

God had not forgotten his promise to Abraham, that he would make of Isaac a great nation, nor did he want the power to effect his purpose. For the second time did Hagar experience that the God of her master was everywhere present, and that all events are overruled by his providence. "God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water." v. 19. Happy they whose eyes God has opened in time of their extremity, to perceive that well of living water, of which, if a man drink, he "shall never thirst!" John iv. 14.

Learn 1. God will certainly fulfil all his promises to his people, however impossible these promises may appear to mere carnal reason. Num. xxiii. 19.—Luke i. 72.

2. In prosperity, we should be mindful of our faults, that we may not be high-minded but fear." Isa. li. 1.

3. We must not trust to legal righteousness, external ordinances, or religious privileges, for justification before God. Rom. iii. 20.—Matt. iii. 9.

4. Those who are placed in relationship to the saints of the Lord, enjoy not only great spiritual, but also, great temporal advantages. Gen. xxxix. 5.—Isa. xxxvii. 35.

5. The providence of God extends to every event. Matt. x. 29.

October 5th, 1861.

THE HEALING OF A DEMONIAC.—

MARK i. 21.—28.—Luke iv. 31—37.

I. Jesus having departed from Nazareth came to Capernaum; and there he taught on the Sabbath-days. v. 30—31. Persecuted and driven from one city he came to another.—What an example of fearless and unflinching continuance in duty does our Lord set us here! They were astonished at his doctrine, for his word was with power." v. 32. At this period a spirit of lifeless formalism pervaded the church. The people and the priest had alike gone astray. The preaching of those who professed to be ministers of God could give no comfort to those who mourned in Zion.—A strict external observance of the law of Moses, was inculcated by their ministers upon the people. The conduct of these religious guides—as they professed to be—was far from being consistent with their teaching.—Matt. xxiii. 4.—Luke xii. 46. The Pharisees had no idea of the spirituality of the law. They believed that if their words and actions corresponded in any degree with the moral law, their duty to God was fulfilled. They knew not, or overlooked the fact that God takes cognizance of every thought of the heart, and that therefore, man will be judged, not by his external conduct, but by the motives from which that conduct proceeds. In fact,

they never thought seriously of the existence of an everywhere present and ever-working God, or of their relationship to him as intelligent creatures. From pride and avarice, they desired to have a reputation for sanctity among men. When beyond the sphere of human inspection, their cloak of religion was thrown aside. Matt. xxiii. 25.—vi. 2. This was the condition of those, who sat in Moses' chair at the time of our Lord's ministrations upon earth. Could the preaching of such men avail in awakening the spiritually dead? Dead themselves, could they be instrumental in giving life to others? How utterly inadequate were their moral dissertations to give comfort to those who mourned in Zion to the awakened sinner! By leading the burdened soul to Sinai, within hearing of its thunderings and lightnings, they could only add to the weight of his load. Need we wonder then that the inhabitants of Capernaum, were "astonished at the doctrine" taught by our blessed Lord, for "his word was with power." Of what character the teaching of Jesus was here, we are at no loss to determine. We have ample specimens of his preaching, embodied in the biographies given of him by the evangelists. His sublime doctrines, were communicated in language clear, simple, and dignified; and were explained by such similes and illustrations, as attracted the attention, and sealed them on the memory. We may be sure that not only dignity and grace indescribable, but also, the love, the sympathy for man which filled the heart, were also manifest in the manner of him, "who spake as neverman spoke." As to the subject of his speaking—what was it but just that subject, which, though old, is ever fresh and sweet to his people—that subject which is "music to the sinner's ear"—life through a crucified and risen Saviour?—Add to all this that his word was accompanied by the operations of the omnipotent, spirit, and we can form some idea how it is said by the Evangelist to have been with power.

2. There was in the synagogue a man, who was possessed of the spirit of an unclean devil. Mark i. 23.—Luke iv. 33. Demoniical possession, mentioned repeatedly, in the New Testament scriptures—a common phenomenon in the days of our Saviour and of his Apostles—has excited no little speculation. The ancient, heathens, Greeks and Romans, believed that those who were mad, were possessed of the Furies—a sort of imaginary demons. We have reason to believe that demoniacal possession was distinct from madness. It, and madness, are separately specified in the list of diseases, the subjects of which are mentioned by Matthew, as having been brought to our Saviour to heal; and had they only been different names for the same disease, this would