

III.—THE GRACE OF GOD MAY BE FRUSTRATED—WHEN IT IS NEGLECTED, AS IF SALVATION WERE AN UN-IMPORTANT MATTER.

Speculative infidelity, though often enough harshly charged upon any one who ventures to question a dogma in the received theology, upon any one even who leaves the old ruts in the beaten track of orthodoxy, is not, never was the chief, or very formidable antagonistic principle to any system of truth. When learned, argumentative infidelity and atheism prevailed so as to enlist the culture and intellect of the age upon the side of unbelief, as in the decline of the Greek and Roman peoples, it was in each case a system of falsehood and superstition they assailed and overthrew. Few errorists, if any, have chosen to cherish, and promulgate error, knowing it to be error; and many who have been subjected to no small amount of vituperation from *ex-officio* defenders of the faith in our own and other days, have not been less, but more devoted to God's truth, than their anything but Christlike tempered assailants.

Truth courts investigation; it can bear searching inquiry, and even hostile assaults, as gold can abrasion,—and at the end of the conflict appear more plainly and certainly truth than it did before. All that is true is proved, and made faithful to us by trial.

The crying sin of our age, as it has been the sin of every age, the sin of learned champions of religion, who compile "Aids, to faith," and prosecute heretics in the court of Arches,—laboriously mounting batteries of Quaker guns on Gibraltar,—as much as the sin of anybody else,—is the secret, often unsuspected infidelity of the heart,—that, the deadly fruit of which is cold indifference to the claims of God, the entreaties of Jesus, and the

monitions of the Spirit of Grace,—that which produces neglect of the great salvation, and consequent inevitable ruin.

It is an easy thing now-a-days to assume the name of Christian,—to build churches, and frequent them,—to minister from pulpits, and theological chairs, and pity the heathen, and papists, and abandoned creatures! But of all who group themselves within and around ecclesiastical organizations, how many believe in a *real, living, holy God, with His eye upon them?*—how many believe in *sin, upon them*, abhorrent to that great God?—how many believe in a *veritable judgment-day*, in eternal misery, and everlasting joy, and all preparing for the one state or other now?—how many believe in Jesus the Son of God, and Son of Man, as a *Saviour from sin*—and believing on Him, *obey Him?*

Look, reader, where I point now; in that direction lies the great sin and danger of every human being.

It is of the first importance that we hear what God the Lord has to say, that we may receive and understand every word he addresses to us, that we may know our malady and his remedy, our ruin, and what we must do to be saved.—Yet multitudes, called Christians, among the rest so many of ourselves, are living from day to day, eating, drinking, planning, prosecuting one scheme and work after another, without a serious thought about the end of these things, or about the other entirely neglected things, which are yet "the things that belong to their peace." "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" And thousands, who would be amazed and shocked when plainly told of it, are thus frustrating the grace of God.

III.—THE GRACE OF GOD MAY BE FRUSTRATED, BY PERVERTING IT.

We read (Jude iv.) of "certain men