

God," furnished him with an opportunity to expose the ignorance and folly of idolatry, and to offer the information of which the want was so publicly recorded. Among the Gentiles he taught and practised a disregard of Hebrew rites and customs, but in Jerusalem, he submitted to purification, and offered sacrifices. This view of Paul's character—his readiness to adapt himself to circumstances, is fully borne out by the account he gives of himself in this chapter:—"Unto the Jews, I became," &c. We see too in the very passage from which the clause is taken, how he adapted his instructions to the peculiar customs that were familiar to the Corinthians, "For ye know that," &c. This is one of that class of passages, which contain an illusion to the gymnastic exercises and games, that were celebrated among the Greeks. Almost every city had its contests, in which the inhabitants exercised their strength and agility; but besides these local and ordinary exhibitions, there were four public and more solemn games to which all Greece was wont to resort. These four were the Olympic, the Pythian, the Nemean and the Isthmian; which were so called after the names of the places in which they were held. The Isthmian games were held on the Isthmus of Corinth, and consequently must have been well known to the inhabitants of that city. Of this circumstance the apostle as a wise master builder, avails himself in writing to the Corinthian church, for in addressing them it was natural for him to allude to these contests and borrow from thence such illustrations as would explain and confirm his argument. As they were so familiar with the exertions and successes of those who contended for honors in the games of the Isthmus, he takes occasion to speak of their Christian calling as a race which demanded their zeal and their energies, and in which they could not succeed without being careful and using constant effort. "So run that ye may obtain." Consider

I. The conditions of successful running.

II. The inducements so to run.

I. The conditions of successful running, or how must the Christian run so as to obtain?

1. The Christian must run in the prescribed course.

The place in which the footrace and most of the games were performed, was a terrace of earth, enclosed on each side by a high bank. It was about 200 yards or the eighth of a Grecian mile in length, and thence acquired the name of the Stadium. It is said moreover that in the Stadium, the race-course was marked out by lines from the starting place to the goal (Phil. iii. 16.), and that those who ran out of the space so included did not contend lawfully. Hence it appears that it was necessary for the racers in order to carry off the prize, to keep within the prescribed bounds. Their agility and swiftness, however great and untiring, could not of themselves ensure success; but constant care was required not to transgress the limits while they endeavoured to pass and outrun each other.

So it is necessary for the believer to follow the course marked out for his feet, "To run the race which is set before him." His course is one of faith and holiness, and consists in a series of acts of devotion and godliness,—of repentance toward God and faith in Christ. He is to go on in the discharge of holy duties, and the cultivation of spiritual graces, abounding in the work of faith, the labor of love, and the patience of hope. He may be tempted to proceed in a track of his own beating—a way that is right in his own eyes; and sordid interest may prefer another direction, or suggest expedients for lessening the labour of running; but any such deviations must endanger his success. It is to his peril, that the believer wanders from the course which it is the design and glory of the Scriptures to mark out, for they are the rule by which he is to go; "and as many as walk according to this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy." The Scriptures state clearly in what direction, and within what limits he is to run, and the footsteps of others who have gone before, tend still more clearly to point out the right way. "Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, and see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein and ye shall find rest to your souls." We have for an example the prophets and apostles, and the wor-