

angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, "the Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor." And Gideon said unto him, "If the Lord be with us, why then is this befallen us? and where be all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?" It is hard in the midst of the chastening for departure from God, to realize that it is because relationship had existed that this had befallen them. To recognise His hand, was the germ of faith; to see His deliverance in purpose, the growth of it. "If the Lord be with us, why then has all this befallen us?" When He was grieved with their sins, and insulted by the setting up of false gods, He left them to reap, as they had sown, confusion and strife,—to be scattered and peeled. Yes, He noticed them in chastening, because they were His. And Gideon said, "O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. And the Lord said unto him, **SURELY I WILL BE WITH THEE**, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." And it is just here that the spring of confidence rises.—"*I will be with thee.*" It was so with Moses of old. If the Lord be not with me, carry us not up hence. The starting point of faith is, "God with us." Without this, all contest is in vain and worthless. He met them as they were, and acted on His faithfulness to His promise to their fathers, passing by in marvellous grace their own sinfulness and unbelief."