

THE FAITHFUL OLIVE TREE.

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“The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?”-
Judges 9:8,9.

HERE then, in parable, a temptation was set before the olive tree; it was urged to become ambitious, and aspire to reign over the rest of the trees. We gather from Jotham's parable, at the outset, that we also are all liable to temptation. Though you may think yourself to be as firmly rooted and as useful as the olive tree, yet may the fascinating whisper be heard by you, “Come thou, and reign over us,” and though you should be as sweet and gentle as the fig tree, yet there may come to you the wily invitation, “Come thou, and reign over us;” and though you should be as fruitful as the vine, yet to you in the Lord's own vineyard there may come the serpent voice, “Come thou, and reign over us.” We shall never be out of the way of temptation so long as we grow in this earthly garden. Our Lord himself had a stern conflict with the adversary at the commencement of his ministry, for he came up from the waters of baptism to be tempted of the devil, and at the close of that ministry, “his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” in the agony of his spirit when the powers of darkness assailed him in Gethsemane. We must expect in our measure to be conformed to his likeness in this respect. The serpent will bruise our heel as

well as our Lord's. Even into quiet like that of an olive garden, there will come the tempter and the temptation. It is not possible for us to be located anywhere in this world where our surroundings will be clear from danger; for, if the serpent comes not into the olive grooves, yet the other trees may tempt us. What therefore I say unto you, I say unto all, "Watch," for we are not ignorant of the devices of evil, and those devices will surely be exercised upon us. Therefore let us cry unto the Strong for strength, and set a double watch against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

*“Christian! seek not yet repose,
Cast thy dreams of ease away;
Thou art in the midst of foes;
Watch and pray.*

*“Principalities and powers
Mustering their unseen array,
Wait for thy unguarded hours;
Watch and pray.*

*“Watch, as if on that alone
Hung the issue of the day;
Pray, that help may be sent down;
Watch and pray.”*

Temptations frequently come in the form of very pleasing baits. Satan gilds the pill that he offers us. He very seldom presents to any of us a bare hook, though that may be done with those who become habituated in sin. It is almost a bare, unbaited hook when persons continue in drunkenness after they have ruined their health and brought themselves to a beggar's rags. Satan hardly has to tempt them at all, for they go willingly after their idols, and date upon them. But with God's own people, Satan generally takes care to bait his hook, and cover it so that it is scarcely seen.

In this parable, the temptation to the olive tree is a throne, a crown, a kingdom, a sovereignty over the trees. The trees of the field said unto the olive tree, "Reign thou over us." Now there is always a sort of glitter about a kingdom. There are few persons who can resist the fascinations of a diadem. To reign over the trees might seem even to the olive tree, to be a very strong temptation, — a brilliant offer indeed. Take heed, dear friends, lest ye be carried away by the deceitfulness of the pleasures, the profits, the honors which Satan puts in your way. When we are likely to be gainers by any proposal, we ought always to look well at it before deciding. When a

day is too bright, we fear that it will finish with a thunderstorm; and when a man's prospects in life seem altogether extraordinary and excessive in their brilliance, he ought to pause awhile, and see where he is going. We have always been taught that when there is very large interest to be had, there is something rotten about the security, and very great risk to those who invest in it; and it is just so in all things. Whenever there comes to you, all of a sudden, some very alluring offer, something very grand and very unusual, like this request, "Reign thou over us," then doubly be on your guard, for it is after this fashion that Satan baits his hook and catches his fish. It is after this manner that he goes forth to hunt for his prey, and many have been entangled in the meshes of a golden net who seemed in other ways to have escaped the corruptions of the world.

Many, to obtain a higher wage, have left holy companionships, and sacred opportunities for hearing the Word, and growing in grace. They have lost their Sabbaths, quitted a soul-feeding ministry, and fallen among worldlings, to their own sorrowful loss. Such persons are as foolish as the poor Indians who gave the Spaniards gold in exchange for paltry beads. Riches procured by impoverishing the soul are always a curse. To increase your business so that you cannot attend week-night services, is to become really poorer; to give up heavenly pleasure, and receive earthly cares in exchange, is a sorry sort of barter.

