

the manifestation of the Trinity here. The Son is present in the flesh, the Holy Spirit descends on Him in a visible form, and the Father bears witness to Him. This testimony not only certified Jesus to the last of the prophets as the Messiah to whom Jehovah had promised (Ps. 2: 7) the dominion of the world

(Weiss); but it also, in all probability completed and sealed His own assurance that He was the Messiah and strengthened Him for His work. That His true manhood was not above the need of such divine communications, His constant exercise of prayer and many other things in His life clearly show us.

PRACTICAL LESSONS.

1.—*Fear of punishment is a very imperfect motive for doing right.* (7)

“The fear o’ hell’s a hangman’s whip,

To haud the *wretch* in order;

But where ye feel your honor grip,

Let that aye be your border.”

But as fear is the only motive that some men can understand, it must still be occasionally appealed to, (2 Cor. 5: 10-11.) Yet love to Christ who has redeemed us is the highest motive and ought to be the most powerful. (2 Cor. 5: 14-15.)

2.—*Stern, faithful, dealing with sinners is often a necessity.* (7)—It is not easy for gentle sensitive Christians to speak words of sharp rebuke. Certainly it ought to be done only after careful thought and earnest prayer, but the responsibility for doing it cannot be evaded without sin. (1 Tim. 5: 20; Heb. 3: 13.)

3.—*The only true test of religion is conduct.* (8-9)—The case of these leading Israelites ought to warn us against a similar self-deception. It is equally easy for us to trust to Church connections and spiritual descent for salvation. But what a man is, is shown by what he does. No amount of church-goings or joy in religious exercises, or assurance of being saved, will make us Christians in the sight of God if our conduct is not right, if we are not rendering that self-denying service which reveals the Spirit of Christ.

4.—*Judgment is constantly impending over every impenitent soul.* (10-12.)—The doom of evil is interwoven with every law of the universe, (Gal. 6: 7-8.) Although the penalty may be long delayed, these laws are all the time steadily working to bring it round. Sometimes it is executed with fearful rapidity and in every case it will, sooner or later, be exacted in full. There is no escape from it for any sinner except through abandonment of sin and appropriation of the Divinely appointed Saviour.

5.—*Christ is constantly separating the good from the bad.* (12)—Every Sabbath, through the

power of the truth, this winnowing process takes place. The Spirit is operating in some measure in every soul that hears the Gospel and according as that soul yields or resists, its place, for the time, is determined. Christ often gives outward effect to this inward choice as in the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews who had rejected him. And he will consummate this separation at the last judgment.

6.—*It is a christian duty to help on every true work of God.* (13).—The example of Jesus reminds us that it is becoming in every one of his followers, not to determine his presence in any religious movement by the measure of blessing which he himself expects to enjoy by means of it; but to think how he can help and encourage others, and how he can use the special workings of the Spirit to accomplish their salvation.

7.—*God is able to make the humblest gifts a means of grace to the ablest and holiest of men.* (14-15.) An infant may speak a word which the Holy Spirit may use to pour a flood of light and comfort on the heart of some hoary Christian, or the profoundest and most accomplished student of God’s truth.

8.—*In attending on the ordinances of God we ought to expect a blessing.* (16-17.)—It was at the time of Christ’s voluntary consecration to his work that the first outward and public testimony of his Father to his Messiahship was given. We may not always be able to see why the blessing should always be connected with the ordinance or how it may come to us through this observance. It ought to be enough that God has commanded it. Let us go forward and look for what He has promised.

9.—*God is pleased with every one of his obedient children.* (17.)—Not certainly in anything like the same degree in which He is delighted with His only-begotten and well-beloved Son. But in the measure in which His regen-