No. 150.

The faith of Abi; an example to others.
Taken wholly from Butcher.

Hebrews xi. 8. "By faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should afterward receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."

The choice of this passage is selected, many believe, from the history of faith: for it records brilliant instances of the sufferings, the triumphs, the glory of this mighty and supporting principle. In this illustrious catalogue, the ancestor of the Jewish nation held a distinguished rank. He is particularly celebrated for two instances of his faith, when, to human appearance, the command, or the voice, were full of perplexity and darkness. The first of these is that, to ask the tent of the shekh to forsake the land of his nativity, of follow the leadings of providence in a country wholly unknown. His faith was founded on a firm belief of the power, the truth, and the goodness of God. Thus divine command was communicated are are not told; but he had no doubt of its reality, so that being the case, he submitted not for a moment. Without a murmur, or without a question, he could resign the attachments, the strong associations of the home of his early days, his father's house, the scenes of pleasure to which he had been accustomed, check not his firm vigorous heart. The faith of duty was clear: the voice of God was plain by understanding; is it the age of 95 years, the son of Sarah, set out to obey it. The place of rest was to be shown him; that was the divine promise of his faith demanded no more. It was able to better what was promised: if thus he had no doubt. He was also firmly persuaded, that God was faithful and good: in tracing him there was no danger of disaffection. So if the

He went out, not knowing whither he went.

There words fully describe the conduct, oh a firm belief in the doctrine of providence will ever produce. The patriarch obeyed, though he was wholly ignorant what the result beforehand had to rain on the earth, his halting would terminate. In the sentence, the shekh describes his conduct; a variety of imputed truths were contained a implied.

1. The doctrine of an overpowering providence is clearly recognized, and practically acknowledged. He believes in revelation,
this shines brightly & prominently among the articles of the creed, wh we universally admit, When the foundation of this doctrine, revelation declares, "the light is a shield to the people." We a will owe peace & glory, & good things will be vouched to others, that will be abundantly large to the righteous. - it shall be well with them, for the shall eat the fruit of their doings. The works of righteousness shall be given with effect of righteousness quiet & assurance forevermore. It is manifest, that every promise, satisfaction, & threatening in the Bible rests upon this ground. that the greater of all things does not forbear his works: "in every age this has power consolation & joy on frsion, 3. The journey of life is cheer'd, is the weakness of nature satisfied by this abiding persuasion. Admit that the world is in some respects a wilderness; yet if the doctrine of Providence be true, the two may say, I am not wearied or the guide. Are there many dangers, to wh Fare continually exposed? the power of God can deliver them all. Am I likely to be bewildered by many of the attractions which I am placed in? heavenly wisdom can extricate me. Do I not know all the I am going to, but it so,...
Grandest plans of human sagacity vanish into nothing.

But though forfeits and penalties belong not to each other as man, yet the offenses of innocence are equally crimes.

Because we have been disappointed to day, it does not follow that tomorrow we shall be too. Because one scheme has failed, we are not on that account to give up every thing in despair. The resources of the human mind are in many cases, truly astonishing. Our abilities, bodily and mental, were given us for a use, not for use; it is not only our interest, but our duty, to exert them. If we do not, we are unjust to the powerful end; are fly in the face of that Providence, by whose the world is governed, and whose designs are benevolent.

Where the life is a blank, neither dignity nor comfort can be expected. Where it is a scene of incorrigible wickedness, wretchedness must be the invariable consequence. When the conscience can only demonstrate and condemn, the destruction of happiness is complete. Institute of refuge either in God or himself; whether shall the poor wretched go?

Are the events of life unknown? Let not patience, nor hope, nor love, nor life be lost to us. Man is in many cases born to suf...
for: it is of the essence, that we are not conscious; but we remember this, by means of misfortunes and disappointments, when they do happen, with unshaken fortitude of eternal resolution. This will often be the blow; this will not weaken our minds; this will prepare us for the divine favours; leave us open to the formation of new plans; the further exercise of our duties; faith, hope, etc.

This view of things illustrates in the most direct manner the excellence and importance of natural and spiritual faith. Faith in the abstract cannot be better defined, than it is at the beginning of the book of the text, the substance of things hoped for is the evidence of things not seen. What our senses do not actually converse with, can be realized to the mind only by the operation of faith. It is that, which substantiates us in these things, where either distant in time or remote in place. Faith is the evidence of things hoped for, the assurance of things not seen. Now for the glorious discoveries, which revelation acts before us, as if: the important animating truths, which

in parts, we have the testimony of God himself, of him, who cannot lie, who can see; those deceits may be deceived. This faith, however, as consists merely in the aspect of the understanding, is of the lowest degree, of nothing properly religious in it. The faith which places so fruitful a religious sense benefits man, in that, it is an evidence of nature, a witness by love, it includes a perception of the debt, and readiness of all the divine proceedings, a firm conviction that our care in all things are ordered in the very best manner.

Daily experience proves, that there is nothing but the exercise of this divine principle, that can support a man in the pilgrimage of life. Without it, despair point out its existence, it must frequently hang on us. We shall have no hiding place from the storm. The crass of mortality gather around us, or we have nothing to shun its attacks; but when the shield of faith is upon the arm, the fiery darts are repelled. The life of salvation is like a helmet; the breast plate of a good conscience guards the heart. We can trust the breast, we cannot see them. O shame has her perfect work, as
we are content to wait God's time for the removal of present difficulties. We feel a persuasion, that all things, however unpromising they may seem, will work together for good. This persuasion under the divine blessing determines us to ask but one question, which is the path of duty? to gauge only one grand object, that is a meetness for the divine favor. Thus we hear the voice of providence is clear, in our daily prayers, is that we may understand that voice, we go forth, not enquiring how our journey will terminate. That we can quietly leave to Him, and do all things wisely and well. Such was the situation of Mrs. Pennington. She was called to quit his native abode, to be gone as a stranger in a strange land. This was only the first step to the trials of this faith and obedience, as he had entered his name on illustrious characters from a generation even to the present hour, he is celebrated as the father of the faithful and the friend of God. But why was this, because he obeyed, went out, not knowing whither he went in.