Let me call your attention to something rather singular about this parable. The trees represented in the parable, were acting unwisely in desiring a king, for the trees which the Lord has planted need no king, and he was not set a king over them. He makes them to be full of sap, and waters them out of his treasure houses; and it is for the trees of the wood to sing before the Lord, and to clap their hands in his name. Let the trees of the wood rejoice before him that made them. But, according to this parable or fable, they conspired together to deliver themselves from the theocracy, — the government of God, — and to come under the government of one of their own order. The trees desired a king, and so fitly pictured that fond desire of the Israelitish nation to have a king when God was their King, and they had no need of any other king. They were constantly crying, "Make us like the nations that are round about us, and set a king over us;" but this desire for a king was a wrong desire altogether.

Yet notice that, when the trees went to choose a king, they did it very wisely; their choice was an admirable one. They did not say to the

spreading cedar, "Reign thou over us," nor to the pine with its odoriferous shade, "Reign thou over us;" but they said to the fruitful olive, respectable in character, and in every way a right royal tree," Reign thou over us." And when they were disappointed of the first election, they went to another worthy tree, the fig, and said to it, "Come thou, and reign over us." Then they went to the vine, — that fruitful tree, -and said to it, "Come thou, and reign over us;" and they only went to the bramble when they were hard pushed, and feared that none of the trees would accept the candidature for royalty. They made a good choice at first, and I have noticed that even when men are themselves bad and foolish, they generally have sense enough left to pick out somebody better than themselves to be the instrument of their designs. How frequently have I seen an ungodly man act thus when looking out for a wife! She must be a Christian; he has sense enough to see her sterling worth, her solid character, her meekness and her gentleness, so he wants her as his wife. Often have I known that a man in business, albeit he despised religion, has wanted to have his confidential servant not simply a professor, but really a possessor of the grace of God.

This is one of the dangers to which Christian people are exposed. It is not because you are a bramble that you will be the first to be tempted to reign over the trees. They will not want the bramble just yet; they will come to that as the fourth in the list. But if you are the good olive tree, they will want you first; they will want you for a bad purpose because there is something about you that will make their purpose look respectable, and so you will serve their turn. They will not care for the best part of you, that part for which your Lord cares most. That part they will openly despise and trample on one day; but, just now, that is the charm to them, and they say to the olive tree, "Come thou, and reign over us." Be on your guard; some of our bankrupt companies would not have taken so many people in if they had not the names of certain men of repute as directors. Their power for evil dies there. We must have a king, contrary to God's will, so we must try to get the olive tree to reign over us, if we possibly can so as to make our new kingdom seem respectable. O believers, be on the watch! Take heed unto yourselves lest you enter into unholy alliances, or put yourselves into positions out of which you may be unable to escape, but may have to mourn to your dying day that you ever entered into that evil confederacy. You must say, "Our Master bids us come out from the world, and he separate from sinners." He bids Christians walk with him and be choice in their company, and not be unequally yoked together with

unbelievers, for that would be dishonoring to God and ruinous to their souls.

You see, therefore, that this parable of Jotham can afford instruction to us; and I ask the Lord, while I further open it up, to give me the right word to all to whom it applies.

I. My first head is this, APPARENT PROMOTIONS ARE NOT TO BE SNATCHED AT HURRIEDLY.

“The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. But” — there is a pause there. It was all very well for them to say to the olive, “Reign thou over us. Come at once. Do not give it a second thought; come along. You never had such a fine opportunity as this; here is a brilliant opening for you. Come and reign over us.” “But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?” Notice how the olive speaks. It says, “Should I? You say, ‘Come along,’ but I answer, Should I? This is a matter that needs consideration. Ought it to be so? Would it be right? Is it wise? Is it prudent? Is it just? Is it God’s will? *Should I?*”

I speak to younger and old this word of caution now. Be not in a hurry to make changes. Hasten not to run into evil thinking it to be good; but always look before you leap. Stop a while, and ask, “Should I? Should I do this or that?” I meet constantly with persons who are in terrible trouble, and who I know came into that trouble, and will probably remain in that trouble for years, — perhaps, all their lives, — because they once, unthinkingly, did an act which they ought not to have done if they had only paused then, and asked, as the olive tree did, Should I? Should I? Should I?” a few minutes spent in serious consideration, and especially in prayerful waiting upon God, would have kept their pathway smooth and themselves in peace. You I have almost done a certain deed, but I beseech you to pull up now, and stop a minute, and say to yourself, “Should I do it?”

