

Plain Sermons by Contributors to 'Tracts for the Times'
Volume Three—Edward Bouverie Pusey
London: J. G. F. & J. Rivington, 1841.

SERMON LXXIV.
REAL OBEDIENCE, IN ALL THINGS.

JAMES ii. 10.

“Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”

THIS has doubtless appeared to many a hard saying: it has appeared probably to be, in its plain meaning, contrary to what we call our natural sense of justice; we have not been able to understand *how* it could be, and so we have thought that we did not understand *what* it meant; and so some, perhaps, have been content to pass it by, some have taken up the one or other explanation, which might square with their ideas of GOD’S justice and mercy.

It *is* undoubtedly a “hard saying”—not one “hard to be understood,” but because it is very easy to be understood: it is very plain and simple; it tells us directly and clearly that if any one should keep the whole law of GOD, except one point, and in that one point should break the law, he would just as much be an offender against the law, as if he had broken the whole. All his other faithfulness would *so far* be of no avail; this one offence would taint all; he would be just as much a transgressor in GOD’S sight, just as much an unholy being in the sight of the HOLY ONE, as they who had broken all. This is rather softening this stern saying than making it harder; for the text of Scripture seems rather to say, that he shall have the whole weight of the law upon and against him; he shall become liable to the guilt of breaking all. So much however is plain; and the saying is hard, only because it is contrary to our notions: we cannot bear that so much responsibility should attach to our single actions; we would take things easily, and wish that GOD were like ourselves; we cannot bear the thought of strictness, of a rigid, unbending rule of right: we are wont naturally to measure ourselves by an easy, pliant rule; making large allowances for ourselves; looking on ourselves, as what we think we on the whole are: we shrink from looking into our actions, one by one, which might undeceive us; shut our eyes against much which we *might* easily see; pass over it lightly; and satisfy ourselves, that if we are not altogether what we ought to be, we shall, in the main, do very well. Against this loose, careless way, the stern peremptory voice of the text is directly opposed: it tells us that GOD looks upon us and our actions one by one; that we cannot be two sorts of selves, one a transgressor, the other a doer of the law; that the slight random way of keeping GOD’S commandments in which people allow themselves, will not stand in His sight; that there is a strict, earnest rule; that HE does not give His commandments to be dealt with in this trifling way, but, one by one, to be obeyed, because HE gave them; that

HE seeks at our hands a full unswerving obedience; not a self-willed choosing amongst His commands, which we will keep and which we will leave, at *our* pleasure, but the fulfilment of them, because they are *His* pleasure; and that these wilful careless ways make us guilty before HIM. “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”

Hard, however, as the saying may to any seem to be, the occasion upon which it was spoken makes it yet harder. For St. James is not speaking of what most would regard as being exclusively grievous sins, but of what many would think a slight instance of a slight sin. He is not speaking of excess, or uncleanness, or sore passion, of strife or wrath, or any of the open sins of the flesh; nor, again, is he speaking of oppression or actual hardness towards the poor, or carelessness as to their wants, or shutting up the bowels of our compassion to them; he is speaking only of an undue and improper respect towards the rich in GOD’S house, and a want of kindly regard to the feelings of the poor, or of those, whom GOD’S Providence has in any way placed as our inferiors in this world’s goods. “My brethren,” St. James begins this subject, “have not the faith of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the LORD of Glory, with respect of persons. For if there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment, and ye have respect unto him which weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here, and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool, are ye not partial in yourselves, and become judges of evil thoughts?” GOD forbid, that a minister of CHRIST should speak lightly of offences which GOD has singled out for condemnation, or use the world’s language concerning them; rather should we learn to judge of *them*, as GOD’S unerring Word teaches; condemn such offences as HE condemns them; hate them as HE hates them; so shall we think of those more grievous offences more nearly as He judges of them. Yet the offence which St. James here condemns does not appear to have been one in itself of the more heinous sort; one would, at least, hope so; for it is difficult to see, how our whole Church and nation is not in some degree guilty of it; for what St. James condemns in words, that, in our modern places of worship, which we ourselves build, we seem to act, preferring, in GOD’S presence, before Whom we come alike as sinners, and before Whom we alike confess ourselves unworthy to appear, the rich to the poor; allotting the best places to the rich, and thrusting aside the poor. It is difficult to see how our modern Churches are not, for the most part, built in direct contradiction to the rebuke of St. James. And we are suffering also from this sin; we have been alienating the minds of the poor from the Church, in which outwardly, at least, they are not accounted of the same value as the souls of the rich; we have been suffering yet more perhaps in the habits with which the rich have often learnt to enter the house of GOD, in the careless way in which they come, as though they were showing honour to GOD, instead of being, as we confess ourselves, “miserable sinners”—“not worthy to be called His sons”—who came to pray HIM “to cast us not away from His Presence.”

