

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

NO QUARTER.

A Sermon

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“Elijah said unto them, take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape.”—
1 Kings xviii. 40.

ELIJAH may be called the iron prophet; he was a man stern and brave, who flinched not to deliver his Master's message at all hazards. It was meet that such a man should be raised up just at that time, for the Sidonian queen, Jezebel, was a woman of imperious spirit, superstitious to the last degree, and resolute in carrying out her will; ruling Ahab with sovereign sway, she had issued her mandate that the prophets of Jehovah should be slain, a mandate which was all too well obeyed. None could stand before this tigress until Elijah came, and dared her malice to do its worst. That lone man, of heroic soul, stemmed the fearful torrent of idolatry, and like a rock in mid-current, firmly stood his ground. He, alone and single-handed, was more than a match for all the priests of the palace and the groves, even as one lion scatters a flock of sheep. On the occasion of our text, you will remember that he had proved the prophets of Baal to be liars and pretenders, and then, like a practical man as he was, he went on to the natural conclusion. The law of Israel was, “The prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die;” and, therefore, the case being proved before all men, Elijah became himself the executioner; he bade the people seize the impostors, and he himself purpled the Kishon with their blood. “Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape,” was the thundering voice of the prophet of fire. The man did his Master's will thoroughly, never dreaming of compromise. Perhaps it was for this reason that he, with but one other of woman born, ascended to heaven by an unusual road. The God who made him so grandly faithful had determined that he who passed through the world differently from other men, should pass out of it differently, and he who had in life flamed like a seraph, should in a chariot of fire be carried to his reward.

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I am not, however, about to go further into the details of that matter, but would seek instruction from its main idea. Brethren and sisters, the spiritual teaching of such an utterance as this is far-reaching; there is a lesson in it which might be turned to many accounts, for like the cherubic sword at the gate of Eden, it turns every way. One use of it must suffice for this morning: but at the same time, as a hint of how it might be employed, we would observe that it has a distinct bearing upon the present condition of the church of God. "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape," is a voice which our cathedrals and parish churches might be the better for hearing. Unholy compromises are the fashion of the day; an infusion of honest blood is needed, greatly needed. Men are growing utterly careless as to religious truth, because they see the servants of God and the votaries of Baal associated in the same church, and worshipping at the same altars. Sincere loyalty to God brooks not this confederacy with idolaters. Errors were suffered to remain in the national church for peace sake, and now they have become dominant, and threaten to destroy the lovers of the truth! It is now clear that every error of doctrine or ordinance is as mischievous as a prophet of Baal, and should not be endured. The world is wide, and men are only responsible to God for their beliefs; but the church should not, within her borders, suffer falsehood to propagate itself. Christians have no right to associate themselves with any church which errs in its teaching. If we see that gross error is rampant in a church, and we join it in membership, we are partakers of its sins, and we shall have to share in its punishment in the day of visitation. It is utterly false that it does not matter to what church we belong. It matters to every man who has a conscience and loves his God. I dare not associate in church fellowship with Ritualists and Rationalists; loyal subjects will not join the society of traitors. What a blessing it would have been in Luther's time if the reformation had been carried out completely! Great as the work was, it was, in some points, a very superficial thing, and left deadly errors untouched. The reformation in England was checked by policy almost as soon as it commenced. Ours is a semi-popish church. If in this country the axe had been laid to the root of the trees, as John Knox laid it in Scotland, we might have been spared a thousand evils; but now the trees, which were only lopped, begin to send out their branches again, and the errors which were allowed to occupy a secondary place by permission, now come to the front and threaten to thrust out the truth of God altogether. The only way in which our conscience can be kept clear before God, so that we can walk with him in light, is that we abhor every false way, and renounce everything which is not of God and of the truth. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." When will Christians see this? The Bible, and the Bible alone, is said to be the religion of Protestants, but the statement is a terrible lie; the most of Protestants believe a crowd of other things over and above what is taught in the Bible; they practise ordinances destitute of scriptural authority, and believe doctrines which are not revealed by the Holy Ghost. Happy will the churches be when they shall cast off the yoke

of all authority apart from the Scriptures and the Spirit. What have the Lord's free men to do with councils of the church, with fathers and doctors, with tradition and custom? The true church has but one Rabbi, and his word suffices her. Away with the commandments of men. Down with the traditions which make void the law of God. "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." A thorough purgation is needed; a root and branch reformation is imperatively necessary. May the Lord send us a prophet clothed with the spirit and power of Elias, by whom the fruitless and poisonous trees of error shall be hewn down and cast into the fire.

