

February 24

"...They shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land." — Zechariah 9:16.

Here we see the dignity of the Lord's people. They are "stones," precious stones, set in the "crown" of the King of kings. For such is the infinite goodness of God, that he not only spares, but pardons and justifies them. In his righteousness they are exalted. They are not only saved, but ennobled. With kings are they upon the throne. They are naturally in a low estate, and are viler than the earth; but he raiseth the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill. And though the world knoweth them not, and they are little and low in their own eyes, and it doth not yet appear what they shall be, yet now are they the sons of God; and since they have been precious in his sight, they have been honourable; and he has loved them, and calls them his jewels, and a peculiar treasure unto him. And all those who in his light see light, view them in the same way. They remember the time when they began to honour them that fear the Lord; when they took hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew; when they prayed to see the good of his chosen. Then they seemed to regard them as more than human beings; and while, above all things, they desired communion with them, they felt unworthy of their presence and notice. And though, since then, they have found that they are not already perfect, yet they know that they are the excellent of the earth, and that they are more excellent than their neighbours. There is often more real virtue in their failings than in the very devotions of others: "the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim is better than the vintage of Abi-ezer."

Here is also their exhibition; these stones of a crown are "lifted up." They are not to be concealed. Our Saviour compares them to a city set, not in a valley, but on a hill which cannot be hid; and to a candle, placed, not under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that it may give light to all that are in the house. And when he calls them by his grace, he says to the "prisoners," "Go forth; and to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves: they shall feed in the ways, and their pasture shall be on all high places." Christians need not be concealed; every thing in their religion will bear examination, and challenges the eyes of all, whether infidels, or philosophers, or politicians, or moralists. They ought not to be concealed; every thing in their religion is adapted to do good; but for this purpose it must be known. They cannot be concealed; their principles must operate; the sun cannot shine without showing itself. Here is also their utility; these stones of a crown are to be lifted up "as an ensign upon his land." An oriflamme^[1] suspended over the royal tent; and designed to attract and aggregate followers to the cause in which he is engaged. Thus the Saviour himself is spoken of: "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious." But what Christ is, Christians are, subordinately indeed, yet really. Hence their calling, to hold forth the word of life. They are placed and displayed, to reprove, and convince, and excite, and encourage others to seek and serve God. They are witnesses for him. They are trophies of the power and greatness, and riches of his grace. They proclaim what he is able and willing to do. And saved by him, they are all employed for him; and "whether they eat or drink, or whatever they do, they do all to the glory of God."

Morning Exercises For Everyday In The Year
By Rev. William Jay

1. An inspiring standard or symbol.- Ed.