I will throw the emphasis on the letter I. The olive tree said, “Should I? Should I? I am not a bramble. The bramble may be king of the trees if he likes; it may be a question which the fig tree, or the cedar, or the vine, or the oak might entertain; but should I? Should I leave my fatness, and go to be promoted over the trees? Should I do this?” Now, there are a thousand things which may be right in worldlings which are wrong in Christians.

There is a very high law for all men, and I will not depreciate the true standard of common morality, but set it as high as it can be set; but over and above that there is a law of consecration, there is a rule, not merely of morality, but of something more, — of holiness. There is a law of disinterestedness which is binding upon a Christian, which imposes upon him a restraint that causes him often to say, “I might do this if I were other than I am; but, being what I am, I cannot do it.” When Nehemiah was governor of Judah, he had a right to take his daily portion; it was the proper provision for: the governor’s support, and all the previous governors had taken it; but Nehemiah said, “So did not I because, of the fear of God.” It would have been quite right for Nehemiah to take it, but he would not take it because there was something better still which led him to say, “God will be somewhat compromised if I do this. These people are poor, so I will not impose a tax upon them. I will not take that which is lawfully mine.” “All things,” said Paul, “are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient;” and often, out of that blessed rule of loving expediency for the good of others and the glory of God, we may be made to keep back from things which we would allow in others but cannot allow in ourselves. I invite any dear Christian friend here, who may be asked to take an important step, — concerning which, if he were to consult a friend, he would certainly say, “Oh yes, that is a fine thing, for you do it;” to put to himself the question, “Will it be, all round, the best thing that I can do for the glory of God? Should *I*? Should I do this?”

Sir Edward Cole, Chief Justice of England in the time of James I., was a man of noble spirit, and often incurred the displeasure of the king by his patriotism. On one occasion, when an unworthy attempt was made to influence his conduct, he replied, “When the case happens, I shall do that which shall be fit for judge to do.”

Oh, that all Christians, in trying moments, would act as shall be fit for followers of Christ to do!

Sometimes, the new course of life that may be proposed to us may seem very desirable. It was not a small thing for the olive tree to be asked to be king over the trees, to lord it over all the forests, to have loyal homage from oak, and cedar, and all the fruitful trees. It did seem, an exceedingly desirable thing, yet the olive said, “Should I leave my fatness, and go to be promoted over the trees?” So, dear friend, be not deceived by the glitter of prosperity, nor moved away from the steadfastness of your faith and your

love to Christ by the appearance of something which looks to you exceedingly advantageous; but stop where you are, and ask yourself, "Should I?" For there is this fact to be considered. If this olive tree had taken the kingdom, it would have involved many cares and troubles. In the original, the word runs as though it might be translated thus, "Should I leave, my fatness, to go up and down among the trees?" You know that a king, when he takes a kingdom, has much work to do. He has to watch over his subjects, and to visit different parts of his dominions he cannot keep still, and, be quiet. So this olive tree says, "I have stood here for centuries, and many have enjoyed my fatness, but if I become a king, I must go up and down among the trees." So, I ask you, whenever you have an opening in providence to rise in the world, to consider the duties that will be involved in it rather than the profits that will come, of it, because it is selfish to say, "Oh, yes! I should like the emoluments;" but it is righteous to ask, "Am I equal to the duties? Can I perform them? Can I expect to be enabled to discharge them as a Christian should do in the sight of God?" for the very best work of every sort ought always to come from us Christian people. A Christian servant should be the best of all servants. A Christian artist should try to have the clearest eye and the deftest hand. Whatever is done by those of us who are Christians, we ought to do as unto the Lord and I am sure that we ought not to do anything, in a second-rate way "unto the Lord." Up to the utmost of our ability, we should do our very best for him. Well then, if there is an opening set before you, look not so much at the glitter of it, but, like this olive tree, look at the work of it, look at the duty attached to it, and ask, "Can I do it? Am I equal to it?" Do not occupy the position unless you have: a reasonable expectation of filling it well, and performing its duties acceptably.