But whatever this offence exactly was, or by whomever committed, St. James refers it to the “royal law,” “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;” and by that law he

goes on to say, he who in such wise “had respect to persons” “committeth sin, and is convinced by the law as a transgressor.” So then, not this specific act alone, but all such respect of persons, as involves a neglect of that law, all inconsiderate, not merely any proud, treatment of one Christian by another, because GOD has placed him in a lower station, is, in principle, condemned. Yet how common such offences, as we even walk along the street, or of masters towards servants, or servants towards inferior servants, or neighbours to those to whom GOD has allotted a little less of this world’s passing goods or comforts! Yet is it of these very offences, that the Apostle goes on to say, that whoso doeth them is “convicted as a *transgressor*,” yea, “whoso keepeth the whole law, and yet offend in one [even such] point, he is guilty of all.” So then, what I before said was the plain meaning of this passage of St. James, is true not of greater offences only, but of those of which we think lightly, that whoever breaks habitually any one of GOD’S commands, although he should seem to keep all the rest, is, before GOD, as if he had broken them all.

St. James goes on to explain, in reference to the ten commandments, the ground of this truth; “for HE that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law;” that is, that which makes sin really sinful, is, that it is breaking the commandments of GOD; “if we love GOD,” our Blessed LORD says, we should “keep His commandments:” it matters not then *thus far*, which commandment we break, (though some sins are, of course, more grievous than others,) all breaking of His commandments is a preference of our own will to His, of the creature to the CREATOR, of His gifts to Himself, of things earthly to heavenly; all breaking of GOD’S law is (as it may be) carelessness or neglect or even contempt of HIM who gave the law. Over and above the offensiveness of any sin in itself, all sin has, in common, one offensiveness, in that it is a disregard of His authority, Who forbade it. Whether it seem to us slight or no, or be in itself comparatively slight or no, it all has this heinousness, that it sets at nought His authority, is rebellion against HIM, takes part with His enemies against HIM, is, so far, a falling from HIM, and an attaching ourselves to something other than HIM; it is a forsaking HIM, Who is the source of our being, the rule of all right, the fountain of all goodness, the spring of all life; and for HIM who is life and light and holiness, choosing somewhat else, which must be darkness and unholiness and death. Our trial, in this life, in one word, consists in this, whether we will conform our wills to GOD; whether endowed, as we are, with free-will, and having the power to choose good or evil, we will learn to frame our own wills to His, to make His will the rule of ours, to choose nothing, long for nothing, desire nothing, accept nothing, except what HE wills; that so, being more and more conformed to His will, and thus again, being more and more joined to HIM, and admitting within us more of His HOLY SPIRIT, our will may, at the last, be one with His, and we may, throughout eternity, do His will as having learned to have no will but His.

Free-will, of which men boast, is, in our corrupted nature, a perilous gift; at best it is an awful gift: in our corrupted nature, it is a freedom to choose good or evil, with a

strong overcoming bias to evil; in our restored nature, it is a power to choose for ourselves that which God appointeth for us, to choose by a separate act of our own, unconstrained, uncompelled, that which alone ought to be chosen, the will of GOD: it is an awful dignity, with which we are invested, that whereas inferior creatures fulfil GOD'S law by the very law of their being, and HE Himself is their law, we have it left in our choice whether we will so do; we fulfil His law, not by constraint or of necessity, but by a separate act of our own. Amazing and awful gift, this;—one, which, for its very greatness, we might well shrink from, but that HE has been pleased to lay it upon us—for a creature to have to choose, by an act of its own, its CREATOR'S will, to have, in any degree, to concur, so to say, with HIM, Who is the only source of power and right, to have to choose for ourselves HIM, Who is the only object of right choice, to be in any sort, even so far (one dreads to say the very word) independent of HIM, as to be able even to choose HIM and His laws by any act of our own. And well may we shrink from it; and, having been made members of His SON and engrafted into HIM, and so entitled to have His life, through the Life-giving SPIRIT, flow into us, and having been conformed to HIM, well may we pray not to be left to our own choice, but that HE by His HOLY SPIRIT, pledged to us, will master our spirit, direct, control, guide, impel, constrain it, that it should not be able to choose for itself, but choose or leave, as HE guides it.

