

His salvation seizes the mind it is not easy to expel it. It will come back to it again and again. He is a perfect representation of the God-man, and little wonder is it that He has taken a great hold upon humanity. Everything that is good, and pure, and upright, and manly, and honest, claims Jesus Christ as its champion; and whenever anyone who was marked with the mark of Jesus degrades his life to the opposite of these, (*i.e.* whenever he becomes bad and impure, dishonest and mean), he may well shrink from encountering Him whose eyes are a flaming fire.

The very commencement then of this message to the Church at Thyatira seems to indicate that some great warning in their case was necessary. And this we know was the fact; but, before the warning there come words of praise. Four points of commendation are found. They are noted for good works and good qualities of a fourfold character. These are, charity and service, faith and patience. In those early days of Christianity there was great need of charity. Rightly understood, there is no more comprehensive word than charity. It covers nearly every noble and lovely quality, and there was great need for exercising it in the days when Christ sent His messages to the Churches. The religion brought great distress upon multitudes of people. Situations were lost; men and women were thrown out of work; children were disowned and expelled from home. The Churches then had to take care of these and throw over them the mantle of charity. For this and similar works the Church at Thyatira was noted, and all its persecutions were borne with great faith and patience.

We meet in the Acts of the Apostles an instance of the kindly feeling that was learned at Thyatira. When Paul in his journeys came to Philippi, we are told a woman of Thyatira, named Lydia, received him gladly, and entertained him even after he was beaten and imprisoned. In some way or other, no doubt, Lydia was connected with the very Church of Thyatira mentioned in the message. That goodness which comes from Christian love is the best goodness in the world. Lydia, who came from Thyatira, had it, the whole Church in Thyatira had it. And it would seem that this goodness was on the increase; at least, that meaning we may take from the words of the 19th verse, "The last more than the first." It is open to us all, to improve in our faith and good works. It should be our object to do so. The last with us should always be better than the first. We are to "grow in grace."

But then, the praise bestowed upon the Church at Thyatira stops here. There is a curious mixture of good and evil in everything connected with life. It is very seldom that a person is found so bad that there is not some good in him; still less frequently is one found

so good that there is no bad in him. How often you find a person good, in a great many ways, but weak even to sinfulness, it may be, in but one point. So it is in the subject before us. The Church of Thyatira was good in charity and works, faith and patience. In this respect its members were all right,—but for all that there was a cancer at work eating away the very life of the Church. "Notwithstanding," says the Saviour, "thy service, charity, faith and patience, I have a few things against thee."

There is something pathetic in this, and all the more because it is true to nature.

Many there are who have a great longing to stand right with God, and all such may know that no kindly act has ever been overlooked by their God, but are we not conscience-stricken when we hear these words: "Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee." A few things! What are those "few things" which God has against us? Can we not find them out? Do we not know them? We may know them sometimes by how much we like them. A thing that is sinful is often very pleasant. It is hard for us, perhaps, to persuade ourselves that there is anything wrong in it. That is the most deadly enemy that a Christian man or woman has to contend with. There is the continued whisper that comes from the evil one: "There is no harm in it." Ah! it is very easy for us to persuade ourselves that there is no harm in what we love to do, but may it not be that that is the very thing which God may have against us?

But what was this cancer which was gradually eating into the life of the Church at Thyatira? It was clearly an attempt to undermine the virtue of the Christian people there. We described this deadly evil in connection with the Church at Pergamos, where the sin of Balaam, who seduced the Israelites to impure sins, was leading the people astray. It was an evil more deadly than the violence and persecution which continually threatened the early Church. We have it described here under the name of one of the most wicked women perhaps that ever lived. Balaam, as a man, was bad enough, but Jezebel, as a woman, was much worse.

She was the daughter of a foreign king, and Ahab, King of Israel, married her. She brought with her the seductive "abominations" of her country, and wrought such mischief in Israel that the people from her day to the present have never been able to recover from it. It was to confront her that Elijah, the Tishbite, came forth to do his work as a prophet of God, but even he was made to quail before her cruel and bloody mind. Such had Jezebel been to Israel, and it would seem that at Thyatira there was some such wicked woman who was gradually corrupting the little band of Christians there. In one