

sary for your fitness for your work, and the salvation of the souls of your people. For thus not only will you be enabled for yourselves to walk in righteousness and peace before Him in whose favour is life, but you will be earnest in your petitions at the Throne of Him who is the Author of every spiritual blessing, whose Spirit alone can renew and sanctify those to whom you minister, and whose all-directing and overruling providence waits to be gracious to His Church and people.

The consideration of our text further teaches us that ministers ought to trust in God only, and live near to Him in habitual dependence and prayer for all those heavenly gifts and operations of His grace which are necessary for the right and profitable discharge of their sacred office. Divine grace, sincerely sought, alone can qualify you for a charge so pregnant in bearings on the immortal interests of your fellow-men, as it did the Disciples when the Holy Ghost fell on them on the day of Pentecost, and Peter said, "Therefore, being at the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth that which ye now see and hear." You know that the same Spirit alone opens the understandings and hearts of your flock to receive the Truth in the love of it, awakens them to repentance, increases their faith, makes His grace sufficient for them, and moulds them to obedience and submission to God's will. We know that the grace of God is as necessary to enlighten, purify and strengthen for His service, and to quicken dead souls to life, as it was to lay the foundations of our salvation in the redemption that is in Christ. And yet how often is its necessity little borne in mind and are our supplications cold and unfrequent for this inestimable benefit. What else can we expect but little of His converting and sanctifying grace when it is thus seldom thought of and seldom sought? No, my Brethren, we may be assured that, if we do not own and honour Him as the only source of all strength and prosperity in the ministerial work, we shall incur His heaviest displeasure; and it will be a better and brighter day for our Church when we live and act more under this abiding impression.

The consideration of the passage before us further furnishes, as has been already adverted to, a lesson of encouragement to ministers in working out their own salvation, and being instrumental in that of others, with fear and trembling, seeing that, while you thus labour, God worketh in you both to will and to do. The real obstacles to the accomplishment of the objects of your mission are indeed formidable, and insurmountable by the natural man, and other things may appear to be difficulties to the slothful and fainting heart, but there are none which His Almighty grace is not able to overcome, and, if you in faith and patience use the appointed means. He will

give the increase. He will array you in His heavenly armour. With Him even the pebble from the brook will be enough to lay low the most mighty of your spiritual adversaries, the walls and strongholds of Sin and Satan will fall before you, and in their stead the spiritual temple of living stones will be built-up on that chief Corner-stone which God hath laid in Zion.

What abundant ground for trust and consolation to know that the very ends for which you labour are the objects of Christ's loving solicitude, and the Father's guardian care. Bring not in your own utter insufficiency your suit to the Saviour, distrustful of His power and grace, lest you expose yourselves to that rebuke which He addressed to the Disciples at the Sea of Galilee: "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" When Israel bemoaned himself and said, "My way is hidden from the Lord, and my judgement is passed over from my God," he was thus reproved, "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the Earth, fainteth not, neither is weary. There is no searching of His understanding: He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." We may depend too much on ourselves, but there is a no less sinful despondency and distrust. We may droop and grow languid under a sense of our own weakness rather than trust in the Divine promise. But look out of yourselves to the redeeming love and omnipotent grace of Him whose ambassadors ye are. Plead with Him amid all the sore bereavements and trials of the Church in the spirit of the prophet when he poured forth the cry unto Him, saying, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord, awake as in the ancient of days, as in the generations of old. Art Thou not it that hath dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?" Draw instruction and encouragement from the wonders of His might and mercy in the days that are past, and learn more and more for yourselves, in His fear and love, to put your confidence in Him. His arm is not shortened that it cannot save, neither is His ear heavy that it cannot hear. So shall you, though you may sow in tears, reap in joy. And "he that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall come again with rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him."

Lastly, all approach to boasting or self-glorying on the part of ministers, as if their usefulness came not from God alone, is excluded by the passage in our text. Even the great Apostle of the Gentiles says of himself, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." All your sufficiency, my brethren, from first to last, whatever of His renewing grace and strength you have experienced in your own heart, and whatever comfort you are

permitted to enjoy in having ground to conclude that the work of the Lord is in any measure prospering in your hands, is from God; and therefore to Him be all the gratitude and praise. Let this be the reigning desire of your souls. "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy Son's and Thy people's sake," and him that thus humbleth himself He will exalt, while he that exalteth himself shall surely be abased."

In conclusion, our text, while it expresses the sentiments and spirit in which ministers ought to act, conveys important lessons of instruction to the congregations and people to whom they minister. They are not to glory in the intellectual powers, the eloquence, or learning of their ministers, and thus tend to puff them up with the vain wind of mere popular applause, and infuse into them a false taste for those things as in any measure their chief aim, which are only subordinate to the great ends of their office, but to regard mainly their qualifications for and their usefulness in the work of the salvation of souls, for this their sufficiency shows their calling to be indeed of God, and is the result of the operation of His grace. Nor are you, my hearers, who have this day met together, along with the office-bearers of the Church, in the House of God, while you respect and esteem your ministers, to pride yourselves upon your possession of them, or to say, like the Corinthians, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos?" "Is Christ divided? Who is Paul, and who Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" Seeing that God is the only source of all their gifts and usefulness, look to Him in all, and give all the glory to Him, lest He, in His wise and righteous providence, cause you to feel your entire dependence on Him for these privileges which you enjoy by removing from you those whom you have been too prone to idolize. What is from God only can never be a reason for glorying in man, but the very reverse. And, as all their fitness for their work is from Him alone, you ought rather to make it your fervent petition on their behalf that His enriching grace may descend on them and on their labours. You ought to hold up their arms in their prayers and cares for you, by your supplications for them and for your own souls, and where there are thus praying pastors and praying people, there God will command the blessing, even life for evermore. You ought to cheer their hearts and strengthen their hands, and seek to have knit together more closely the ties of mutual consideration and affection, by giving them reason to cherish the conviction that they have your prayers and your sympathies, and cordially co-operating with them in the employment of all the means for promoting your own spiritual welfare, and that of others. Be concerned, that there be not in yourselves, or in your demeanour towards them, anything which may inter-