

merely because the work is too hard for their unassisted efforts? If this were true, then there would be room for carelessness and despair—then might men walk in the way of their own eyes and follow the devices of their own imaginations, and refuse to stir in a business, where, with the best intentions and the best endeavors, they might yet miscarry. A very few words, however, will suffice to show that no such inference or apology can be drawn from the text.

It must be admitted, indeed, that true religion is very often set forth in Scripture under the notion of seeking God; and His true servants are represented as following and enquiring after Him. David, for example, expresses his determination to walk religiously by saying, "O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee." And in encouraging his son Solomon to do the same, he says, "If thou seek the Lord He will be found of thee." In the same sense, it is elsewhere written, "The heart of them that seek the Lord shall live." "Blessed are they that keep the testimonies of the Lord, and seek Him with their whole heart." "I have not spoken in secret, saith the Lord; I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain." "Ask and it shall be given, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." Now, in all these passages, not only is a spirit of true religion set forth under the notion of seeking, but that spirit is also represented as being rewarded with the object of its search; and yet, in the passage before us it is said, "Many will seek to enter in and shall not be able." We have not far to go, however, for an explanation of this apparent difficulty. *Seeking* is here opposed to *striving*. But although, by itself, or when opposed to absolute indifference, seeking may be sufficient to denote a true spirit of religion, yet, when coming in contrast with a word of more powerful signification, it loses a part of its original force, and becomes descriptive of a less intense state of mind and exertion. The Greek word which is rendered strive, is a word of very powerful signification. It is borrowed from the wrestlers in the Olympic games, and includes the idea of great bodily exertion, accompanied with great mental energy. The word which is contrasted with it is comparatively tame and feeble. It is quite plain, therefore, that by those who are here said to seek and not to be able to enter in, we are not to understand those who set about the work of religion with sincerity and earnestness, but those only whose feelings upon the subject carry them no farther than to wish or seek, but not to strive and labor.

That persons of this description are numerous in the world may very easily be made to appear.

In the first place, There are many who have no better title to the character and the hope of Christians than the mere name. They are born in a Christian country, admitted into

the Christian church, and are careful to observe its ordinances. In doing so, they do well. But in thinking that they shall thus enter into life, they wofully deceive themselves. The promise of salvation is not made to the external profession of religion, without the sincere practice of it; and there is no delusion more frequently or more strongly guarded against, in Scripture, than that by which men are led to rest in the form, and to neglect the power of godliness. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord," said our Saviour to His disciples, "and do not the things which I command you. Not every one that saith Lord, Lord, but he that doeth the will of Him that sent me, shall enter into life." If external professions of religion could entitle men to salvation, the Pharisees, of all others, would have been the nearest to the kingdom of heaven; and yet it is written, that except our righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and of the Pharisees, we shall in no wise enter into it.

Akin to the mistake of those who seek to enter in by their external observances, is that of others who think they shall be saved through their knowledge of the things that pertain to salvation. They spend much of their time in meditating or in talking upon religious subjects. They can speak in parables, and open their mouths in dark sayings. They make themselves masters of the technical terms of theology, and pique themselves not a little upon the skill with which they can contend for the form of sound words. They choose out companions who have as much, or perhaps a little less, knowledge than themselves, and delight to hold a controversy with them upon some abstruse point. And truly, to see the earnestness and the zeal which they display, you would expect great things from such persons; but, unfortunately, when the dispute is ended, their zeal and earnestness forsake them; and they who were so active and acute in religious argument, are cold and indifferent about religious practice. Their knowledge lies all in their head, and never descends to warm their heart or regulate their conduct. Now, such knowledge may condemn, but it can never save; for it is of no avail to understand the doctrine which is according to godliness unless we obey it. Men must be brought to the knowledge of the truth, before they can be saved by it; but the truth, before it save, must sanctify; and of those who seek to enter in, none shall more certainly and deservedly be excluded than those, who, after enquiring for the way, never set out upon it. "Every one that heareth my sayings and doeth them not," said the Saviour, "is like a foolish man who buildeth his house upon the sand." And again it is written, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." To know is a privilege, to do is blessed.

Not widely different from the mistake of