

of God. In His grace He makes use of the very unfaithfulness and its consequences to bless the people. In suffering these nations to remain, God had not merely chastisement in view ; He also wished " to prove Israel by them whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk therein as their fathers did keep it " (ii. 22) ; in short, would they separate from evil ? Thus in 2 Timothy God uses the mixture of vessels to honour and dishonour to test and bless the hearts of those that are faithful. " If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work " (2 Tim. ii. 21). What a blessed description of faithfulness in perilous times ! God would shew us a path which glorifies Him as much in the darkest day of ruin as in the brightest days of the church.

But the Lord had yet another object in leaving these nations to prove Israel (iii. 4), " to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the Lord, which He commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses." The blessing which God had in view, was to cause Israel to return to that *Word* which had been given at the first, and which was their only safeguard. Similarly now, the apostle says to Timothy, in an Epistle which dwells on the ruin : " But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them ; and that from a child thou hast