This however is the character of our trial in this life; this the end of all our several trials, whether of doing or suffering, whether of choosing good or abstaining from evil, whether of doing His will or keeping from what is contrary to it, to conform our wills to His, to do His commands, to obey HIM. And therefore, *thus far*, whatever it be, whether as we think in a matter great or small, all transgression has this heinousness, that it is a going against the will of HIM Who is alone good and right, the Good GOD. All is going against the only end for which we and all creatures were created, to do His will and glorify HIM; all is setting up some other god in our hearts whom to worship and to serve, than HIM the ONLY GOD. I need not say, how much more grievous this offence becomes in Christians, by how much the more loving, GOD has shown Himself to us; the amazing loving-kindness which HE has shown us, in saving, loving, choosing us, and giving us again the power which we had lost, freely to love and choose HIM, must awfully heighten our unthankfulness in choosing and loving any thing beside HIM, out of HIM.

This then is the task we have to learn through life, to prefer GOD and His will to every thing besides HIM, not to serve HIM with a divided and half service, not to serve sometimes HIM, (as we think,) sometimes ourselves, but to serve HIM wholly, not halting between the two ways, but cleaving wholly to HIM; not, as Scripture says, with “a double heart,” “with a heart and a heart,” one heart, as it were, for GOD, and one for the world; and so, as St. James says, “unstable in all our ways,” doing nothing stedfastly, nothing perseveringly, but going first this way, then that, because as it were two selves, but with a whole heart; since then only do we love GOD really, when we love HIM wholly: GOD is One, and if we in any way prefer any thing besides GOD to GOD, although in other things we think to serve HIM, GOD is the second object with us, i. e. we account something

higher, of more value to us than GOD, and make it our god. On one side is the CREATOR, on the other the creature; we must choose wholly the ONE, the CREATOR, or we do choose the other, the creature; we have our choice given between the two; there can be no choice, without preference; wherever there is a choice to be made, if we choose the creature against the will of GOD, no matter how small it seem, we are rejecting the CREATOR. Nay, in one way, its very smallness makes the act more grievous, in that, for a small matter, we go against the will of GOD.

This we do not like to think: we would fain deceive ourselves; we would not be brought to see what we are really doing; we would fain persuade ourselves that we may on the whole be serving GOD, while we are following in some things our own wills; that we may be (as we readily own ourselves, if it may serve our end,) imperfect servants, while in some lesser things, as we deem them, we are serving ourselves, and not serving GOD: that we may in some things not be serving GOD, and yet not be breaking away from His service and serving Satan. We do not like to be driven to make the choice, to see the real state which we are in, lest we should be obliged to come to a hard and painful struggle, part with what it would cost us much to part with, or else confess nakedly to ourselves, that we are not serving GOD, and have therefore not to look for the reward of those who serve HIM, but for "the wages of sin," that is, "death."

To hinder us from so deceiving ourselves, and perishing, does GOD so often, throughout Holy Scripture, inculcate on us the duty and necessity of serving HIM with a *whole* heart: "Thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD with *all* thy heart, and with *all* thy soul, and with *all* thy mind," is, our LORD tells us, "the first and great commandment" of the law. This whoso did, HE said, was "not far from the kingdom of heaven." This HE teaches at the very entrance into that kingdom; "No man *can* serve two masters; for either he will hate this one and love that one, or else he will hold to that one, and despise this one. Ye *cannot* serve GOD and mammon."

HE knew what is in our hearts; HE knew the temptations to which we are exposed; HE knew that many would wish to persuade themselves that they were His disciples, whom yet HE should have to disown; HE knew that many would long to unite these two services, serve GOD and yet not relinquish Mammon, and therefore HE so lovingly yet earnestly warns us that we *cannot* do it; HE Who is "the way, the truth, and the life," tells us that this is not the way to HIM Who is our life, but the pathway to death; HE would save us from the labour and vexation of this divided unprofitable service; HE Who has bought us would make us wholly His.