I am not, however, about to speak upon that important subject. I want to carry fire and sword into another district, where I trust the invasion will yield practical results. Let us look at home, searching our own hearts, testing our own souls. Our manhood is a triple kingdom; spirit, soul, and body, are the United Kingdom of the Isle of Man; that kingdom ought to be wholly dedicated to the one God of Israel; but instead thereof sin has polluted it, and even where by God's grace the reigning power of evil has been subdued, sin still intrudes and seeks to regain the mastery. The great law of Christian life in regard to sin within ourselves is, "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." We hold neither truce nor parley with iniquity: war to the knife against every sin of every sort should be the constant habit of the Christian man's innermost nature.

I shall, this morning, only speak to the people of God. Let that be fully understood. I am not addressing myself now to unregenerate persons, to those who are not believers in Jesus Christ. I should be foolish indeed, if I were to exhort those who are dead in sin, to fight with their sins in the hope of obtaining salvation thereby; for that is not the way of salvation at all, even were they capable of it. Sinners must first be led to Christ, and find saving grace in him by a look of faith. Faith is the first business, not works. To talk of good works before the new birth is to disregard the divine order and put the last first. It is idle to talk of the duties of a Christian to a man who is not a Christian. To you unconverted hearers, the first, and for the present, the only work of God is, that ye believe in Jesus Christ whom he has sent. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" for "he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." I address myself to those only who have believed; but upon them I would press home the clear, sharp, thorough counsel of the text.

We shall give, first of all, *reasons for the slaughter which we now command*: secondly, *arguments for its thoroughness*, "let not one escape;" and then, thirdly, *truths of practical value will be mentioned, to help us in carrying out the command*.

I. First, then, let us adduce some REASONS FOR THE SLAUGHTER which we now advise.

At the outset we remind you that our sins deserve to die, every one of them, because *they are traitors to our God*. Once we were traitors, too, and then we gave our sins a willing shelter. We conspired against the majesty of heaven, and, therefore, our transgressions were loved and pampered; they were our darlings, and we doted

on them. At this time, beloved, the case is altered, the Lord Jehovah is our God and king; we delight in his reign, and our prayer is, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory." Our inbred sins would fain rob the Lord of his glory. Every sin is virtually an attack upon the throne of the Most High, it is a treasonable assault upon the crown rights of heaven. He who rebels against the law of God by his breach of that law virtually says, "I will not have this law-maker to rule over me." It is not meet then, O ye children of the kingdom, that sin should be permitted to assail the Lord through you. It is not meet that souls redeemed by the blood of Jesus, loved with an everlasting love, and made secure of endless favour, should harbour those black and foul traitors the sins of the flesh and of the mind. Let the decree go forth in the power of God the Holy Spirit this day to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. Take those foxes which spoil the vines, and let not one of them escape.

Let them be slain, secondly, because *they have already done us infinite evil*. In their assault upon God we have already found a master motive for their overthrow; let us remember also that they have sorely injured us and our race. My brethren, what has sin done for us? Can it point to any advantage or blessing with which it has enriched us? Look down the roll of history and see if sin be not man's worst enemy. Whose hot breath blasted Eden, withered all its bowers of bliss, and caused the earth to become barren, so that without labour even unto sweat she will not yield bread for our sustenance! Mark well yon innumerable graves which cover every plain with hillocks. Who slew all these? By what gate came death into the world? Was not sin the janitor to open the portal? Harken at this moment to the shouts of war which in every age of the world's history have created a horrible din of groans of dying men, and shrieks of flying women. Who first dipped yon flag in blood, and made the air pestilent with carnage? And yonder despotic throne which has crushed down the multitude and made the lives of many bitter with hard bondage, who laid its dark foundations and cemented it with blood? Whence came war with its carnage, and tyranny with its sufferings? Whence, indeed, but from the sins and lusts of men? All over the world if there be hemlock in the furrow, and thistles on the ridge, sin's hand has sown them broadcast. Sin turned the apples of Sodom to ashes, and the grapes of Gomorrah to gall. The trail of this serpent, with its horrid slime, has obliterated the footsteps of joy. Before the march of sin I see the garden of the Lord, and behind it a desert and a charnel. Stay ye awhile. Nay, start not, but come with me. Look down into the ghastly gloom of Tophet, that region abhorred, where dwell the finally impenitent, who died with unforgiven sins upon their heads. Can you bear to hear their groans and moans of anguish? We will not attempt to describe the sufferings of spirits driven from their God, eternally banished from all hope and peace; but we will ask you, O son of man, who digged yon pit, and cast men into it? Who provides the fuel for that terrible flame, and whence getteth the worm that dieth not its tooth which never blunts? Sin has done it all. Sin, the mother of hell, the fire-fountain to which ye may trace each burning stream. O sin, it is not meet that any heir from heaven, redeemed from hell, should