Then recollect that, every time a man moves, he gets fresh cares, fresh temptations, fresh troubles. I somewhat admire the principle of the coachmen I have seen in Switzerland when the flies settle on their horses, and suck their blood. I have been very anxious to knock the creatures off; but the men have said to me, "You had better not do so; for, if you kill those flies, there will be some fresh ones come that will be greedier, and suck more." So, when you have a set of troubles, you had better let them stop; for, if you get rid of them, you may get others that will be worse. My burden, that I have to carry, I would be glad to be rid of; yet I should not like to take yours, my sister, nor yours, my brother, because I do not know where your load might chafe my shoulders. I know where mine galls me

when it galls at all, and I can carry my own burden better than anybody else's burden; so I am content to keep it, and I think you should be content to keep yours. By divine grace, you have been excellent as a servant, but how would you be as a mistress? Yes, you have been a very good *employ* —, you have done your work very well; but, as a master, you might be a complete failure. Look well at the thing, turn it round all ways. Many a man has done exceedingly well in one sphere of life, but has not done so well in another sphere. Solomon truly says, "As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place." There is a niche in which each statue stands, and you see its proportions; for the niche was prepared for the statue, and the statue for the niche. But if you set it up higher, it loses its due proportions; it is seen from another point of view, and its beauty is gone. Let us, therefore, whenever there is something new set before, us as a great attraction, stop and ask, "Should I take it?" adding to all our other reflections this one, that wherever we may go, we shall have a change of trouble and care, but we shall still have trouble and care.

The most weighty consideration in connection with the question "Should I?" is this, *can I expect the divine blessing on what I am about to do?* Dare I venture to lay this case before the Lord in all its detail?" I know some of you who are quite willing to bring a case to your minister for his advice; and sometimes he sees, by the very look of your face, that your coming to him is all a sham. You had made up your mind before you came, and you only wanted him, just to say "Yes" to your "Yes," so as to have some kind of sanction in doing something about which your conscience is not quite easy. Has it not been so? And sometimes, in your family when you have wanted counsel, have you not fought shy of the one person who would have honestly told you the truth? You have thought like that, "There is one prophet of the Lord in Israel, but he always speaks evil and not good of me. Let all the prophets speak except Micaiah; I do not want to hear him. He does not seem ever to soften his message, but he lets out the plain blunt truth, so I won't go to him." It is not wise, dear Christian friends, if you talk as that wicked king did. If you are about to change your state of life, or your position in any way whatever, let the change be such that you can look at it yourself from top to bottom, and can invite Christian friends to look at it most carefully, and yet say of it, "It is good." Let it be such that you can look at it on a dying bed, in the light of eternity, and say, "In this thing I really sought to glorify God." If not-, it will be better by far to say, with the olive tree, "Should I?, Should I?" and to come to the olive's

decision, "I will do nothing of the kind; any tree that likes may have the crown; it is not for me."

II. Now, secondly, ACTUAL ADVANTAGES ARE NOT TO BE TRIFLED WITH, for the olive says, "Should I leave my fatness, and go to be promoted over the trees?"

The greatest advantage in life is to be useful to God and man. The olive says, "Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?" It was the olive's glory that it yielded oil which was used in various offerings to the honor of God, and which was also used for the honor of men in the most sacred ceremonies at the anointing of kings and priests; and the highest glory of any man's life is that he is honorable to God and useful to men. The first consideration of a saved soul should be, "How can I best magnify him who has saved me"? How can I be most useful to my fellow-men in promoting the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ?" Anything, then, which robs us of that fatness, — the power to honor God and to do good to men, — anything which takes away in even the smallest degree our power to do this, is a dead loss. If the olive tree shall be made king over the trees, but lose its fatness whereby it honors God and man, the olive tree is a loser. So if, by changing from a cottage to a palace, ay, and from a prison to a throne, the believer in Christ would lose any atom of his power to serve God and bless the sons of men, he would be a loser thereby. We must always hold this before us, as a test when an offer comes to us, — will it really be for the glory of God and the good of men?

Sometime I think beloved brethren, it is *our sense of having that fatness of divine grace*, by which we honor God and help men, which *makes temptation powerless*; for, in the Hebrew, the text runs thus, "Have I then lost my fatness that I should go to be promoted over the trees?" So may you say to yourself, "Have I then lost my joy in Christ, or lost my peace of mind, or lost the blessed privilege of glorifying God, that I should go and look after this world's gain or this world's honors? If I had not Christ as my Savior, — if I had not love to him in my heart, — if I had not the love of God shed abroad in my soul, this or that might indeed be a temptation to me; but as I have not lost those great blessings, you tempt me with a bait that has no fascination for me, for I have something better.

