

comfort and admiration of God's people from that day to this. It was in the fiery furnace that Shadrack, Meshack and Abed-nego won such glory to the God of Israel that even a heathen king proclaimed His majesty and dominion, and commanded his subjects to worship Him who could deliver after this manner. It was in the furnace of persecution that Stephen, Peter, James, John and Paul proved the divinity of their characters and the genuineness of their faith.

Without suffering the world could never have known the strength of their faith, the fervency of their love, or the purity of their lives. Their trials made them "spectacles unto the world, to angels and to men," and won for their master the ears and hearts of thousands.

When an apostle would present to us the highest achievements of faith, and the most wonderful exhibitions of the power of divine grace, he refers us, not so much to the doings of God's people as to their cheerful and triumphant sufferings—Heb. xi. Dear readers, how are your afflictions revealing you to those around you? Are you adding your testimony to that of the cloud of witnesses who are gone before, to the sufficiency of divine grace to sustain and comfort in the hour of sorrow and suffering? Is your patient endurance saying to those who are watching you, "I can do and suffer all things through Christ which strengtheneth me?"—Selected.

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#### THE SCEPTICAL SHOEMAKER.

"I have read," said the shoemaker, "a great deal about the heathen gods, and I believe the account of Christ is taken from some of the heathen writings or other."

"Will you abide by your own decision on two questions which I will put to you?" said the Bible-reader. "If so, I will freely do the same. I will abide by your answers; by doing so we shall save much time, and arrive more quickly at the truth."

"Well," said he, "out with it, and let us see if I can answer; there are but few things but what I can say something about."

"Well, my friend," replied the reader, "my first question is: Suppose all men were Christians according to the account given to us in the gospels concerning Christ, what would be the state of society?"

He remained silent for some time in deep thought, and then was constrained to say: "Well, if all men were really Christians in practice as well as theory, of course we should be a happy brotherhood indeed."

"I promised you," said the reader, "that I would abide by your answer; will you do the same?"

"O yes," he readily replied, "no man can deny the goodness of the system in practice. But now for the other question; perhaps I shall get on better with that. You have got a chalk this time against me."

"Well, my next question is this: Suppose all men were infidels; what then would be the state of London and the world?"

He seemed still more perplexed, and remained a long time silent. At length he said: "You certainly have beaten me, for I never before saw the two effects upon society. I now see that where the Christian builds up the infidel pulls down. I thank you; I shall think of what has passed this afternoon."

The sequel was that he was fully persuaded in his own mind to give up all his infidel companions, and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. But the change did not stop here. When first the reader called he had sat on an old dirty chair, with a number of half-starved children sitting in their rags on the floor around him, neglected and uncared for; now they have removed to a better home in a cleaner street. Within all is cheerful and happy. The father, no longer faithless, delights in the company of his wife and children, all of whom are neatly dressed; and his chief happiness is to read and speak to them of the things which belong to their everlasting peace.—H. L. Hastings.

#### A FEW WORDS ABOUT HONEST MISTAKES.

The senior editor is moved to say a few words about the question of the relation of the honest but mistaken believers in Christ. It is a subject that has a practical side and is one that causes some difficulty in the minds of honest people. We are led to say what we do from an incident that came under our notice not long since.

Our government during the war prescribed a form of oath and ceremony of mustering in its volunteer soldiers, and grants a pension by law to those who are disabled or suffering from the effects of their exposure in the service. When the men enlisted, took the oath and were mustered in, the government promised to do this. Some time since a man who had been a faithful soldier had been a prisoner of war and endured all the hardships of three years service, made an application for a pension. It was then discovered that the man had never been regularly mustered into the United States service, that at the time he enlisted he had not taken any oath or been formally mustered. It was also found that he had mistaken something else for that oath, yet honestly believed he had been mustered. Now what did the government do? Under a strict construction of the law there was no formal covenant between the government and the soldier; he had not done, on account of an

honest mistake, what the government required to make him a soldier. Yet he had been faithful to the government as a soldier in all that he could do. The government said, We will not take advantage of the informality but will give him his pension. Did they do right? It seems to us that they did, and that they did not in any way lessen the value of the formal oath by so doing.

Christ has proscribed an act of faith (baptism) by which men become His followers, His disciples, by which they enter into covenant with Him. A man, through a mistake and the teaching of the mustering officer, does not comply with the exact act that Jesus proscribes. He does what he honestly supposes Jesus requires and with full purpose of heart serves Jesus all his life. Now may not Jesus—or would he not have the right in view of all the surroundings to accept the service of the mistaken man and give him the reward? It seems to us he might do so and still not in any way violate to his own requirement. We must remember that Jesus is not only the law-giver but the judge, and must temper judgment with mercy and compassion. If He does not He is not the Christ that wept over Jerusalem.

To us all this appears very plain and easy, but now comes the practical application of the matter. Men say, If Jesus accepts a man under these circumstances why should not we? Because we are not the judge would be reason enough if there was no other. But let us take the illustration with which we began this article. Suppose some mustering officer should say, "The government paid the man who was mistaken about his muster, therefore I will not observe the law in mustering other soldiers, but will accept them the same as the mistaken man was accepted." You would say at once that he was very foolish not to see the difference between the government condoning a mistake and his going to work deliberately to commit one. So with us. Because we think Jesus may or even ought to condone an honest mistake, it does not follow that we have a right to go deliberately at work to sanction the mistake ourselves. To us the two things are as wide apart as the poles, as wide apart as I am from Jesus in power, authority and wisdom, and it has always seemed strange to us that any intelligent man failed to see it. What I may do and what Jesus with all his authority as Judge and King may do are two things. I am only to preach and practice what Jesus commanded, and beyond that I am not to go, I dare not go. While I do that I know also that Jesus will do just what is right when He comes to judge the world, and when He tells me that He to whom much is given of Him much will be required, while to him to whom little is given of him little will be required, I at once say that Jesus has a right, in view of all the circumstances in each case, to make such allowances as He judges right for any and all honest mistakes made by those that love Him. That He will do so I have not a particle of doubt, and as I believe some men who love Christ and believe in Him are honestly mistaken about baptism, I am profoundly convinced that He will not be less merciful to them that He will be to the honest mistakes in my own life. But because I believe this is no reason why I should in any way disregard or sanction in others a disregard of the law of Jesus as I read and understand it. In fact it is a further reason for me to adhere to it, for I am thus without excuse. Believing that Jesus is so good that He will overlook and condone an honest mistake is the very reason why we should try not to make the mistake or sanction it in others. The more we believe in the goodness and mercy of Jesus the more we are constrained to preach and practice exactly what He has taught and to avoid all mistakes. But we have said enough. This is not in reply to any one else, or to controvert any question, but to suggest that what we believe and think Jesus will do with any one who mistakes His law has no more to do with our accepting them to or rejecting them from church fellowship than what we may think or believe as to whether William Tell shot the apple off his son's head or not.—Christian Oracle.