make friends with thee. Shall we fondle the adder, or press the deadly cobra to our bosom? If it had not been for the grace of God our sins would have shut us up in hell already, and even now they seek to drag us there; therefore, let us take these enemies of our souls and slay them—let not one escape.

But further, dear brethren, it is meet that every sin should die through the grace of God, whether it be pride, or sloth, or covetousness, or worldliness, or lust, or any other form of evil; it is meet that it should die, because *it will work us serious mischief* if it be not put to death. Of great sins, as men think them, there is little need that I speak unto you, for you all know how dangerous they are; but those called little sins are equally to be renounced. To fall by little and little, is a terrible way of falling. A Christian man cannot indulge a known sin and yet walk with God. As soon as we tolerate sin within ourselves, we lose power in prayer. The Scriptures cease to be sweet to us when sin becomes pleasant; the services of the sanctuary are dull and lifeless when the heart is fascinated by evil. No tongue can ever tell what mischief a single sin will do to a professor—it is like the one worm at the root of Jonah's gourd. Take David's case—what a change came over the spirit of that man's life from the moment when he went astray! He reached heaven, but how painfully he limped all the way thither, and how heavily he groaned at every step. The songs he wrote before that time are frequently jubilant, and often ring with the crash of the loud sounding cymbals; but after that the voice of the sweet singer of Israel is hoarse; he touches the mournful string, and supplants the psaltery by the sackbut. Sin broke that eagle wing, and dimmed that eagle eye. Samson is a yet sadder case. Let his shorn locks and blind eyes speak to us. O soul, if thou wouldst behold thy worst enemies, look upon thy sins. If thou wouldst see that which can straiten thy soul's estate, bankrupt thy heart of joy, shipwreck thine assurance, and kill thy usefulness, thou hast only to look upon sin. See ye it not, its scales are bright with many colours, and its eye gleams with fascination, but its fangs are deadly. As Amalek was the remorseless foe of Israel, so is sin the pitiless enemy of the believer; therefore, to arms against it, take ye all its children and let not one escape.

These reasons might suffice to arouse us to the slaughter. Shall not traitors die? Shall not those who have compassed our ruin be put far from us? Shall not these insatiable adversaries, who are swifter than eagles and stronger than lions to injure us, shall not these, I say, be resisted and overcome? Peace with them is not to be dreamed of. The Lord and his people shall have war with Amalek, from generation to generation. Let not our heart incline to spare a single sin, but with a jealousy cruel as the grave let us hunt down these unclean beasts.

Methinks when Elias said, "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape," he derived an argument from the spot whereon the altar had so lately stood. By that wondrous spectacle, when bullock, wood, stones, and water were all licked up by heavenly fire, he would plead with them to serve Jehovah. Surely Elias would say, "Look ye there, *the sacrifice has been accepted by Jehovah*. What then? What is the natural consequence of it but that the enemies of that sacrifice,

the setters up of a rival victim, should at once be slain?" Brethren and sisters, you and I have seen the sacrifice of Calvary, a sight far more august than that of Carmel. No bullock was there, but the Son of God made flesh. Your faith has seen him nailed to the tree, you have beheld the sufferings of his body, and by contemplation you have gazed upon the agony of his soul, and you know that it "pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." When he made his soul "a sacrifice for sin," the flames of divine justice fell upon the victim, and now the sacrifice is finished, Christ has made an accepted atonement for all our sin. Will you not draw the inference that henceforth you cannot serve sin? By the blood of Jesus you are under bonds to hate evil. These sins necessitated the griefs of Christ, will you indulge them? For these your transgressions your Saviour bore the wrath of God, will you return to them? This would be barbarous ingratitude, can you be guilty of it? Can you gaze upon the bleeding wounds of Jesus, and then wound him afresh with sin? Say, believer, art thou justified, and yet canst thou go back to wanton dalliance with transgression? It cannot be. There is no more sanctifying spectacle in the world than the sight of the bloody sacrifice of Jesus Christ. There is nothing which to the Christian mind is a more convincing proof that sin must die than the fact that Jesus died. Heaven's eternal Darling bleeds and suffers for transgression, then transgression must die too. The cross crucifies sin. The tomb of Jesus is the sepulchre of our iniquities. By the blood and wounds of Jesus we are constrained to take the prophets of Baal and let not one escape. Have your swords ready for their hearts! Up and slay them. Hew them in pieces, as Samuel hewed Agag before the Lord.

