

March 9

"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." — Ephesians 6:10.

To this we must be brought. Nature can never do the work of grace. Reason cannot be a substitute for faith. Education cannot render needless the teaching of the Spirit. Vain must all our exertions be, without his agency. Without his influence we may have the form of godliness, but not the power; we may be reformed, but not renewed; we may become other creatures, but not new ones.

What is the use we are to make of this admission? Are we to derive from it ease in sin, self-justification, excuses for indolence, reasons for despair? Self-despair, indeed, grows out of it, but no other. There is hope in Israel concerning this thing. We have a resource, and it is accessible; and we are commanded to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

When we plead for this doctrine, we are often charged with enthusiasm. But the Scripture asserts, that we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus; that it is God who worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure; that hereby we know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us. And we retort the charge upon those that would exclude this influence. For what is enthusiasm, but visionary hope, groundless expectation? And what can be more delusive, than looking for an end without suitable and adequate means; a mighty effect, without a more powerful cause; a practice, the most alien from our depraved nature, without a divine principle; a gathering of grapes from thorns, and figs from thistles? And this is the case with those who deny the operations of that grace which is alone sufficient for us. We allow that we draw the character of the Christian high, and expect from him great things; that he should be renewed in the spirit of his mind; that he should walk by faith, and not by sight; that he should overcome the world; and have his conversation in Heaven. But we have means answerable to all this. We have a principle adequate to the practice. We have a cause far superior to all these grand results. We allow that the work of a Christian, as it is described in the Bible, looks fitter for an angel than for a fallen, weak man; but this fallen, weak man has more than the sufficiency of an angel for the discharge of it: his sufficiency is of God.

Such a discovery, such an assurance is necessary. We are depraved creatures, and we cannot be ignorant of it. We have inward repugnances to spiritual duties. We are surrounded with outward difficulties. On the side of sin there is number, example, constant solicitation. Our slothful heart cries, "There is a lion in the way; I shall be slain in the streets." With all this known and felt, who could enter a religious course with pleasure or vigour, without the certainty of effectual aid? Possibility, probability, is not enough. Mere hope is not enough. Our hands hang down, our knees tremble, our very souls are chilled, unless we have a full and express persuasion, that God will be with us, and bear us through. And here, therefore, he meets us, and says, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Rely on me. Nothing is too hard for the Lord. I can enlighten the darkest understanding. I can turn the heart of stone to flesh. Take hold of my strength, and be more than a conqueror. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

At the sound of this animation, every thing revives in me, like vegetation at the call of spring. I am filled with confidence and courage; weak in myself, I am strong in another, and almighty in the God of my salvation.

And is it not better for me, that I should be a constant suppliant at the mercy-seat, than have no reasons for calling upon God, being able to do without him? Is it not better for me to depend upon the God of all grace, for the continual supplies of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, than to have a fund of my own? The sufficiency lodged in me must have been limited and finite, but in the Lord Jehovah I have everlasting strength. I could not trust in my own heart, but I can rely on his word, I can never be so willing to supply myself, as he is ready to succour me. "Though in ourselves we have no stock,
The Lord is nigh to save;
The door flies open when we knock,
And 'tis but ask and have."

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