From this instructive example, I remind you of the concluding reflections.

1. Let us use all diligence to have our minds well grounded in religious principles. It's only this can expect stability in our practice, a gain in our progress. We shall never act with confidence upon what we only half believe. The consolation of piety can never be tasted where a sense of its value is not deeply rooted in the heart.

Let us remember, that in this age, religion can suffer from no weapon so much, as from the unbelief, insipid, or base lies of those who profess to have it. But they seek it not, rejoice in the loss of salvation, they taste it not to the heart. Let us see it to, that we be not guilty of this treachery. Let us fully learn, not only the theory, but the practice of the Gospel. Reproaches are cast upon the cause of goodness, let us rise them down. By this gainsayers will be put to silence; the mouth of blasphemy will be stopped, we shall be able to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. However uncertain we may be as to intermediate events, if the final issue we can have no doubt, if our conversation be seen, and
as become the God of x, the reward will be glory, honor, and immortality.

2. We should remember, that however difficult some duties may seem, or whatever perplexity may attend some dispensations of providence, nothing is required of us, but what has actually been performed by man's mind. The J. in our text stands containing a long catalogue of confessions of sinners, who have preceded us in the most trying situations. Many of them were exposed to difficulties and dangers, that it is not probable we shall ever be obliged to encounter. That strong faith, that firm, hearty reliance on God, which is my object to recommend, was equal to all their emergencies. It guarded them from the snares of perplexity, it supported them under the pressure of afflictions; it taught them to improve their trials into means of grace, while they were in earth, to have their triumphs gay fixed in heaven; till therefore something is required of us in the path of religion, it has never been demanded before, let us not complain. What man has done, may

3. I am very grateful to the God of God, particularly the Father, who has brought to light immortality to sight. In this respect, a happy opportunity the two texts takes place. Uncertainty rests upon the future lot of the good man. While walking with God, he knows what he is going. This is the great discovery, what real religion, as it is termed, cannot make. The region beyond the grave, philosophy could never explore. Poetry created a future world, and peopled it with the shades of departed human beings. She framed a tatterdemalion. The wisest, with a sort of equity in her decisions the pun

4. vice versa. Deity, but it was an airy fabric, presented a foundation. Reason could do so little with authority. The bulk of the fall was instant by broken, no answer could be given to the question, in what a splan of comfort could be felt by the enquirer. Think of the

5. what there was something beyond the sepulture, besides innumerable vacuity eternal silence, small
that the most enlightened pagan could do. But this, with us, the case is far different. The divine book speaks a clear and authoritative language. There is no reward for the righteous. When our earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building of a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Be not ignorant, therefore, concerning yourself as the prince of this world, nor as those who have no helpers. If we believe that God rose again, then also we sleep in Him, and shall sleep together with Him! "There are a few of the gracious declarations by which the faith of the believer in Him is animadverted and confirmed. They are precious at all seasons, but particularly so when human hopes are cast down. When we conclude, as we are ready to conclude, "all these things come against us!") Faith bids us look up, "unto the fountain to the house of the living!" Assuredly so that we believe, our best treasurers are not lost. A glorious period is coming, when we shall see them again, when by divine grace, if our conduct has been as good, our outward lives they will be as blissful as their! This bears down by upon the point, where assistance is wanted; this is solid comfort. It is not a mere pecuniary, a perhaps that it may be so. It is as certain, as that this is the last place, let us, like holy Absalom, cherish faith by our weaknesses. True faith is not an incident, a principle. It is properly felt neither by the enthusiastic, the lukewarm, or the gloomy professed. It is not mistaken, abused by each of these characters. In the wearer, it makes it on the presumption: lukewarmness the object of contempt; timidity makes it down to despair. The faith of Absalom was neither timid nor trusting; nor rash. He obeyed the divine voice; he trusted the divine promises, but he neglected no human means of success. While like Absalom, he acted as seeing them, who is invisible, he took as much pains in effecting his purposes, as if success depended on himself alone. Children of faith, behold your pattern. Your comrade, and success; but by divine assistance, you can do...
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God of our lives, Author of all good, from thy good may we ever derive instruction and comfort. From thee and in thee, through before us, may we learn valuable and lasting lessons. May the instructions be derived from the fear of God: as we have seen, contemplating not to be left when we are gone: we acknowledge there are many providences & blessings to leadings with perseverance & diligence. Knowing that thou wilt not withhold good things from those who walk uprightly, may we advance in the way of thy commandments with a perfected heart. Amidst the uncertainty of things future, may we trust in thee & do our duty. May patience which never failure us. May we ever have a deep abiding sense of the excellency & importance of true faith, remembering that it is the substance of things hoped for & the evidence of things not seen. Whatever may be our difficulties or trials in life, may we take courage from the example of those holy men who have gone before us in the faith & duty of suffering, & look to thee for strength & comfort.

At home, June 30th, 1822, afternoon.
At home, Friday lecture, Oct. 31st, 1828.
At home, Dec. 1st, 1831, afternoon. - severe moment.