

pised. Who can live on mere promises? asks the carnal mind. Who can subsist on joys drawn from objects that cannot be seen? Give us something more tangible, for our happiness and hope, demand the children of this world. Thus they slight the unseen riches of the skies, and pursue with all their heart the treasures of earth. In this they despise their birthright.

(2) The birthright of offered mercy may be sold. We have before remarked that no man can take it from another; but, reader, you may give it away yourself. You may part with it by an act of your own will. It is given you by God, and He never recalls His gift, till He sees you barter it away. "His gifts and callings are without repentance." He has made over to you the offer of His mercy as your birthright, and He continues this privilege with you till He beholds you willingly part with it, and receive something else in its stead, as your chosen enjoyment. But thus you may sell your birthright in the inheritance of God's mercy. You see something else you wish to have, and yet know you cannot possess with God's mercy. Your heart is set on the object of its desire, cost you what it will. You will have this, at whatever risk to your soul's well-being. You take it, and your birthright in God's mercy is gone from you for ever. Mistake not these words. It is not meant to affirm that you *intend* to give up all interest in God's mercy, when you receive that earthly pleasure on which you have set your heart. It would be too much for the tempter to let you see this effect of your action. But you resolve that you will have this gratification, which the word of God, or your own conscience, tells you is wrong. You determine you will take the risk for the present; you seize the indulgence, and your birthright is gone.

(3) The birthright of offered mercy may be sold for a small gratification. This is a solemn point in the warning—"That there be no profane person among you, as Esau, who for *one morsel* of meat, sold his birthright." How brief was the act, how small the gratification that formed the turning point in Esau's history! A few moments at best only elapsed, a few thoughts only passed through his heart, he experienced only a few sensations of bodily pleasure, and he who a little before was the heir of peculiar blessings, went forth, disinherited by his own deed. Yet, events like this are occurring among us every day. Ah, you greatly mistake if you think that a great crime, or a course of flagrant sins, is needed to barter away your best birthright. A man may go near a precipice whence he falls into a fatal gulf, by a very slow and unobserved approach, and then the last move over the brink, is one short step into destruction. In this progress the danger lies in the *direction*. If the face is *towards* the precipice, it matters not how gradual the steps be, they will at last take hold of death. In like manner, a sinner may go on to perdition by a very slow process. All here, too, depends on the *direction* the soul pursues. If it is departing from God every step it takes is *towards* the brink, and then one brief step is all that is needed, to place it beyond the reach of mercy for ever.

God, indeed, is long-suffering, and may bear much before he regards you as closing the bargain, in selling this highest good. But the last act in the series of slighting thoughts of his grace, may be what you deem inconsiderable. You may be sitting by your fire-side, and it may be a thought, that you will rather take up a newspaper or a novel to read, than your Bible. Or you may be in the house of God, and it may be a purpose, that you will rather give way to sleep, and treat the word preached with indifference, than give earnest heed to the things that are spoken. Or you may be moving in ordinary life, and it may be a determination to enjoy this present indulgence rather than deny yourself. You decide that you will enter the tavern, at least this once, that you will sit in the company where the Bible and religion are sneered at, this once, because you relish the mirth and wit that circulate there. The pleasure of sin you derive in these things may last only a few minutes or a few hours. After all the previous sinful training your soul has passed through for this crisis, you may think very little of your act, and