

and that looking upon sinners as outlaws, its cry is *torture, torture?* What has been said of hell,—of its undying woes? We could have no worse conception than that usually given, if we were told that at death the soul is given over into the charge of ten thousand fiends! When we shudder at such horrid representations, and shake our heads in doubt as to the propriety of such a torture, we are told that this is *justice*, and that those who suffer thus are *sinners*, and that nothing is bad enough for them! Justice! Nothing bad enough! Then God is precisely such a being as those who cry hatred, wrath, destruction, anything to him who has become an outlaw! In contrast with this worse than false view of justice, let me give that presented in the Bible. David says, Justice and judgment are the habitations of his throne; righteousness and truth go before his face. He also says, Unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy; for thou renderest to every man according to his works.

Thus justice is not an attribute whose only office is to torture, and which disregards the rights of its subjects; mercy and truth attend the great Judge as well as justice and judgment. Justice has an eye to the good of the offender; every blow it strikes is for good, and the punishment is measured in proportion to guilt,—in other words, to what the benefit of the offender requires. Punishments are administered as medicines; and the most wicked require the most punishment. Justice, therefore, may be defined to be *that attribute which leads God to seek the reformation of man by the agency of punishment*. If justice looks at all to the past, it is that it may know how to graduate its inflictions so as to secure the greatest good of the sinner. It is sometimes said of parents that they are too just. But none are ever too just—They may be too cruel! cruelty was a common falling among parents in former times. There were many like the father, who cruelly beat his son till his heart became well nigh as hard as the anvil upon which his father hammered his iron. Finding himself on one occasion unable to harden an instrument he was making, the son said, 'Whip it father; if that wont harden it I know not what will.' This justice is not cruelty,—not revenge,—not anything which seeks the sinner's injury; it is as much his friend as mercy itself.

3. I object to the idea that justice and mercy conflict with each other, because it gives a false idea of mercy. It converts mercy into weakness, and makes it blind to the crimes of the guilty. We often hear it said that parents are too merciful. Those who speak thus fancy that it is mercy which leads parents to indulge their children unduly; to give them little presents in order to prevent their crying, and to hire them to be obedient; but that is not mercy; it is weakness,—a weakness that has proved the ruin of many children!—*True mercy is that disposition which excites us to pity those in distress; and though it will not lift a hand to avert a single blow of justice, it will exert all its powers to reclaim the sinful and render them happy.*—God will have mercy on all men, that is, he will provide means for their salvation; he will confer upon them favors never reserved; he will do for them what justice does not require. Here is the difference

between justice and mercy. Though like mercy, justice has always an eye to the good of man, what it does has relation to deserts, while what mercy does has relation to wants. Mercy considers our necessities,—it asks not what has man merited, but what does he need? The benefits, therefore, which mercy will confer, will be according to its own character, and not according to our character.

What, then, may we not expect from mercy? It is impartial, and will not bestow infinite blessings upon all. How sweet the thought of mercy to the poor crushed sinner, as he lies bleeding under the inflictions of justice! Think of it!—The great God of heaven is rich in mercy,—he delights in mercy,—his mercy is everlasting! See him bending from his radiant throne, reaching down his gentle hand, and lifting from their horrible state those who had ruined themselves by sin! There is not one ever lifted from his deep degradation, but what was lifted up by mercy! How many there are who were once vile and wretched, that are now honored and useful! It was mercy that redeemed them! According to his mercy God saved them! Every saint in heaven, chanting the praise of the Eternal, owes all his bliss to mercy! It is mercy that takes the culprit, and makes him clean and happy! And when the last wanderer returns and enters the gates of glory, and there goes up from all souls one united song of thanksgiving, it will be a song in praise of mercy!

Such is the nature of justice, and such the nature of mercy. According to these views, no man will be doomed to endless pain, for such a doom would be subversive of both justice and mercy. Hence when the text says, Some shall have judgment without mercy, and that mercy rejoiceth against judgment; it cannot mean that some shall be sentenced to infinite pain, that they shall have full justice done them, but never share the mercy of God. Neither can it mean that any shall have a punishment which mercy would oppose, for justice and mercy agree. And you will observe that the text does not say, the judgment without mercy begins at death, or is inflicted after death. It does not speak of death or eternity as the place of adjudication; and, therefore, it gives no support to the idea, that in eternity some will endlessly wall under the inflictions of justice, while only a few will rejoice in the favors of mercy. Hence it is all assumption to say, the judgment without mercy is after death, or that it is endless pain.