And so throughout the whole Bible, faithful acceptable service is entire whole service. It is the character which GOD gives to David, "He kept My commandments and followed ME with *all* his heart, to do only right in Mine eyes." On this was the promise to those after him, "If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before ME in truth, with *all* their heart and with *all* their soul." This the praise given to righteous kings, Jehoshaphat, and Asa, and Hezekiah, that they "sought the LORD with *all* their heart," with a "perfect heart." This the ground of their well-doing, "In every work that he began,

in the service of the house of GOD, and in the law and in the commandments to seek his GOD, he did it with *all his heart* and prospered.” This the character of true penitence, “they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD GOD of their fathers with all their heart, and with all their soul. This the condition of finding the LORD; “All Judah rejoiced at the oath; for they had sworn with *all* their heart, and sought HIM with their *whole* desire, and HE was found of them. This the prayer of David and GOD’S saints, and in them of the Church, “O knit my heart unto THEE, that I may fear Thy Name,” i. e. knit it together that it be wholly one, and whole Thine. This their profession, “I will keep Thy precepts with my whole heart.” These their hopes, that GOD would dwell with them, and continue their GOD; “When wilt THOU come unto me? I will walk in my house with a *perfect* heart.” This their hope, that HE would not let them go astray, “With my *whole* heart have I sought THEE, O let me not wander from Thy commandments.” These are they whose end is peace, they whose heart is “perfect,” whole. This the praise of the patriarchs Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Job in that they were “perfect,” “plain,” entire. This the prophecy of our evangelical Christian obedience, and the condition of life; “The LORD thy GOD will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy GOD with *all* thine heart and with *all* thy soul, that thou mayest live.”

Such is the praise of GOD’S saints, wholeness, entireness of heart; and of many whom Scripture blames, this only is recorded, that they sinned in one point.

This is the condemnation of Jehu, “that he took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD GOD of Israel with *all his heart*; for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin;” and this one sin so spoiled all his other obedience, that the blood of the house of Ahab, which he had shed in execution of GOD’S decree, was visited upon his house; “I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu,” saith GOD. Thus for one sin, other deeds became guilt to him; breaking one command, he became guilty of all. This was the condemnation of all the better kings of Israel, that they still would not depart from the *one* sin of Jeroboam; this of all Israel, “their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty.” This the character of a repentance hateful, unaccepted by GOD, “For all this, treacherous Judah hath not turned unto ME with her *whole* heart, but feignedly,” wherefore, HE saith also, “backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah.”

Consider, again, brethren, how GOD has in the good chastised, in the evil has punished *single* sins; doubtless, meaning in part to impress upon us the awfulness of single transgressions, of breaking the law in one point; how the breaking of one command, and that as it would seem slight, and for which we see no reason except that it was GOD’S will, cast our race out of Paradise; one transgression of one man made the whole human race sinners, brought death into the world, and placed us all under GOD’S wrath; one act of filial disobedience brought a curse on the whole race of Ham; one contempt of his birthright caused Esau to forfeit it altogether, so that “he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears,” yet how much had he which we should think noble! One act of disobedience took away the kingdom from the house of

Saul, yet how well did he begin! Failure in one temptation made Jeroboam, the trustworthy, the chosen of God, a by-word and an apostate; one sin (vanity) made Absalom a parricide: one allowed sin (covetousness) made it better for Judas, had he never been born; and it sadly adds to the awful-ness of the warning, that in that his final sin he knew not what he was doing; he was left to betray his LORD, unknowingly, in a manner; he sinned so much more terribly than he knew of; he betrayed through covetousness the innocent blood, but thought not that it would be shed; and yet doth Holy Scripture speak so terribly of him.

Or, to turn to GOD'S servants whom HE chastised: one unadvised speech lost Moses the entrance into Canaan; one act of deceit made Jacob an outcast and a wanderer: for one act of disobedience was the prophet slain, who had fearlessly borne faithful testimony against Jeroboam and all Israel in the very day of their rebellion; that one act has stained all his faithfulness, and he is known by the name of the "disobedient prophet;" for one grievous sin did the sword never depart from the house of David, though in all besides, Scripture bears him witness "he did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any thing, that HE commanded him, all the days of his life;" or, again, for one act did the young ruler, who had kept all the commandments from his youth up, and whom Scripture saith our LORD beholding, loved him, lose—we know not what beside, but—at all events the privilege of being one of the first followers of our LORD.