*“Go you that boast of all your stores,
And tell how bright they shine,
Your heaps of glittering dust are yours,
But my Redeemer’s mine;” —*

“and while he is mine, I cannot leave him, — not even to be promoted over my fellow-men, nor to roll in wealth, for he is infinitely superior to any bait or bribe which you can present to me.”

*“Begone, unworthy of my cares,
Ye specious baits of sense;
Inestimable worth appears,
The pearl of price immense.”*

Let the joy of the Lord, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, be your protection against temptation. I feel persuaded that when you have full assurance of faith, and your heart is filled with joy in Christ, you are able to repel the fiery darts of the enemy, for if he comes, and offers you gold, you can say to him, “I have diamonds and pearls that are worth far more than all your gold.” “I offer you honor,” says he; but you reply, “I have the love of Christ, which is my greatest honor. Is it not written, ‘Unto you who believe he is an honour’? That honor which I derive from him is greater than any honor which you can give to me.” Thus you checkmate your great adversary. You can prove to him that in Christ, you possess far more than he can possibly offer to you.

*“Jesus, to multitudes unknown,
Oh name divinely sweet!
Jesus in thee, in thee alone,
Wealth, honor, pleasure, meet.*

*“Should both the Indies at my call,
Their boasted stores resign,
With joy I would renounce them all,
For leave to call thee mine.*

*“Should earth’s vain treasures all depart,
Of this dear gift possess’d,
I’d clasp it to my joyful heart,
And be for ever bless’d.”*

Oh, that our hearts may be kept in this blessed condition! So shall temptation be powerless to overcome us.

To help you in this matter, let me remind you of two or three things on which you may reflect with profit.

First, beloved, suppose it should be your prospect in life that, from this day forward, you should not be as useful as you now are but that you should be much better off; suppose it were proposed to you that you should not glorify God as you have done in the past, but that you should be much more respectable; suppose it were laid upon you as an obligation, that, from this time forward, you should not do half the good you have done in the past, but that you should receive a title of nobility, and move in a higher circle of society than you have done; *would not these proposals startle you?* If you are a true Christian, I know they would. You would say, with the olive tree, "Shall I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?" You would instantly recoil from such a prospect when it was set before you, and you would say, "No, let me be as a servant of Christ, wherever I can serve my Master best, and let me be kept where I can bring most glory to his holy name."

If this prospect startles you, let me invite you to consider *what the retrospect would be*. Suppose that lying on a dying bed, you as a child of God should have to say, "I was very happy and very useful during the first part of my life, but I took a step which apparently promised me comfort; but, ever afterwards, there as a blight upon my whole life. God never again favored me by making me useful in his service. I did little or nothing for him; and now I have come to the end of my life like a withered fruitless vine-branch." Do you not think that, even with a faint hope of heaven to sustain you, your dying pillow would be stuffed with thorns? I am sure it would be a far more joyous experience to lie there waiting to be translated, and feeling, with Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." Do not, therefore, O olive tree or Christian, be tempted to turn aside to gain a fading crown, but keep where thou art, and enjoy the fatness which divine grace gives thee, wherewith thou shalt honor God and be a blessing to men.

I will also venture to say that, if a Christian were to leave, the enjoyment of communion with Christ and usefulness amongst his fellows even for a day, to be through that day made into a king, it would be a day that he would ever afterwards wish to have crossed out of his diary. A day without

Christ, who is my life? Without his love for a day? Without his smile for a day? Let the day perish wherein such a calamity could happen! What if the thrones of all the Caesars could be occupied for that one day by a chaste heart that loves Jesus, it would be a wretched heart, and it would say, "I had better be in a prison, and find my Lord there, and live in his love, rather than be exalted here to sit upon a throne without him." Now if it would be so sad for a single day, what would it be if you could make such a choice as that for the whole of your life?

