

vigour with which individual effort is applied. A congregation whose elders and deacons are faithful, active, and prayerful—whose Sabbath-School Teachers are well-instructed, pious, and punctual—whose catechumens are ever ready to wait on the instructions of their pastor—and whose families are cheered by the voice of melody and salvation from their happy abodes,—such a congregation is in a fair way of realizing the import of the Apostle's command; and the Church which is composed of such congregations, is, beyond doubt, part and parcel of that great Christian temple, against which “the gates of Hell shall never prevail.”

II. Of the members of the Primitive Church it is said, that they “walked in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, and were multiplied.”* Paul, we apprehend, has a direct reference to this when he exhorts the Corinthian Church to “*be of good comfort.*” Believers in general live below their privileges. I question much if even their expectations partake of that expansive range—that heavenly bearing—that holy sublimity of tone—which the testimony of God and the great and precious promises of the everlasting covenant do unquestionably warrant. There is among believers too great a tendency to look upon the Gospel as on something future; something that resembles a light shining from afar, and reflecting rays only few and feeble on their present path. Now, it is one peculiar excellence of the Gospel that it speaks peace to the soul even now; and that it scatters many blessings on the road that leads to heaven. A clear evidence of this is derived not only from such exhortations as those of the Apostle, “Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice;” but from those very numerous places of the New Testament where “comfort” is specially spoken of as the object of prayer, or as matter of actual enjoyment. In praying for the Romans, St. Paul thus pours forth his soul: “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.”† In the epistle from which our text is taken he

* Acts ix. 31. † Rom. xv. 13.