Such, brethren, is the awful way in which Holy Scripture itself explains the text; such, in GOD'S sight, the character of single sins; of single acts of sins, of which men think so lightly. Yet consider also, how seldom sins are single. "A little leaven," Scripture saith, "leaveneth the whole lump;" a single sin will taint the whole man. Even heathen acknowledged that virtues were bound together with a golden band, so that no one could have one virtue perfectly who had not all; and sins too are interwoven together in a sad chain, so that one sin opens the door for others, draws them in after it, spots and pollutes every thing else, even what might have been acceptable service, but for this, even when it does not draw the whole man to perdition. There have been, who have given way to one wrong habit, only half knowing that it was wrong, not realizing that it was sin, except that they resolved against it; and these have, towards the close of life, had their eyes opened, seen their sin, but then seen also how it has spoiled the whole of their conduct, how it has spread like a cancer, eating out and corrupting what was good; how what they fell short in could be traced to this one sin; how the evil they at any time did, was its bitter fruit. Consider too how sins are joined together; how sensuality, for instance, is linked with hard-heartedness, or with anger, and irritability, and cruelty; how self-indulgence produces inability to pray or to repent; how over-eagerness about worldly things steals away our prayers, and often men's belief in the True GOD altogether; or how vanity produces jealousy, and jealousy envy, hatred, slandering, deceit, malignity, discontent at GOD'S graces in another,—at last, as we see, in Cain, murder: how sins apparently the most opposite are by a subtle band joined together; vanity, or the love of men's praise,

and lying which even man despises; extravagance and covetousness; or what seem to have nothing to do with each other, as St. Paul says, idolatry was the root of lust and all that frightful list of sins, to which, he tells us, human nature was once abandoned; or, our own experience shows, how sabbath-breakers go on to drunkenness and working ill to their neighbours; or proverbs tell us in a practical way, that "idleness is the parent of all sins." Whoever has been awakened to see in himself any one such sin, and has traced it through his life, has been amazed to see how on every side it branched off into other sin, how it spoiled his whole self. This, too, any can, at all events, see in others, and in others may learn to know themselves; how many a fair character is stained by one sin, how many a person seems to us all but in the right way, but is held back by one sin; how many a person who seems on the whole in the right way, is still hindered from making progress in it and being an eminent Christian, by one sin; how often do we remark, "How excellent a person such an one would be, but for that *one* thing in them!" "What a such an one should be (as it may be) vain, or irritable, or anxious to get on in life!" This one leprous spot of vanity, or anger, or ambition, infects all; this one seed of corruption cankers what was otherwise blossoming so fairly and with so much promise. The chain round one little limb, keeps the whole man a prisoner; the failure to decide aright in one point mars all other service, puts a person altogether in a wrong course; hinders, at the very best, what might have been high self-denying duty, and reward proportionate.

Thus does conscience itself, thus does our own implanted sense of right bear witness to the text; and not less our daily judgment in the things of this life: we count him a madman, who, though in his senses on all points but one, is on that one point insane; we count him a bad servant, who, though on other points good, has one incurable fault to which he is continually yielding; we count him a disobedient son, who on one point ever disobeys; and are we then good servants, if we, in one thing, ever neglect the commands of our Gracious MASTER? are we good sons, if we, in one thing, ever disobey our compassionate FATHER? are we not worse than mad, if in one thing we ever prefer earth (and with earth, hell) to heaven? are we not guilty, if in one thing we ever offend GOD?

Yea, a man's own conscience, till it be seared, will bear witness in another way. He will have no rest. The consciousness of one indulged sin will not allow him rest. He condemns himself, and does what he condemns: he has no life in his devotions, no pleasure in the thoughts of GOD, no comfort in thinking of a world to come; his own heart condemns him; all is with him uncertainty and anxiety; and should GOD, "Who is greater than his heart and knoweth all things," pass on him the sentence of his own heart, he would be condemned. Whoever among you, brethren, is such an one, knows this, which I say, to be a sad truth.

Then also Satan, in a fearful way, bears witness to the truth. There is no more common temptation by which the accursed one would plunge man into deeper, more hopeless, sin than this. He persuades them to commit the first sin by telling them it is slight; and then he perverts the Apostle's truth, and tells them its heinousness, and that they are his; that they may as well go on in sin, and breaking other commands of GOD,

because breaking one is enough to condemn them. One habitual sin *does* condemn them; yet is not one sin so hard to break from; and so Satan would lead them on to other sins, both because he has pleasure in man's sins, and because they will so be tenfold his, and bound by the chain of their sins, and, as he hopes, will never be freed; yet it is a truth, which he thus perverts, that as long as they go on breaking one commandment, they are condemned. There is a common proverb, by which men express that if they have gone any way in what is wrong, they may as well take their fill both of the enjoyment and of the sin. They feel themselves shut out from heaven by their one sin; they have no hope beyond the grave, and so they may as well have the miserable consolation of "the pleasures of sin for a season;" if therein they may forget themselves and their doom. What again is more common than to have some one habitual sin alleged as the reason why a sinner should not avail himself of some means of grace, or break off any other evil habit? It may be well for others, they say, but what is it to me? how can I do it? It may be well for others to keep holy GOD'S day, to go to Church, to read GOD'S Word, to pray to HIM, to thank HIM, but what have I, such as I am, to do with these things?

