

chances are that the chains will be cast about us. Let us be prompt with our "Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savorest not the things that be of God;" or else, with the Jewish children, firm in our "But if not" we will not thus sin.

3. We are constrained to admire their close adherence to the Law. There were many surrounding circumstances which might have been pleaded in excuse for swerving from duty. Captives in a strange land—slaves to an absolute monarch—their language but little known—threatened with a fearful death—surely they may yield to the compulsion, bow before the image, and pass on. What care the Babylonians? It is but a form. In their hearts and in their homes they can still serve God, who is merciful, long suffering, and slow to anger. Not so did they reason. They understood that with God "obedience is better than sacrifice," and accordingly they ate not the king's meat, neither would they worship the king's image. But in the present day many seem to think and act otherwise. With the full blaze of gospel light around them, with the word of God in their hands, they cut, trim, hesitate, and keep hold on the world, adding just as much Christian practice as they imagine may ensure an entrance into heaven. We have our laws, and we should act upon them as strictly as did those captives. Can we conscientiously say we do? If we examine ourselves on one or two points only, we find ourselves wanting. Our law commands us not to neglect the assembling of ourselves together—to commemorate the Lord's death on the first day of the week. How frequently are trifles allowed to deter! A little rain, a little headache, a little fatigue, a little distance and we neglect the Lord's ordinances, bow down to the *idol ease*, and lose sight of the cross. Then we often think more of self than of Christ. They thought of God, not of themselves. We sometimes have little or no influence—we move in such restricted circles, what can we do? We cannot change the order of things—we have neither time, nor talent, nor money. These captive children might have pleaded their isolated position, but they desired to honor God—they were obedient to His commands and thus brought glory to Him and honor to themselves. Let those who complain of lack of power and opportunity read again and again this Jewish record, till in their turn they can do likewise, and earn for themselves respect as consistent doers of that which they profess, instead of bringing reproach upon the cause of Christ by their lukewarmness.

In manufactories furnaces are required for various purposes. We may also, in Scripture, find traces of several which God employs. There is the Refining furnace in which God's children are purified by affliction. There is the Testing furnace, in which they learn the quality of their faith and by which it is manifested to others. And there is the Destroying furnace into which the rejected are cast. Happy are those who endure the trials first named, for they

shall receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to them that love him.

Preaching brethren! Is popularity courting you? Is he whispering that if you will just keep back that unpalatable truth and speak in more general terms you will gain a large congregation and effect much good? Do you perceive that if you speak all the truth a furnace awaits you? Well, the Lord can and will bring you through it, but if you go not forward in faithfulness you are likely to finish your course in one of severer fire, from which he will not deliver. Stand ye forth and speak all the words of the law of love—the gospel and commands of Christ.

Man of business! Do you see the furnace? Is it hard work to make both ends meet, and would a little deviation from the Lord's own ways bring you safely over? Are you reminded that "Everybody does so," and that your means of doing good would be increased? Well, never mind what Satan says, but say you. "The Lord will deliver, and if not, then for his glory I'll go through the fire, if need be!" Be like the poor old Irish woman, in the recent revival, who, having given her heart to Christ, was confronted in her lonely cottage by the whiskey jar which was her only means of livelihood. Sin or destitution seemed to be the only alternatives. But little consideration was required, love to Christ prevailed, and the jar was, with its contents, dashed into the road with the exclamation, "Christ and thee cannot dwell together." Thus she went into the furnace, and no doubt the Lord was watching to deliver in the right time and manner. Be then ready to say—

"My God, whether I rise,
Or still lie down in dust,
Both I submit to Thy blest will;
In both, on Thee I trust."

Trembling, loving one, bending at the Throne of Grace, asking that your absent treasures may be safely kept and brought back to your arms, can you say, "But if not?"

"Whate'er my God ordains is right:
Here will I take my stand,
Though sorrow, need, or death make earth
For me a desert land,
My father's care
Is round me there;
He holds that I shall not fall,
And so to him I leave it all."

Stricken, suffering one when earthly things seem passing away—when pain racks the frame, and all that loving hands can do, or skill devise, seem powerless to relieve, can you say—"But if not?" Can you look beyond and trustingly exclaim—

"Whate'er my God ordains is right;
He taketh thought for me;
The cup that my Physician gives
No poisoned draught can be,
But medicine due;
For God is true,
And on that changeless truth I build,
And all my heart with hope is fill'd."