The prophet might have used another argument, which would be sure to tell with them. "Hearken," he might have said, "*you have yourselves confessed that Jehovah is God.* Awestruck by the miracle, you have a second time repeated the ascription of praise to Jehovah and owned that he is God. What then? Let these seducers be put down at once." Such a confession demanded consistent action. The most of you to whom I speak this morning have avowed that the Lord of holiness is your God. You have not only said it by joining in the solemn worship of the sanctuary, and thus declaring it in psalms and hymns, and by saying Amen to our prayers, but many of you have avowed your personal faith before the church of God; you have come before the assembled brethren, and you have declared that the Lord is your God and king. Moreover, you have, in obedience to your Master's command, submitted yourselves to that symbolical ordinance by which you have declared yourselves to be dead to the world and buried with the Lord Jesus in baptism unto death. Solemnly have you been baptised into his name, and in his name have been raised up from the liquid grave—will you be false to all that this symbolises? Is your profession a lie? Was your baptism a blasphemous falsehood, a presumptuous intrusion. Let me put it to each heart as I would put it to my own; let us have no profession, or else make it true; and if our profession be true, it certainly demands that sin should not be pampered but abhorred. But am I not speaking to church members who think it consistent with their profession to do during the week what they would not like to have known

to-day? Are there not some of you who in trade have not clean hands and yet have been outwardly washed, as professors of Christ? It may be you will come this evening to the Lord's table, wherein you set forth the Redeemer's death, and yet the morsels from Satan's table are hardly out of your mouths. If your life all the week has been contrary to the life of Christ, what do you among his people on the Sabbath? If you indulge at home in a passionate spirit, in a proud and hectoring conversation, if you are dishonest, if your talk is unchaste, if you practise intoxication, or any other unhallowed indulgence of the flesh, who can clear you from guilt, and who shall be advocate? You have declared that you worship God, how dare you follow Baal? Ye say that ye are the servants of Christ, how can ye be servants of Belial? Can ye link the two together? It must not, cannot be. If God be God, serve him with all your heart and mind, but if the world and sin after all be better than the Lord's way, then say so honestly, and take your choice. Be true, I pray you, be always true to your solemn professions.

The prophet had a claim upon them because he was undoubtedly under *the inspiration of God*. He had no need to tell them so, for they all observed it. The actions of Elijah that day were very remarkable; and indeed, apart from the fact of his being guided by God's Spirit, they would have been questionable; but God gave him certain sacred instincts which stood him in the place of verbal directions, and the man was led beyond himself by a mysterious influence to which he was pliant and plastic. When he laughed at the priests of Baal, he did what God would have him do; when he bowed his knee and cried for the fire, and the fire came, he was yielding to the Divine impulse which struggled within him; and so when he said, "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape," all the people were obedient, because they felt that God was speaking through the man. Now, if there be any voice in the world which is assuredly divine it is that which cries out of the excellent glory, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." "Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind." "Abstain from all appearance of evil." "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." This is the intention of election—he has chosen us that we should be holy. This is the object of redemption—he hath determined to redeem us from all iniquity. This is the great end and aim of the Spirit of God—that we may be his workmanship, created in the image of God. Holiness is the great requirement, and at the same time the great privilege of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. O brethren, think not that these lips speak alone when I say, slay the sins that are in you, let not one escape; it is God that speaketh it, and let his voice have power over your souls.

