

Note, he is just in the position in which we now find the Israelites. He has "crossed the Rubicon," and there is no way back again. He may become a backslider, and fall once more into open sin; but he never can be precisely where he was; if he fall, his guilt will be heavier and his destruction more complete.

But let us trust he is not going to fall. What, then, is before him? An arduous and desperate conflict, to which he has now to gird himself. Satan will set upon him with all his forces; the world is his unrelenting foe from this day forward, *unless* he surrender to it, or at least pay it whatever tribute it choose to demand, and in his own heart there are strongholds of sins which must be taken and pulled down before he can have peace. In this conflict he must conquer or die. And the question to-day's subject proposes is, *How shall he prepare for it?*

To this question the analogy of Israel's preparation for the conquest of Canaan returns a threefold answer:—

1. *All sin must be resolutely put away.*

This is typified by the administering to the Israelites of the rite of circumcision. None of the men under forty years of age, all of whom had been born since the Exodus, had been circumcised; perhaps because the covenant was regarded as suspended, in consequence of the unbelief of the people, until the forty years had elapsed. But circumcision had been ordained as an outward sign of an entire consecration to God, and of the expulsion of any thing that hindered that consecration. (Compare Matt. 5. 30.) "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee," and this could not be omitted on the eve of what was really a "holy war." So with the Christian. It is no use for him to take the decisive step already referred to, and then to shrink from abandoning those sinful habits—sloth, passionate temper, fleshly lust, selfishness, arrogance, avarice, frivolity—which, if indulged in, will utterly unfit him for the battle of life. "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us," and then, and not till then, can we "run the race set before us," or "fight the good fight of faith."

2. *The means of grace must be diligently used.*

This is typified by the observance of the passover, vers. 10, 11. It, too, had been omitted in the wilderness—indeed necessarily, for only the circumcised could partake of it, (Exodus 12. 48;) and it was equally important

to revive it before entering on the great struggle for the possession of Canaan; for as circumcision was the sign of admission to the privileges of the covenant, so the annual passover feast was the sign of continued participation in them. (See Exodus 12. 14, 15.) We are reminded by them of the two Christian Sacraments, of which they were undoubtedly the precursors in the Jewish Church. Baptism is designed to be the sign of dedication to God by the putting away of sin, and so of admission to His covenant. (See 1 Peter 3. 21; Acts 22. 16.) The Lord's Supper is the commemoration of the death of the Lamb of God, through whose blood we are saved from destruction, and is designed to be the sign of that spiritual feeding on Christ which is the strength of the Christian's soul, as literal feeding is of his body. But the observance of the passover at Gilgal may represent to us all the outward ordinances through which God dispenses grace to those who use them in faith, as prayer, Scripture reading, public worship, preaching, etc. The young Christian cannot afford to go without these, and if he neglects them he has no right to expect God's blessing.

3. *Yet our trust must be wholly in Christ.*

After Joshua had circumcised the people, and kept the passover, the Son of God appeared to him in human form, as the "Captain of the Lord's host," and gave him the assurance of speedy victory. It is to the same "Captain of our Salvation," (Heb. 2. 10) that we must look; and the forsaking of bad habits, and the use of the means of grace, will all be useless apart from Him, "without me ye can do nothing." But through Him we may be "more than conquerors."

For Senior Scholars.

1. THEMES FOR BIBLE READINGS.

1. OUR WARFARE. 2 Cor. 10. 3; 1 Tim. 1. 18, 19; 1 Tim. 6. 12.
2. OUR FOES. 2 Cor. 2. 11; Eph. 6. 12; James 4. 7; Gal. 5. 17.
3. OUR FOES. John 16. 33; 1 John 5. 4, 5; Rom. 7. 23; 1 Cor. 9. 25-27.
4. OUR LEADER. Heb. 2. 10; Psalm 60. 4; Psalm 27. 1-3.
5. OUR ARMOR. Eph. 6. 11; 2 Cor. 6. 7; Rom. 13. 12; Eph. 6. 14-17.
6. OUR DUTY. 1 Cor. 16. 13; Jude 3; 1 Peter 5. 8; 2 Tim. 2. 3, 10.