

he fall." You see from this noted instance of unfaithfulness, how far a man may go in the profession of Christianity, how much he may do for the advancement of its interests, how richly he may seem to be partaking of its privileges, and how highly he may be honoured by its most devoted friends, and yet have no part or lot in it at last. Nor is the case before us, in this respect, a singular one. Barabbas, though a prophet perished in his sins. Judas, though an apostle, was yet a traitor, and a son of perdition. And our Lord has expressly told us, that there are *many* such,—"many who shall say, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils? to whom He shall say, Depart from me, I know you not."

Let every *many*, therefore, who nameth the name of Christ, be warned by these melancholy proofs of its fickleness and deceitfulness of the human heart. Look to them as so many beacons to guard you against "making shipwreck concerning the faith." And learn from them, at the same time, how greatly it concerns you to search and try the evidences of your calling. Trust not in mere professions, however loud,—in mere external privileges, however distinguishing,—in mere intellectual gifts, however excellent,—in mere occasional impressions, however lively,—in mere outward services to the cause of Christ, however zealous. You may have "a name that you live," while you are dead. You may have "a form of godliness, while denying the power thereof." You may have all gifts, and may speak even with an angel's tongue about those glorious truths "which the angels desire to look into," and yet be no better than "a sounding brass, or a tinkling symbol." You may be esteemed as a pattern of sanctity in the judgment of men, and even of good men, while yet "your heart is not right with God." You may be a fellow-labourer with Paul, and yet a castaway,

II. Mark, then, I pray you, a little more particularly what the apostle has stated in the text regarding the conduct of his former friend and coadjutor. He tells us that Demas, actuated by a worldly spirit, had "forsaken him." And though we may not be warranted by these words to conclude that Demas had utterly and finally renounced the faith of the Gospel, they evidently imply, that he had temporarily swerved from it, and that, too, in a manner the most open and equivocal. He refused to stand by the apostle in his hour of trial, withheld from him his former sympathy, withdrew from those Christian labours in which he had once been noted as a sharer with him, and shunned to be any longer seen in his society. So long as the profession and preaching of the Cross were unattended by any serious hazard, Demas had been perfectly willing to take part in them. But now the time of persecution had arrived. Paul was now a prisoner for Christ's sake, and living in daily expectation of his martyr-

dom. To be, in these circumstances, a partaker in his faith, was to run the risk of sharing also in his tribulations. This Demas saw, and this he shrunk from. He was not prepared to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." That want or weakness of faith which he had hitherto concealed from others, and, probably, from himself also, could not be any longer disguised. That world which he had long loved secretly, without perhaps being aware of the strength of his attachment to it, he now openly clung to and embraced. And the apostle who had formerly been well pleased to hail him as a friend and fellow-labourer, was now constrained in sorrow to declare of him, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world."

Ah! brethren, there is nothing like a time of trial for proving "what manner of spirit we are of." It is *then* that the solidity of our faith, and the honesty of our profession, are fully tested. If God were once more pleased to suffer the fires of persecution to be kindled, it can hardly be doubted, that the number of those who now throng the ranks of the visible Church, would be sadly diminished. When we look at the conduct of many even as it is,—when we think how little, for the most part, is to be seen about them beyond a cold and lifeless profession to mark them out as Christians at all,—when we mark how slow they are to make any sacrifice, to incur any expense or to put themselves to any trouble or inconvenience for the sake of promoting the interests of pure religion,—when we see how glad they are to plead the most flimsy excuse, or to urge the most contemptible sophistry in order to escape from the strict requirements of their duty,—how readily they will compromise their principles when these are ever so little at variance with their worldly interests! and how paltry a consideration will often prevail with them to set the authority of their Divine Master at open defiance!—When we think of these things, we cannot avoid the painful conviction, that there are many *Demases* among them who only adhere to the Christian profession because they can now do it cheaply, and without hazard; but who, if a time of trouble should arise, would be ready at once to adjure it altogether. With all justice may we apply to them the prophet's question, "If ye have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with the horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein ye trusted, they wearied you, then how will you do in the swellings of Jordan?"

There is no great risk, it must be owned, of any man forsaking the cause of Christ at the present day, if thoes alone are to be held as doing so, who throw off the very profession of Christianity. It is not usual for backsliders now to do so. They can well enough afford to do otherwise. It costs them little or nothing to maintain, and all their worldli-