Again, I think Elijah had a very prevalent argument as he pointed to the fields around Carmel, and to the parched sides of the mountain. Far as the eye could see, there was not a speck of verdure. Even where the water-course at other times had supported a narrow line of straggling vegetation, there was now no trace of rush, or reed, or grass; all brooks and rivulets were dried up, and their banks were desolate. Men looked with eager gaze, but saw no trace of grass for beasts, or corn

for men. With what eloquence could Elijah have pleaded had he cared to do so ! “All this has been brought upon you by your sins ; you have turned aside from God, and he has smitten you till Lebanon languisheth and Sharon’s plains are as the dust of the furnace. If you would remove the evil, sweep away the cause of it. Slay the traitors who have despoiled you.” Let me at this time point some of you to *the barrenness of your spirits incident upon sin*. Remember your loss of fellowship with Christ, your want of joy in God, your powerlessness in prayer, your lack of influence for good upon the church and upon the world. What has made you thus barren ? There was a time with you in those young days of your espousals, when your soul was like the garden of the Lord, and the excellency of Carmel and Sharon were yours ; but now this day, even though you sit with God’s people, you do not enjoy the word as they do, and though you pray it is not prevailing prayer, and when you sing, the hymns which charmed you once are now monotonous. The joy has departed from your life, its verdure and its comeliness are gone, and how ? Have not your secret sins betrayed you ? Were they not to your souls as a moth to a garment, fretting and devouring it ? Grey hairs were here and there upon you, and you knew it not, till a spiritual decay made you totter for weakness. The thieves of sin have in the night broken through and stolen away your jewels and carried off your choice treasures. If you wish to recover your former state of bliss, you must at once with resolution take these prophets of Baal, and let not one of them escape.

Might not Elijah have said “*Think of your unanswered prayers*” ? Some of you have a long file of them. Like the Israelites in Elijah’s day, who cried for rain, but no rain came, you have been praying to God for your children’s conversion, and they are not converted ; you have asked the spiritual life of a dear friend, and you have not had it ; and peradventure the reason is this—you walk contrary to God, and he is walking contrary to you. If you will not hear him, neither will he hear you. He will not cast you off and let you utterly perish, but he will restrain the heavens, and they shall be as brass above you. You cannot be a Jacob in prayer if you are an Esau in life. If you are weak on your knees, your sins have wrought the mischief—let them not escape. Remember, if you will slay the Lord’s enemies, he will remove your barrenness, and hear your cries. When the prophets of Baal had watered the ground with their heart’s blood, the Lord deluged the fields with rain, but not till then. When we give up sin we shall find our captivity turned. Put away sin from thee and God will visit thee. Christian, purge thy way and thou shalt see Christ’s face again. He hath gotten himself away into his chamber, to see what thou wilt do when he has left thee, and now if thou wilt sigh and cry to him, he will return. Above all, if thou wilt say,

“The dearest idol I have known,
Whate’er that idol be,
Now will I tear it from its throne,
And worship only thee,”

you shall soon have back your Master, and with him all the dews of his Spirit, and your soul shall blossom again, and the fruits of joy and

holiness shall be brought forth. Need I argue longer? Is not every Christian ready to take up the sacrificial knife, and slay his transgressions?

II. Secondly, let me remind you that the text is a very thoroughgoing one. "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." Let me give some ARGUMENTS FOR THIS THOROUGHNESS. I fear there is good need why I should argue for the thoroughness of the slaughter of sin, because human nature makes desperate attempts to rescue at least one sin. Like Saul, it cannot bear to kill all the Amalekites—it would save a few of the better sort. I have heard men very eloquent against drunkenness, very, and I would not have them less so; but they have not had a word to say against Sabbath-breaking, or against unbelief, hardness of heart, pride, or self-righteousness. They would kill the adder and spare the viper. Have you not also known some who justify the taunt in Hudibras, and "compound for sins they are inclined to by damning those they have no mind to." They are ferocious against certain sins and fond of others. They would not touch arsenic, but poison themselves with prussic acid. Just as Lot said of Zoar, so do they say, "Is it not a little one?" Some will avow that they have a constitutional tendency to a sin, and therefore they cannot overcome it; they take out a license to sin, and reckon themselves clear though they indulge their evil propensity. Brethren, this will never do. Indulgences for sin issued by the Pope are now rejected—shall we write them out for ourselves? Is Christ the messenger of sin? I know that some persons feel they are excused in the use of bitter language occasionally, because they are provoked, but I find no such excuses in the Word of God. In no one passage do I find a permit for any sin, or a furlough from any duty. Sin is sin in any case and in any man, and we are not to apologise for it, but to condemn it. It is pleaded by some that their father was passionate, and they are passionate, and therefore it runs in their blood, but let them remember that the Lord must cleanse their blood, or they will die in their sin. Others will say that their constant discontent, moroseness, and murmuring, and tendency to quarrel with everybody, must be set down to their infirmity of body. Well, I am not their judge; but the word of the Lord judges them, and declares that sin shall not have dominion over the believer. Does a sin easily beset us? We are doubly warned to lay it aside. More grace is needed, and more grace may be had. Never suppose that God has given to you a license for any sin, so that you may live in it as long as you please; no, but believe that Jesus has come to save us from our sins. I have received no intimation from the Lord to deal delicately with any man's sins, or to become an apologist for transgression. My message is that of Elijah, "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." For, observe this, *one sin may result in fatal consequences*. "To a child of God?" say you. I say not that; but how know we that you are a child of God? how dare you think yourself born from above while your heart loves any one sin? In truth, you may be assured that you are not a child of God if there be any one sin from which you do not long to be delivered. A child of God may for awhile be the captive of sin, but never a lover of sin. One sin ruined our race; one fruit plucked from the forbidden tree hurled manhood from its pristine glory. The effect of that one sin has

