was called to prepare the way of the Lord, and to act as the precursor of Christ. He stood in a position altogether singular, in which he was greater than all the prophets, but less than the meanest in the kingdom of heaven. "John fulfilled his course." Every follower of Christ should then consider whether in addition to the race which all must run, he has not some course more arduous allotted to him: whether he is not called upon by some advantages he may possess, to render a peculiar service to God. Paul evidently considered that he was required to run a peculiar race, even the apostleship

which he had received of the Lord. It was his constant desire and solicitude, that he might finish his course with joy. And at last it was his happiness to say, when his labours were closing, "I have finished my course."

2. The Christian must lay aside every encumbrance. It is well known that the racers in the stadium were most careful to cast off every thing that could impede their progress. For some time previous to the contest, they rigidly abstained from every indulgence that would weaken their strength, or lessen their agility, and before starting in the race, they divested themselves even of the burden and inconvenience of their garments. So too must the heavenly race be run. Self-denial must be exercised, and those things rejected that press down our energies, and cause us to linger on the way. Such indeed is the express admonition of Scripture—"Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth most easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Many are the retarding influences to which the mind aspiring after immortal honour is liable, and which it must strenuously oppose. The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches are a heavy weight upon many. Some are so taken up with secular matters, and so absorbed in questions of personal or family finance—for ever inquiring what shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed, that seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness, becomes a mere secondary consideration. There are others so full of treasure and so fond of carrying it on their persons, that they are likely to break down under the load. Their thoughts too run so much upon it, they are apt to forget the prize for which they contend. Many have found to their sorrow, that gold is too heavy to carry without endangering success. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." It is no less the privilege than the duty of the Christian to lay aside the encumbrance of worldly cares and anxieties, for he is directed to cast all his care on God who careth for him. "Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he will sustain thee," Indulgence in sensual and sordid plea-