

notwithstanding you give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead being alone." The worthlessness of a merely nominal faith is here shown by comparing it to that spurious benevolence which consists solely in good words and wishes. Such a philanthropy is not only useless, but a reproach to its possessor, for his conduct gives the lie to his professions; and, instead of relieving, only mocks and insults the objects of his pretended sympathy. Now, if such heartless conduct is a proof of the utter want of real sympathy and compassion, so in like manner that faith which is unproductive of good works, is equally unprofitable and worthless. It is a mere speculative opinion of fancy, which has no vitality or life. It is a shadow without a substance, a form without the reality, and is no better than a corpse, all whose vital functions have ceased, which is no longer animated or moved by a living principle within, but is about to crumble into dust.

Verses 18, 19, 20, "Yea, a man may say, thou hast faith and I have works, show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou dost well; the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead." Here the Apostle puts the faith of the insincere professor again to the test. As the faith of the Gospel uniformly produces holiness of life, so the latter may be taken as a proof or evidence of the former; but a faith without works is incapable of having its existence proved at all, and consequently cannot be the faith of God's elect. He supposes a real Christian to challenge his opponent in the following manner: "You boast of your faith, are you prepared to show that it is genuine and not an empty profession? for my part I have nothing to boast of, I am at best but an unprofitable servant; but I trust that notwithstanding all my imperfections I have in some measure felt the power of divine grace in subduing my corruptions, purifying my heart, and disposing me to run in the way of God's commandments. Is this the case with you? Is your faith of an humbling, self-denying, operative character? Do you feel the fire of divine love constraining you to consecrate your talents to the service of God and the good of your fellow-men? You tell me that you believe in one God; this, so far as it goes, is very good; it lies at the foundation of true religion, and without it we cannot offer rational and acceptable homage to God. But if this is all that you believe it will serve you nothing. The very devils believe this, and yet it gives them no confidence in God, no hope in his mercy; on the contrary, they tremble from the apprehension of his vengeance. Unless your faith, therefore, is very different from their's, it will not save you from condemnation and ruin, it is in fact utterly worthless." It has been repeatedly stated that true faith lies at the foundation of all holy obedience. By faith the Christian lives, by faith he stands, by faith he walks, by faith he "can do all things." But the faith of the hypocrite—for that is the proper meaning of the term which is rendered *vain man*—is dead being alive. It gives him a name to live, but leaves him under the unbroken dominion of spiritual death. Such a faith is not only useless but pernicious, as it commonly flatters and deceives him to his ruin. Hence our Lord in his discourses and sayings uniformly insists on the necessity of holiness; his exhortations are all of a practical character, bearing directly on the heart and life. And nowhere does he so strongly express his indignation as when he denounces the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who clung to the forms but rejected the substance of vital godliness, and who loved the praise of men, more than the praise of God. "Ye shall know them," he says, "by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

[To be concluded in our next.]