

Our Contributors.

For Dominion Presbyterian.

"Nevertheless."

John vi. 15.*

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Men are often altogether too confident in themselves and in their resources. How often do they begin enterprises which they cannot finish, and raise expectations which they cannot fulfil! It is true indeed that one man can do what another man, perhaps most other men, cannot do. But there are things in which all are equally at a *non-plus*; for all creature differences are only *comparative*. One man, for example, may be able to break a stronger rod than another can; but bring both to the mast of a ship, and the stronger of the two is as helpless as the weaker. One physician may effect a cure where another cannot. But there are cases that are utterly and equally beyond the skill of all physicians. It may be that the disease is too far gone—that application to the physician has been made too late; or it may be that the specific medicine or the specific treatment has not yet been discovered.

But there is *One* who is never too confident of Himself,—one who always preaches Himself, because there is no other whom He can preach. There is no case, however bad or far gone, beyond His grace and power; no one whom death has not already consigned to the perdition of the ungodly, has ever said, or can ever say, that he trusted Him in vain. We need not say that we speak of Jesus Christ, who as the Son of God, "doeth all things that the Father doth," and who, as our Mediator, is invested with "all power in heaven and in earth." "Nothing is too hard for Him." "He saves to the uttermost all that come to God by Him." "His blood cleanseth from all sin." His grace is such that "He will in no wise," i.e., for no reason whatever, "cast out him that cometh to Him." And there is nothing beyond His power. His word is the Almighty word that created and upholds all things. He is Himself the "Word of God." "He speaks and it is done." And His word is enough to heal the centurion's servant, so whatever "He commands stands fast." By a word, He *raises the dead*. For "even as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, so the Son quickeneth whom He will."

Therefore it is that, though Lazarus is dead, He says "Nevertheless let us go unto him." Note it well that He does not say, "Let us go unto them," but "Let us go unto *him*." He does not say, Let us go to the *living* Martha and Mary, to comfort them in their bereavement; but, Let us go to the *dead* Lazarus. Do they say "Lord, it is too late to go to Lazarus?" Lazarus, thou hast said, is dead. Hadst thou been there before he died, he would doubtless not have died; but now that he is dead, it is too late," what would the answer be? He could only say, "Yes, indeed, too late for *you*, but not too late for *me*. I can never be too late; and I am glad I was not there, to the intent ye may believe." For, remember, as we have said, Christ always preaches Himself, because He cannot do otherwise. "For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." "Too late," then, He might say, "for *you*, but not too late for *me*." He has been dead four days, and putrefaction has begun. But "I am the resurrection and the life; and

though Lazarus cannot hear *your* voice, he can hear *mine*; for mine is the voice which, when the hour is come, all that are in the graves shall hear, and shall come forth." Therefore, let us go to him. Come with me to the grave of Lazarus, and see with your own eyes" (for such is the implication) "your Master's power over death and the grave: come and see, not only that He has power to heal the sick, but that He has the keys of hell and death."

We have put at the head of the present article the word "Nevertheless," as being in its connection everywhere in Scripture emphatically suggestive of the Divine all-sufficiency. That is, it emphatically suggests, as we hope to show for the relief of sincere and anxious souls, the adaptation and adequacy of Christ's resources—of His grace and power—to every case and condition, or to every need of humanity, temporal or spiritual, for time or for eternity. What, in view of this all-sufficiency, would you think of the disciples, if they had persisted in saying it was *too late* to go to Lazarus, and had declined, or even hesitated to accompany Him to a place where His life was in danger, though they might be willing to die with Him? v 8, 16? But are we not chargeable with the same unbelief, when we decline or hesitate, as we too often do, to cast ourselves on the grace and power of Christ; when we decline or hesitate to take the path Christ indicates, because, as we think or fear, no good but probably evil may result from it? Is it not, on the contrary our duty and privilege, and our highest wisdom, to be fully assured that, whatever path Christ points out to us—whatever He calls us to do or to bear—He will go with us and before us, and that every obstacle and difficulty must give way before His grace, wisdom and power? Every difficulty you see—every impossibility in your apprehension—He meets by His "Nevertheless;" which is as much as to say, "However great and insuperable the difficulty is to *you*, it is nothing to *me*." Whenever, therefore, He says, "Go forward," let there be no shrinking or hesitation, but the assurance that the greater the difficulty, the more He will be honoured and the more you will be profited. Though the sea may be before you, let His word, "Go forward," be enough. For He says, "when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee."