gone on rankling in our blood through six thousand years, and will go on when years cease to be counted, destroying men throughout an eternity of woe, if it be not purged out of them. That is something dreadful to think of as the result of one sin. Where one sin does not ruin a church, see what mischief it causes. There was only one Achan, but Israel was defeated at Ai, and could not conquer until the accursed thing was discovered and put away. There are poisons so potent that one drop will envenom the whole body; one leak in a ship may be sufficient to send it to the bottom; one lone rock may break the staunchest timbers of a gallant vessel. Say not that there is no danger in one sin, but may God grant us grace to feel that no evil must be spared.

Then, dear brethren, there is this about it, *there never was one sin alone yet*. Sins always hunt in packs. See one of these wolves, and you may be certain that a countless company will follow at its heels. I spoke just now of the sin of Adam in the garden in taking forbidden fruit—let me ask, what was the essence of that sin? I think it would not be difficult to maintain the thesis that it was pride, or that it was discontent, or that it was lust, or unbelief, or indeed almost any other sin you like to name. It was a many-sided transgression, its light resolves itself into all the colours of evil. That devil's name was legion, "for they are many." Sin's whole brood may be hatched out of one egg; the first original sin had all others in its loins. So we must not think of indulging one sin, because it will bring seven others more wicked than itself. He who sports with one sin will soon come to play with more, and go from bad to worse. A thief who cannot get in at the front door because he finds it locked, tries the back door, and the windows, and then finds a little window so small that it was not fastened because no full-grown man could enter by it, and therefore he puts a child through it, and that is quite enough, for the little one can unlock the door, and let in as many thieves as he will. So one sin put into the soul and allowed to run riot there, may prepare the heart for transgressions never dreamed of. Not all at once do men grow abominable, but sin works the way for sin, and folly nursed grows into crime.

Dear brethren, there are Christians who, through a measure of yielding to some one sin, are all their life-time subject to bondage. They are weak in grace, they are melancholy, they never rejoice in the Lord; their characters are doubtful; they are poor examples, they have but little influence for good; their usefulness is questionable, their life is weak, and in all probability their death will be clouded. They will be saved, but so as by fire; they will get into harbour, but they will be like a vessel I saw some few days ago after the late gales, they will have to be tugged in, their masts gone, their sails rent to pieces, so that they cannot realise the blessed word, "So an entrance may be administered unto you abundantly into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

There is one strong reason for thoroughness in searching out sin, with which I will close this point: it is this, there is certainly no sin that Jesus loves, consequently there is no sin that we should love. Jesus never smiles on any sin of ours, but for every sin he wept, and groaned, and bled, and died. Shall his murderers be our favourites? Shall we

harbour those who spat in his dear face, and pierced his blessed side. Methinks there is no argument so powerful to the Christian as the love of Christ. If you are a wife, a loving, tender wife, you will do nothing which would grieve your husband. If you have grown cold in love, that motive will not sway you; but if your heart be warm, and you feel the love of your espousals, you will want no other law. Beloved, will you grieve the Lord that bought you? Will you do despite to him whose heart bled for you? By all the charms of his matchless beauty, and the flames of his quenchless love, I charge you be chaste to your soul's Bridegroom, and chase away the wanton rivals which would steal your hearts, and defile you. Let Calvary be the Tyburn of your sins.

