

## NATURE AND GRACE.

Eph. ii. 1-10.



OUR object in selecting these words as a subject for consideration is, with the hope of gaining your attention to the most mysterious, yet the most important subject that can concern human beings. The truths they contain deeply and most solemnly affect both you and your family, as well as me and mine, both now and for ever. Your attention to them will not necessarily involve any loss,—either of property, or character, or reputation ;—will not make your pleasures less, or your trials more,—but will give weight, and wisdom, and blessing to all your movements. There is one feature of truth running through them with which you may have some, though painful experience ; being children of disobedience, we are necessarily under the displeasure of our Ruler and Judge. Under such circumstances we have no peace, being cut off from its source ; we are therefore children of wrath, having no hope, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment. The truths are revolutionary in their character and design ; they imply an entire reverse of action and object in life,—they will share in no compromise with either friend or foe,—they demand a full abandonment of the one, with an unreserved surrender to the other, before you can be permitted to sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus. “ If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature ; old things are passed away, and all things have become new.”

What a gloomy picture does the Apostle give of the unrenewed condition of man !—“ Dead,” dead to all serious and devout feeling—insensible to every gracious disposition and affection—inactive to all the pleasures and responsibilities of a godly life. But the Apostle enlarges. There are two features of conduct by which he is characterized—“ Dead in sins,” and “ walking according to the course of this world.” The engagements and pursuits of this life are not necessarily opposed to godliness ; they may, indeed, be consecrated by Christian principles, and thus may form part of our service to God. So also the innocent pleasures and comforts of life may be hallowed, and their sweetness increased, by being blended with holy affections, and by being directed to the glory of God. But when worldly pursuits and pleasures absorb our interest : and their claims yielded to at the cost and dishonor of true religion, then the deceitfulness of riches and the pleasures of this life, transfer the whole of life’s service and care to the money side, “ the course of this world.”

The Apostle mentions another feature of character, and dwells upon it with solemn interest—that they are under the *dominion of Satan*, and are instigated and impelled to a course of evil by some of those wicked spirits who acknowledge him as their leader and head, “ according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” What