Probably there are those, perhaps many, who have never thought of the depth and wealth of meaning that is contained in this word, "Nevertheless," and who will perhaps be startled when we say that it may be used as the very "shield of faith, whereby they shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the devil," of which we shall say more anon. Let us therefore endeavor to show what use may be made of it in "fighting the good fight of faith."

We all readily admit *in words* that the *all-sufficiency* of Christ should be our encouragement at all times, and in all circumstances, in relation both to ourselves and to others, and in relation both to temporal and to spiritual anxieties and troubles. But all Christian believers know how apt we are *in practice* to limit His grace and power, and to question His wisdom. We need to be constantly reminded to beware of "the sin which doth so easily beset us"—the damning sin of unbelief, which is the inlet to every other sin. For this unbelief is ever ready, with its *ifs*

and its *but's*, to excuse and justify itself; and it will insist on having the *last word* in opposition to the all-sufficiency of Christ, and in contradiction of the promises that are "all *yea* and *amen* in Him." He says we are to "cast all our cares upon Him; that we are to be careful for nothing;" that He will in no wise cast out him that cometh to Him;" and that His blood cleanseth from all sin." But we are prone to make *exceptions*, and to plead, in justification of our unbelief, peculiarities in our own case and in the case of others. We say we could, without any difficulty or hesitation, cherish hope, *if it were* not for this, that, or the other peculiarity in the case, whether it is our own or that of others. In our own case, for example, when He says He will in no wise or for no reason whatever, cast us out when we come to Him, we shut ourselves out and will not come to Him, "because," we say, "we have sinned far beyond others who have not been favored with our privileges and advantages, or that, besides long continued indifference and opposition to God, we have at our best been guilty of frequent and great relapses into carelessness and sinful ways." In other words, we justify ourselves in our unbelief, by pleading that our case is not an *ordinary* one, and in saying that but for that, we could trust Christ for pardon and everything else.

And in the same way we feel and speak in relation to others. Of such a one we say, "He has sinned against so much light and privilege, or has persisted so long in a course from bad to worse; or is so thoroughly committed in his opposition to the truth, and is so rooted and built up in it; or is so entangled in evil associations, that all hope of him is vain, and all endeavor for his good sure to be thrown away." Now we ought to know that in all this and the like, we are but cutting the sinews of our strength, and that we cannot by anything so much dishonour God and stand in the way of our own well-being and Christian usefulness, as made when we allow ourselves in the *ifs* and *but's* of unbelief, which derogate from the all-sufficiency of Christ. If therefore we cannot, by any of our own resolutions, have done with them conclusively—if they will insist upon a hearing—let us confront them with the "shield of faith," the "Nevertheless" which assures us that they are nothing to the grace and power of Christ. Are we, for example, trying, in the sphere in which God has placed us, to do Christian good, and finding that we are in contact with the most impracticable materials? Is the minister fearing that, under his preaching, the hearer is becoming more hardened and impenitent? Is the heart of the father or mother breaking because of the folly and frivolity, or because of the waywardness and wickedness of a son or a daughter? Is the Sabbath School teacher disheartened by the carelessness of the pupil whose parents, besides being destitute of interest in their child's religious well-being, exert an influence on him that is all and only for evil? No matter what the case may be, or whatever discouraging aspects it may present, only let recourse be had to Christ. Let us call *Him* in; thinking, among other things, of his journey to the grave of Lazarus; and, in the face of all unlikelihoods and discouragements, let us, each of us, say, "*Nevertheless*," let me persevere in the use of appointed means, and let me, by faith and the prayer of faith, engage the grace and power of Christ. Let the minister feel of his hearer; let the wife have the full persuasion regarding her husband, the parent regarding his child, and the teacher regarding his scholar, that while the case is altogether be-

* Will the reader "compare" (1 Cor. II 13,) in reference to the *all-sufficiency* of Divine grace and power, Judges II, 15, 16; Neh. IX:31; Ps. CXL 7, 8?