“ Yes, my Redeemer, they shall die,
My heart has so decreed ;
Nor will I spare the guilty things
That made my Saviour bleed.”

III. And now we shall close, in the third place, by mentioning CERTAIN DOCTRINES WHICH MAY HELP US IN THIS PRACTICAL WORK.

While I have been giving the exhortation to the people of God, I dare say many of you have been whispering, “ Who is sufficient for all this ? ” That is just what I wanted you to say, and my first inference is this—hence we see how incapable is the natural man of self-salvation, and of sin-killing efforts. Tell him to slay his sins; not he—he will hide them as Rahab the harlot hid the spies, and let them out again when a quiet time comes round. Kill his sins! not he—they are his Absaloms, and he would sooner die than lose them. The sinner kill sin? Ah, no. There is an old league between them, a sworn confederacy. The unregenerate will no more quarrel with sin than bees with honey, or dogs with bones. Sin is the sunshine in which the sinner, like an insect, dances through his little hour. “ Ye must be born again, ye must be born again.” All reformation which do not begin with regeneration are wood, hay, and stubble, and will come to an end. All that fallen nature weaves in her loom will be unravelled. “ Ye must be born again, ye must be born again ! ”

And then, secondly, see how much this work is beyond all human strength. If I had to slay one sin, how could I do it? for to kill sin is not such easy work, it is hundred-headed and hundred-lived. You think, “ I have overcome that evil,” and meanwhile you may hear it laugh at you. How true is that of pride. A man says, “ I will be humbler, I will pray down my pride,” and at last he thinks, “ Well, now, I have become humbler,” a sure sign that he is prouder than ever. A humble man mourns over his pride daily; it is only a proud man who has any humility to boast of. But if one sin cannot readily be put to death, what shall we do with the thousands which haunt us and find such convenient hiding-places in our old Adam nature? How shall we slay all these? He that made us must make us again, or we shall never be worth a farthing. He who first of all gave a pure nature to Adam must impart to us the pure nature of the second Adam, or our existence will be a failure. O God, how weak are we !

But then the third reflection is, behold, the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Ghost is God, and he has undertaken to make us pure

and perfect. Brethren, he will do it ; blessed be his name, he will do it. We cannot help him in it, we cannot do it ourselves, it is absolutely certain we shall fail if we make the attempt ; but he can perfect his own work. By his divine power and Godhead he will certainly take these prophets of Baal within us and slay them, till not one survives. Let us adore the Holy Spirit, let us love and bless him, make his person the object of our confidence, and the thought of him one of our richest delights. The Spirit of God will sanctify you wholly, spirit, soul and body, and you shall be presented faultless before the presence of God, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. What a comfortable truth is this to our souls !

The next word is this : dear brethren, let us be very watchful. Since all these sins must die, let us be constantly watching for an opportunity to put them to death. They are watching for our halting : let us watch for their slaying. Sleeping Christian, you might be justified in sleeping if the devil would sleep too, but he was never known to slumber yet. Sleeping Christian, you might have some excuse if sin would go to sleep, but sin never sleepeth ; day and night it dogs our footsteps. Up, then, in the name of God, and be well aroused to watch and pray.

And lastly, and I delight to make this a closing note, what admiration and adoration ought we to give to our Redeemer, the blessed Son of God, because in him was no sin. Remember, brethren, that the manhood of Christ was really human. Do not think of your Lord as though he were not truly man. Remember, he was tempted in all points like as we are, but, oh, that word, "yet without sin." The devil sets him on the high mountain, and bribes him with a world, but he says, "Get thee behind me Satan." The devil puts him on the pinnacle of the temple, and bids him cast himself down, but he will not tempt the Lord his God. Satan appeals to his hunger and bids him turn stones to bread, but he will not take the way of the flesh ; he rests on God, knowing that "man lives not by bread alone." O blessed Redeemer, pattern of our spirit, model to whom we are to be conformed, we reverence thee. Conquering in so many conflicts, coming forth from every trial victorious, thou art glorious indeed. It is not ours to open up the whole matter ; it is ours to worship, ours to love, ours to imitate. O God, help us to do so, and the glory shall be unto thee for ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—1 Kings xviii.