

the race that is set before us. The uncertain length of our career, and the difficulty of fulfilling it, require a spirit of patient endurance, such as will not relinquish hope in consequence of the delay or remoteness of triumph, nor shrink from toil because there is no prospect of immediate repose. Since we know that there is a fixed mark which terminates our course, though it may be hid from our view, and that great glory follows from reaching the goal, we should persist in the race, firmly resolved to press onward from strength to strength. Many have set out in the Christian race full of hope and promise, but they soon grew weary and faint in their minds. Their goodness was like the early dew or morning cloud which vanisheth away. Of the multitudes that first followed Jesus, most went back and walked no more with him. Paul too charged the Galatians with stopping short on the way—"ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" Such conduct can only end in disappointment and disgrace, for he that continues to the end shall be saved. It was only when the apostle had finished his course and kept the faith, that he could with joy expect a crown of righteousness from the righteous judge. The prize of his high calling was secured only when he reached the mark. And still the language of the righteous judge to every believer is—"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." And to them alone will he give eternal life, who by patient continuance in well doing, are seeking for glory, honour and immortality.

II. The inducements so to run.

1. The certainty of success. Those who contended in the Stadium had not this assurance to support and encourage them in the race. For in the games of old a person might contend lawfully, lay aside every encumbrance, exert to the utmost all his energies and persevere to the end, and still not obtain the honor after which he aspired. Of all the racers, and generally there were many that ran together, one only could succeed. However careful and laborious might have been their training, and however great their celerity, considering their physical strength and structure, their running would be all in vain if one

more highly favoured by nature or by fortuitous circumstances, outstripped them in the course. Many might have deserved success, but one only had the privilege to obtain it. "Know ye not that they who run in a race run all; but one receiveth the prize?" It is not so in the spiritual career; for here the honors are awarded on a more generous principle. All who run well, strenuously, and perseveringly, shall certainly obtain. And while the swift and foremost runner is duly rewarded, the more tardy, but not on that account the less faithful and deserving, provided he puts forth such inferior powers as he possesses, receives a just recompense. A crown is proposed for each individual that presses on to the mark—that continues in the faith and obedience of the gospel. So the apostle declares when giving expression to his own joy and assurance, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge will give me at that day, and not to me only, but to all them that love his appearing." And in the context he expresses a similar confidence, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air." He was persuaded that success would crown his efforts, and the persuasion was in his case a constant stimulus to exertion. In as much as his labor was not in vain, he abounded the more therein. The certainty of success—a certainty grounded not on his superiority over the apostles, nor on his outrunning others in the heavenly race, but on the fact that faithfulness in the case of each individual will be rewarded, wrought powerfully on the mind of Paul; and so it should on the minds of all who seek for immortal honors. Because the feeblest, he that has the fewest talents and labors under the greatest disadvantages, has no reason to be discouraged at seeing the rapid progress of others more gifted than himself; for if he continues faithful unto death he, as well as they, shall have a crown of life. If this reflection should not operate as an inducement to patient continuance in well-doing, if the certainty of success should be made an excuse for making less effort to advance, it proves a most defective state of feeling, a mind that has yet to be