

made good in the hearts of the people, which, in the eyes of Jehovah was more true unity than the semblance of it by the people in a state of declension in the beginning of chapter xx.

The earliest rays of the morning found Israel at work building an altar. The people might say, with the Psalmist : " Early will I seek Thee." Humiliation and ruin did not hinder worship. What grace that there remained an altar to Jehovah amid such a state of things ! Three things preceded this worship and led up to it—resolute separation from all evil, getting back into the presence of God, the ruin deeply felt and acknowledged. It was there that they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings ; then that the heart entered into what the sacrifice of Christ was for God, and the portion God has given us with Him in it.

All these blessings recovered in the path of humiliation, were the starting point for the judgment of Jabesh-gilead. The inhabitants of that place had not come up to Jehovah to Mizpeh. That was indifference to the judgment of the evil by which God had been dishonoured in Israel's midst, and it was at the same time contempt for the unity of the people established by God, and which had been confirmed in such a striking way by the attitude of the eleven humbled tribes. The people of Jabesh-gilead had doubtless said, that it was no concern of theirs. How frequently do we hear such expressions in our days ! Their state was even worse than that of the evil-doer. For such a refusal, there *was* no mercy ; but *before* the execution of the judgment, Israel delighted to contemplate mercy. " And the children of Israel repented them for Benjamin their brother, and said, there is one tribe cut off from Israel this day.