

St. Paul was the energy of a christian martyr, when he said, "I can do all things;" but had he stopped there, his virtue would not only have been incomplete, but might have degenerated into self-confidence. But he says, "I can do all things *through Christ which strengtheneth me.*" The union of these clauses constitutes christian virtue. Before we can rely on ourselves, we must know and acknowledge our weakness, guiltiness, yea, nothingness, in the sight of God. Having made this acknowledgment we must rely wholly on His aid. Having sought His aid, we must also discover our duty, and see our way clearly on this point. And having seen our duty clearly, we must then put forth all our energies, conscious of hidden strength from above. But without this humble dependence on God, and single eye to duty, self-reliance is only another name for self-conceit, and it will fail us where we want it most, at the end of our course. For the end of life is the test of life, and until that end many things assume a disproportionate importance! How many characters do we find in history which seemed great to their contemporaries, but which dwindled into insignificance as soon as they were estimated by posterity! Their end is to be speedily buried in oblivion. Their names possibly are recorded, but little more is known of their actions.

After these introductory remarks, I shall endeavour to explain further the meaning, and apply the spirit of the text; ~~first~~, to the general aims and objects of the christian life; and ~~secondly, to the life of the christian minister.~~

A general reference only is required to shew you how entirely the description here given of Gideon and his three hundred men, accords with the life of the christian.