

and thanksgiving re-echoed through the woods of the wilderness of Ziph, and many a strain of holy confidence arose from the lips of him who carried his life in his hand, in hourly danger of captivity and death.

But it is difficult to carry a full cup; and David on the throne forgot the experience of David in the wilderness. The pleasures of sense and of the world, the lust of the eye and the pride of life, for a time took the place of that pure and holy joy which a sense of God's love never fails to shed abroad in the heart.

David's first great sin was in giving way to that wicked covetousness that led him to desire to break up the domestic happiness of one of his subjects, in order to gratify an evil passion. Having marked and admired the beauty of Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, he resolved at all hazards to secure possession of her. That this was only to be effected by the perpetration of a crime so heinous in its nature as the murder of Uriah, did not for a moment deter the king from the prosecution of his purpose. By an agreement made between David and Joab, Uriah was so placed in the front of a line of battle that his death was an inevitable consequence. After a proper time allowed the widow of Uriah to mourn for the dead, she became the wife of David. Some time after this event a son was born to David by Bathsheba. His love for the mother extended to her child, and David rejoiced in this new object of affection, bestowing upon the little one all the marks of his tenderest regard. All this time his conscience seemed quite insensible to the greatness of the crime he had committed, nor does his enjoyment of the beautiful Bathsheba and her child appear to have been alloyed by a single remorseful or reproachful thought. But David was a child of God—disobedient, erring, but still a child. Therefore the rod is lifted up to correct, and by heavy judgments his sin is brought before him. The prophet Nathan, in the beautiful parable of the poor man and his one ewe lamb, faithfully portrays the crime of David. But so dead had a continuance in sin rendered his once tender and susceptible conscience, that, striking as the likeness was, David did not recognize it. Not till the prophet solemnly pronounced the words, "Thou

art the man," did the scales fall from his eyes, and he perceived the depth of iniquity into which he had fallen. The child so fondly loved, the desire of his eyes, is taken from him, and David once again, in prostrate humility, exclaims, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; before I was afflicted, I went astray." David was far from finding that his exaltation to the throne brought the happiness he had anticipated. If outward hardship was exchanged for ease and luxury, shame and contempt for honor and distinction, he found these very paths strewn with temptations and filled with crosses. His own household presented a very opposite picture to that beautiful unity of brethren he describes. The jealousies, animosities, and open ruptures of his sons caused him the deepest shame and distress; and when his favorite son, the beautiful and brave Absalom, actually appeared in arms against his too indulgent parent, and divided the kingdom by his intrigues, a spectacle so overwhelming well nigh broke the heart of David. Reading his sins in his punishment, he would not personally resist the rebellious arms of his son, but nobly bent to the will of God, content to leave the issue of the contest in his hands, and when his captains returned with tidings of victory, but coupled with accounts of the miserable end of Absalom, David's joy was turned into sorrow; and the shouts of triumph were hushed by the bitter lamentation, "Oh my son Absalom, my son, my son; would to God I had died for thee, oh Absalom, my son, my son." Once again the anger of God was kindled against David; and because of his transgressions, judgment fell upon the land. Contrary to express command, David insisted upon numbering the people, manifesting a faithless desire to know the number of fighting men upon whom he could rely; forgetting that the Lord of Hosts fought for them, and that it was the same thing to him to save by many as by few. In this case David's own heart condemned him.

No sooner was the act committed, than repentance followed. By the mouth of the prophet Gad, David receives a message from God which places him in a dreadful alternative. The punishment must come, and come in such a way that David's pride would be thoroughly broken down, and his heart torn by the suffer-