Such terrible witness does GOD'S give to the fearful character of single sins, in His Word and in His dealings; in His judgments and in His chastisements; in our own consciences; in the sad corruption, defiling what is good; in the heaped-up sins of the bad; in man's fearful looking for judgment to come; and this, falling in with what the Apostle subjoins to this very declaration, "so speak ye and so do as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty," i.e. by the rules of the Gospel; "ye have been set free," he seems to say, "by GOD'S mercy in the Gospel; take heed how ye speak and how ye act, for by that Gospel and according to those talents committed to you, shall ye be judged. Ye have received the gifts of the Gospel, bring forth the obedience of the Gospel."

Yet in one more way we may see that we must strive to obey in all things, or we do not obey at all. Our trials, for the most part, consist but in a few things; Satan is not allowed, as with Job, to try us in every part, to see whether there be any unsoundness in us; we are not given with St. Peter, to be "sifted as wheat," our whole selves shaken and tossed by his trials: such was the lot of great saints: our temptations are for the most part few and little in proportion to our own littleness; from many sins we are exempted, not by our own diligence or faithfulness, but by GOD'S mercy providing that we "should not be tempted above that we are able;" if we fail continually in one or two sorts of trials, it may be that we are failing just in what forms our probation, and in what we are to be judged by: what service or what trial is it, if a person fails not when he is not tempted? if the covetous be not a waster? if the slothful be not worldly, or the worldly not slothful? if the easy-natured be not soon angry, or the passionate be not malicious? Yet thus is it that people continually deceive themselves; they see that they have not all sins; they have some natural virtues such as the very heathen had; they sin not when they have no temptation; and so, though they fail whenever they *are* tempted, they flatter themselves that all is well, because not being tempted in all, they do not fail in all. Yet what account shall they be able to give of themselves in the Great Day, who, wherein they were tried,

failed; and only did not fail when they were not tried? Of GOD'S eminent saints, on the other hand, it has been observed,¹ that they are thus eminent in the one point in which their chief trial lay; they are strong there, where by nature they were most weak. Moses, by nature impetuous, became of all the meekest; St. John, by nature fiery, the very image of love and gentleness; Job, by nature impatient, the ensample of patience; Jacob, by nature artful, is praised as a plain man.

What then, brethren? Must we then indeed fulfil the whole law, break no one command, or shall we at the Day of Judgment be found guilty of all? Is there no hope except in unsinning obedience through the grace given unto us? GOD forbid! for so should none of us have any hope. The text would stir us up to increased diligence, to examine ourselves, "to look well if there be any way of wickedness in us," and to break off what we find amiss, to rouse ourselves from our sloth, to dread lest even one accursed thing cleave unto us, to beware how we tamper with any one of GOD'S enemies; it tells us what we deserve, not what, through GOD'S overflowing mercy, we shall meet with. It tells us that we are in no safety, that we have no hope, so long as we continue in one known sin; that we are out of GOD'S favour, that we are subject to His wrath. But it speaks not of human infirmities, nor of the sins which by our frailty we commit, and which we grieve for. Holiness is required of us, diligence, watchfulness, and that far more than even they seem to think of, who have some thoughts of their salvation; we must be saved in and through good works, but not in themselves, as if they could stand the judgment of GOD, not by good works, but by CHRIST; after all our diligence we must be saved by the Blood of CHRIST; that must sprinkle the holy things of the holy, and wash away their unholiness: our diligence is not the ground of our hope, but an earnest that we are still members of HIM, in Whom alone we can be saved; by it we cannot be saved except in HIM, as in HIM also alone could we have it or any other good work; but without it HE will not save us.

As then, brethren, ye would hope to be saved in that Day, take heed how ye tamper with any single sin; ye with whom, as yet, no one sin is habitual, how ye let *one* sin creep over you; or whoever is entangled in any sin, how he continue in it; search diligently your own hearts; be watchful, earnest; and as ye would find mercy in that Day, yourselves show mercy to others and to the poor; for so St. James closes this saying, "He shall have judgment without mercy that hath showed no mercy, and mercy rejoiceth against judgment." The LORD grant that we may all find mercy of the LORD in that Day!

¹ In an University Sermon, by one of the authors of the "Plain Sermons."