

"Rabbi, didst thou not teach me that we must not be reluctant to restore that which was intrusted to our keeping?—See, the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord!"

"Blessed be the name of the Lord!" echoed Rabbi Meir, "and blessed be his name for thy sake, too; for well it is written, 'Whoso hath found a virtuous wife, hath a greater treasure than costly pearls; she openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness.'"

From the London Baptist Magazine.

EXPOSITORY REMARKS ON ZEPHANIAH iii. 12—17.

NUMBER V.

"The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing."—Ver. 17.

In the preceding verse we have seen the people of God exhorted not to fear, or to allow their hands to be slack, and this especially under the consideration of that holy joy which they are supposed to possess. But *fear* is a most untractable, violent and unreasonable passion; and when once excited extremely difficult to subdue. It is easily wrought upon by the remembrance of sin, and by the dark suggestions of Satan and unbelief; and hence the heart is dispirited, the hands are weakened, and the soul languishes in sullen gloom: joy departs; tranquillity forsakes her bowers: the fallen crest of iniquity is raised again; and, instead of *trusting* in the name of the Lord, his favors, his word, his promises, and sometimes even his very existence, are questioned and distrusted.

Yet, on reviewing their former guilt, and the wonders wrought in their behalf by unmerited grace, as exhibited, the one in the second verse of this chapter, and the other in the verses with which the passage before us is connected; it might be inquired:

What more can He say than to you He hath said,—You, who unto Jesus for refuge have fled.

Such, however, is the abundance, the overflowing of grace, Rom. v. 17, that our heavenly Father has given every possible expression to his love, that our doubts and fears may be the more entirely suppressed, and our joys and dutiful activities the more effectually confirmed. In this light the verse now under consideration must be regarded; and it may well draw forth our grateful wonder: "Who is a God like unto thee?" The passage, then, is a guarantee, or pledge, which God in his astonishing compassion has added, for the prevention of fear, and the confirmation of our joy and love; "wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirms it by" a wondrous repetition of his gracious delight in them: so that, by these immutable sayings, "in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." Heb. vi. 17, 18.

God is in the midst of his people. This has been dwelt upon in the remarks made on the 15th verse; but its repetition here is a proof of its vast importance to the interests of Zion. Whatever God may be, if he be *not* in the midst of us, we are unblest. Adored be his name, he has said, "I am with you always;" and, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Let us contemplate the assurances of the divine love with which JEHOVAH's inhabitation of the Church is connected.

1. God affirms his covenant-relation to his people: "*Thy* God is in the midst of thee." In the new covenant he has stated in Jer. xxxi. 33,—JEHOVAH promises that he will be their God. This relation comprehends everything that can be desired. It secures to the humblest believer an indefeasible right, through grace, to