

***"Righteous art thou, O Lord,
and upright are thy judgments.
Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded,
are righteous, and very faithful."***

Psalm 119:137, 138

The advancing Christian learns to adore the awful perfections of his God, and to acknowledge his righteous character and government, even when "his ways are in the sea, and his paths in the great waters." (Ps. lxxvii. 19.) "Clouds and darkness are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." (Ps. xcvi. 2. Comp. Deut. xxxii. 4.) We have already brought out the unvarying testimony of his people to the righteous character of his afflictive dispensations. (Verse 75.) Even from haughty Pharaoh was a similar acknowledgment extorted. (Exod. ix. 27.) Adonibezek also, under the blow of his hand, cried out--"As I have done, so God hath required me." (Judg. i. 7. Comp. 2 Chron. xii. 6.)

Yet in this path, "we walk by faith, not by sight." (2 Cor. v. 7.) *Often in Providence* "his footsteps are not known." (Ps. lxxvii. 19.) We cannot trace the reasons of the Divine mind. We must wait and see the "end of the Lord," when the disjointed pieces shall be compacted into one complete texture and frame-work. "At evening time there shall be light." (Zech. xiv. 7.) *Much more in the dispensation of grace* do we hear the voice,--"Be still, and know that I am God." (Ps. xlvi. 10.) Doubtless he could give his grace to all as well as to some. Yet none have a claim upon him. "Is it not his to do what he will with his own?" "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Matt. xx. 15. Rom. ix. 20. Gen. xviii. 25.) Thus much is plain--enough to silence cavil, and justify God--grace is freely offered to all. Man's own will rejects it, and leaves him without excuse. (Matt. xxiii. 37. John, v. 40.) Effectual grace is withheld from none, but those who deserve that it should be so. None are forced to sin. None are condemned without guilt. Therefore when we stand upon the ocean's brink, and cry--"Oh, the depth!" (Rom. xi. 33) are we not constrained to the adoring acknowledgment--*Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments?* And if this be our praise, even while "we see but as through a glass darkly, and know but in part," how much more, in the world of uncloudy day, when we shall see "face to face, and know even as we are known" (1 Cor. xiii. 12)--shall we sing with reverential joy "the song of the Lamb--Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty! *just and true are thy ways*, thou King of saints!" (Rev. xv. 3.)

The young Christian, however, less able to grasp these deeper apprehensions, exercises himself chiefly in his more engaging perfections of long-suffering, goodness, and love. It is therefore a satisfactory evidence of growth in grace, when our habitual contemplation of God fixes upon our minds the more full and awful displays of his character; and we gather from thence an increase of light, peace, humility, and consolation. But the cross of Calvary harmonizes to our view at once the most appalling and the most encouraging attributes. Though his own declaration--that "he will by no means clear the guilty" (Exod. xxxiv. 7)--seemed to present an insurmountable barrier to the purpose of mercy; yet,

rather than the glory of a God of love should be obscured, or his righteous law should be mitigated, "he spared not his own Son" (Rom. viii. 32); he "made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us." (2 Cor. v. 21.)

And do not we naturally argue from his nature to *his testimonies*? If he be *righteous*, nothing unrighteous can come from him. His *testimonies*, therefore, are his lively image--like himself--*righteous and very faithful*--requiring nothing impossible--nothing unsuitable--perfect love to God and man (Matt. xxii. 37-39)--"our reasonable service" (Rom. xii. 1), no less our privilege than our duty to render. None that are blessed with a spiritual apprehension of their nature, and are conformed and framed to them, will hesitate in setting their seal to the inscription--"*The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.*" "*The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.*" (Ps. xix. 9. Rom. vii. 12.)

But let us take care to exhibit the practical influence of our contemplations of the character and government of God. The unconverted--far from understanding or subscribing to our acknowledgment--complain, "*The ways of the Lord are not equal.*" "*My punishment is greater than I can bear.*" (Ezek. xviii. 25. Gen. iv. 13.) And so opposed are *the righteous judgments of God* to the perverseness of corrupt nature, that even with the child of God there is much murmuring within, that needs to be stilled--much repining to be hushed--much impatience to be repressed--many hard thoughts to be lamented, resisted, and banished. Did we believe more simply, how much more joy would there be in our faith, and readiness in our submission! How clearly would our experience "show, that the Lord is upright; he is our rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him!" (Ps. xcii. 15.) "In returning" then "and rest shall we be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be our strength." (Isa. xxx. 15.) In the submissive acknowledgment of the Lord's dispensations, "our peace" will flow as a river" (Isa. xlvi. 18); more deep and extensive as it approaches the ocean, and fertilizing our souls with abundant spiritual peace and enjoyment.