

would be exposed. The Redeemer did not merely suspect, but knew from the very first that Judas was a traitor, and yet He would not act even on his Divine knowledge of the disciple's character. He would treat him precisely as the other disciples. He would wait for some plain and palpable development of false-heartedness. He would wait until Judas "by transgression" would fall, before He would cast him off. Such should be our course. In our treatment of each other, we should wait for infallible *proof* of guilt before we condemn. Even a Gehazi has a right to be recognized as upright until he proves himself to be false. Even a Judas must be treated as a true disciple until he proves himself a traitor.

III. *We are taught the malignant nature and tremendous danger of the sin of covetousness.* This was the root of Gehazi's wickedness. It was the corrupt tree that yielded such bad fruit. He would be rich. Vineyards and olive yards, sheep and oxen, men servants and maid servants, he must have. He sees more glory in these than in the testimony of a good conscience, the favour of God, and the hope of glory. The world gets into his heart; it makes his head to reel, and as a moral drunkard he rolls into the vortex of eternal perdition. "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in perdition." In the case of Gehazi we see the havoc that avarice makes of the character when it takes possession of the heart. We see that when one yields himself to it, there is no depth of meanness to which he is not prepared to descend, no principle that he is not prepared to sacrifice, no obligation that he is not ready to violate, no enterprise too mean or demoralising for him to engage in, provided there is the prospect of money in it.

Look at some of the elements in Gehazi's fraudulent scheme. What fearful *impiety* there was in it: "Behold my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but, as the Lord liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him." "*As the Lord liveth*." O, what impiety it is to swear by the name of that God who is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," that he will commit that very sin that is an abomination in His sight. And, then, what hypocrisy! It is not for *himself* that he wants the money! It is for a religious object. It is to help two young men in training for the ministry! "My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from Mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments." It is always wicked to lie, but peculiarly nefarious to do so, in the name of religion. It is a sad perversion of what is right to sacrifice truth for the sake of worldly gain; but the guilt is tenfold more aggravated, when religion is dragged in as a factor in the scheme of dishonesty. And then, Gehazi wrongs his master, abuses the confidence reposed in him, and tramples under foot every principle of honour, integrity, and truth.

How malignant the nature and tremendous the power of that avarice that could produce such dreadful results! How malignant the nature of that "love of money" which is said to be "the root of all evil," that could make Ananias and Sapphira lie, even to the Holy Ghost; that could make Judas betray his master for a few pieces of silver, and that

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