

The Christian.

ST. JOHN, N. B., APRIL, 1895

EDITORIAL.

HUMAN WEAKNESS AND DIVINE STRENGTH.

Wherefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distress, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong. II Cor. xii. 10.

The sight of a really happy man is so rare and so refreshing that he becomes an interesting study. Neither wealth nor poverty can make a man happy. In order to be happy a man must be contented with his lot. Such a man was the Apostle Paul. He had learned in whatever state he was, therewith to be content. He belonged to a people everywhere spoken against. Persecutions and tribulations were their lot in general, and his in particular. "I will show him," said Jesus, "how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." He was constantly exposed to these sufferings; but instead of being overcome by them, he considered them a pleasure, and what his enemies intended as punishments, he received as blessings in disguise.

But a thorn in the flesh seemed to be an exception. Perhaps at first he could see no good that could result from his being tortured by such a thorn, or insulted by one so loathsome as a messenger of Satan, and he besought the Lord thrice that it might depart. He would prefer scourging and stoning for Christ's sake to such mean and debasing torture. But when he learned that it was sent to prevent him from undue exaltation through the abundant revelation of the third heaven, he welcomed the thorn and glorified in the weakness which felt its goading because Christ's strength was made perfect in that weakness. How tenderly would the great High Priest hear Paul's cry for help and remember the day of his own weakness, when he met the shafts of Satan, when thrice he pleaded if it were possible the cup might pass from him, and how he learned obedience by the things which he suffered.

He did not remove Paul's enemy, but gave him sufficient strength to endure and conquer that enemy. He heard his prayer and granted him more than he could ask or think. Man's way is to shun great trials; God's way is to meet and conquer them. "Let him come down from the cross and we will believe him," said his enemies. But Jesus would not come down, but *endured* the cross, despising the shame, and is set down on the right hand of the throne of God. These trials which Paul had pleasure in are the weapons Satan uses to annoy and overcome Christians. What, then, must be his disappointment when the Christian passes through them one by one without a murmur, but rather takes pleasure in them—glorying in tribulation—because of its results. These weapons were used on the Saviour in his passage through earth to heaven, and by his

personal knowledge of them he utilizes them as channels through which his own strength shall flow to his followers. It was through them Paul exchanged his weakness for Christ's strength. Suffering for Christ's sake is suffering for the right, and there is no union as strong as the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. The spirit of glory and of God rests on him who thus suffers. It would be unjust to ourselves, and doubly so to Christ, to repine or murmur at those things in which others rejoiced so much.

When the apostles, deserted by every earthly aid, were beaten and threatened with certain death if they spoke any more in the name of Jesus, his strength rose to the surface, filled every nerve, and without a feeling of revenge in their hearts they charged their judges with the murder of the Son of God, and declared that God had raised him from the dead, and that they would preach what they had seen and heard. They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus and went on with their work, utterly regardless of the power and terror of the world.

What a blessing to know that when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. Our weakness does not prevent his strength for it is made perfect in weakness, but our unwillingness to give up our weakness and to accept freely of his strength is ruinous.

The anxious sinner who forsakes his sin gets Christ's strength and salvation by believing in Jesus, trusting in him, and doing with all his heart what Jesus tells him to do. No one who does so is rejected by Christ. But many try in their weakness to improve themselves and will not trust wholly to Jesus, and so reject him. We have the Acts of Apostles showing us particularly how Christ saves sinners—confirming his last commission. Christ commanded his apostles to teach the disciples to observe all things which he had commanded them, and says, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." It is by studying that teaching and making it our own by our daily life that Jesus will be with us and make his strength perfect in our weakness.

Original Contributions.

HEARING—DOING—SAFE.

See Matt. 7: 24-27.

Jesus spoke as never man did. He spoke as one having authority, and not as the scribes. He, and those who were sent to the world of mankind, by his authority, gave all the forms (as far as form stands, by divine authority) of all things which pertain to life and Godliness. But they gave more than form.

Before the advent of the Christ, God gave to his people all the forms of all things, which in that age, pertained to life and Godliness; yet, many of them, who thought they were the special servants of God—the favorites of heaven, lacked all, or, nearly

all, of that which binds men to God and to their fellow-men—LOVE.

It is true, they were anxious to observe all the forms, every jot and tittle of their machine-like righteousness. They would surely wash before eating. They would tithe *rue* and *mint* and *anise* and *cummin*, but, Jesus said: They omitted the weightier matters of the law—"judgment, mercy and faith," or "judgment and the love of God." (See Mat. 23: 23 and Luke 11: 42.) Jesus said: These ought ye to have done.

They would not violate the Sabbath, even by doing a work of mercy, but they could look on a Lazarus laid at the gate, sore and suffering, the companion of dogs (more compassionate than they) without, perhaps, feeling any sorrow for his suffering or pity for his loneliness.

The priest and Levite (perhaps thinking of their religious duties and the forms to which they had to attend) could see a poor brother by the way-side, sore, suffering, *dying*; and yet feel no helpful compassion for him; while a stranger and a reputed enemy lifts him up, attends to his wants, and by trouble and expense, preserves his life.

Hear and do! That is all right. If Jesus says: Believe! It is right to believe. If he says: Repent! It is right to repent. If he says: Confess my name! It is right to confess his name. If he says: Be baptized! It is right to be baptized. If he says: Observe all things commanded! This is also right, and forfeiture of discipleship must of necessity follow wilful disobedience of any of the commands of Jesus. And yet, while discipleship is a life of continual obedience, we might comply with every outward requirement—yield to every form, and all amount to just nothing, if we failed to partake of his nature, drink in of his spirit, become one with him.

A man is not saved, in the gospel sense, by simply putting him into a position, as we would house a machine in the late autumn, to save it from injury, by the storms of winter.

Salvation means more than that. It means to come into communion with God and Christ, to partake of their nature, so that, as far as we may, we will do as they would do, love as they love and do good as they would do good.

Men saved, on the way to heaven, or, a little place which they, in their imagination have pictured out as heaven, and yet not care what may become of the great mass of man-kind outside of themselves, their wives and their immediate connections? Men possessed of the spirit (?) of the loving Saviour and yet thinking with David, whose national theology said: "The wicked shall be cast into hell with all the nations that forget God," believing that hell to be a place of endless torment, far beyond the conception of the most lively human imagination?

Surely there must be a mistake somewhere. They (we) have not yet quite learned what manner of spirit they are of. Where is God's