Ah, beloved, and let me add that, when any do choose worldly gain and worldly honor and let their usefulness suffer in consequence, *it is almost certain to end in disappointment*. Not if they are hypocrites, for they will probably get what they seek after. They mostly prosper in this world, and increase in riches when they give up their profession for it; but if you are a child of God, and you get out of God's way, the hand of the Lord will be lifted up against you. As surely as you are God's children, you will be birched back to him; he will fetch you home with a rod behind you. You shall not prosper if you err from his ways. Look at Lot. He pitches his tent toward Sodom because he sees that the well-watered plain of Jordan is just the place for his flocks and herds. Then he lives in Sodom because it is so comfortable to live in a town, and give up living in tents and wandering about as Abraham does; but did he make a good thing of it in the long run? Ah, let the flames that devoured his house, and the brine that turned his wife into a pillar of salt, and the horrible sin that depraved both himself and his daughters tell that it is an awful thing for a child of God to get away from God; but if he walks with God, it shall be well with him. The Philistines could not hurt Abraham, neither could famine come near his tents: but every evil thing came to Lot when he gave up the separated life, and began to live like the rest of the world. Then, dear Christian friends, when the greatest honor or gain is offered to you, say with the faithful olive tree, "Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?"

*I would not change my blest estate
For all that earth calls good or great;
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner's gold."*

Do not forget that *it was only the bramble that accepted that proffered crown*. He had nothing to lose, so he was glad to take it. Now, if anybody

goes to the races, and frequents the theater, and enjoys all the gaities and frivolities of this world, I do not find fault with him, why should I do so? Whenever I see hogs greedily devouring their wash, I say, Let them enjoy it; it suits them, it is their sort of food.” But if I saw a child of God doing what the ungodly do, I should feel just as if I saw one of you going to the swine-trough, and kneeling down there to find your food. Of course, it was a fine thing for the bramble to be made into a king over the trees. He had always been hidden away despised and hated; but now that he was made king, he could lord it over the rest of the trees; he could pierce them with his thorns, and the flames could burn up his foes. But the bramble’s position would not suit the olive tree, or the vine, or the fir tree; and, dear Christian friend, can you be content with that which satisfies the very meanest of men, those who are dead in trespasses and sins? I trust you cannot. Rather aspire to follow in the footsteps of the saints who flung away this world that they might gain the next. Think of the martyrs, who counted not their lives dear unto them, that they might win Christ, and be found in him. Their persecutors offered them wealth; they offered them position and power; they offered them what was dearer still, that they should live in peace, and enjoy the love of wife and children; and as an alternative, they must stand at the stake, and be burnt to death. They did not hesitate to choose the dread alternative, for they could die for Christ, but they could not deny him. They could be burnt to death, but they could not violate their conscience. They could not leave their fatness, wherewith they honored God and blessed man, for anything that their persecutors could offer them.

Remember also how your Master and Lord acted. All the kingdoms of this world lie at his feet, and the arch-fiend says to him, “All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me:” and his reply is, “Get thee hence, Satan.” He may have life, and liberty, and power, and an earthly kingdom if he will but speak before Pilate, or will but command the eager crowds to make him king, but, he remain silent, and he dies. He saved others, himself he will not save because his heart is set upon our salvation. So, beloved, often deny yourselves what you might have, what might lawfully be yours. Put away every alluring bait if in any wise you would injure your usefulness or mar your character by taking it. The Lord help you to do this by his good Spirit!

III. My time has almost gone, so I can only give you the third division in outline. It is this, — TEMPTATION SHOULD BE TURNED TO ACCOUNT.

First, *let us take deeper root*, The mere proposal to leave our fatness should make us hold the faster to it.

Next, *let us be on the watch that we lose not our joy*, which is our fatness. If we would not leave it, neither can we bear that it should leave us.

Then, *let us yield more fatness, and bear more fruit*. He who gains largely is all the further removed from loss. The more we increase in grace, the less we are likely to leave it.

Lastly, let us feel the more content, and speak the more lovingly of our gracious state, that none may dare to entice us. When Satan sees us happily established, he will have the less hope of overthrowing us.

I have been preaching some practical truths which may not be quite so sweet to you as if I were telling out the precious doctrines of the gospel; but these truths are needed for the strengthening of the soul in times of trial. I pray the Lord to help you to be strong in him, and to stand fast in the faith. Do not go away from the truth that makes you spiritually fat and flourishing. Do not turn aside from the Christ who makes you strong. Do not depart from the fellowship with him that makes you holy and useful. Abound in prayer, abide in communion with Christ; and let not the prospect of the most glittering life tempt you to turn away even an inch from your Lord and Master, but may his Divine Spirit keep you true, to him throughout the whole of your life, and to him shall be the praise and glory for ever and ever. Amen.