What, then, does the text mean? Judgment without mercy, and mercy against judgment! The word judgment is no doubt synonymous with punishment.—Punishment without mercy! What is the idea here conveyed? May it not be simply this? The sins of some men are so great, that, in the endurance of their punishment, they seem, for the time, to be cut off from all blessings. The work of judgment on such is fearful! Look at the man who has rendered himself poor, and diseased, and wretched, by his abandoned life. He is tormented by a sense of his great guilt, and though loathsome with disease, he pines in want, having none of the comforts which are so requisite to the sick! Ah, it is not enough to endure his poverty and disease, without the terrible reflection

that he is the author of his own miseries, the guilty executioner of himself? He has no enjoyments,—no favors,—no comforts. He is without, in all these particulars, anything that can be called a mercy!

The condition of every abandoned man is lamentable beyond expression. Look at the dark intriguer, who has sought his living by deception and fraud. The curse of God is upon him, and the day will come when his bed of down shall be filled with thorns; when he shall have nightly visions of those he has reduced to beggary; when the moans of those whom he has made wretched shall ring perpetually in his weary ears! Yes; God is just, and he will smite him, and make him groan in the bitterness of his soul, and then shall he feel that there is no mercy in his cup.

Look also at him who hath stained his hands in human blood, for this is one class of sinners to whom the author of the text refers. The murderer! what a load does he ever carry upon his heart! The victim of his merciless cruelty is ever with him, all gory and haggard as when it fell lifeless before him. He follows him into the busy crowd; he pursues him in his lonely travels by night; he stands over his bed as he seeks in vain for repose. Other stains may be washed from his hands, but not the stain of blood; other crimes may be for the moment forgotten, but not the crime of murder! Here is judgment without mercy!—a judgment which makes the eye wild,—the visage haggard,—the heart sick,—a judgment which veils the heavens, and covers the earth with blackness, as though the whole world were dressed in mourning for the one he has smitten!

Let us pause here. Let us ask if we have not in such cases the key by which to unlock the meaning of the text? Are there not some men whose conditions is so wretched, that there no alleviating circumstance in their lot,—no glorious sunshine through the clouds in which they are enveloped? I do not mean, Are there not some towards whom God has ceased to be merciful, for we know that he is always merciful, and always merciful to all men? But I mean, Are there not some whose spirits are utterly crushed by the weight of their crimes, who feel as though every star of hope was quenched, and every source of enjoyment dried up? Why, take the murderer who has moved in good society—who has been regarded as an honorable man,—whose associates have been among the most reputable,—whose wife and children have looked to him with confidence and pride,—let the crime which in a moment of passion or from love of gain he committed, be exposed and fastened upon him, and a thunderbolt from heaven could not more unstring his nerves, or death render him more pale! Ages of torture are experienced in an hour; he sees everything in an instant sweep away, and he feels all the wretchedness of utter despair! O heavens! what a judgment is here! Ruined hopes! ruined honor! ruined wife and children! ruined peace! are all arrayed before him. There is nothing to mitigate his woes or sweeten his cup! He has nothing left on which to stand! nothing to which he can cling and keep himself from sinking.

It is not so with all who are visited with judgment. There are degrees in crime, and degrees in judgment. All are not

equally guilty, and all are not equally cursed of God. Some who see one source of happiness forever dried up, are comforted by the thought that others remain open.—Some who have disgraced themselves by one act, have relief in the reflection that they are not wholly ruined. They are comforted by the reflection that they have blessings still left; that ground still remains on which to stand; the beams of hope are still shining upon their pathway.

Thus there is a wide difference between those on whom judgment falls. Those who *totally* disregard the divine law have judgment without mercy, for they show no mercy; judgment sweeps all away. On others judgment is less destructive; it does not annihilate all that renders life dear, though guilty, they have not been deaf to every claim of the law.

That I am right, is certain from the character of the man who has the judgment without mercy. He is one whose heart had been hard as adamant; who had acknowledged the claims of humanity; the obligations of equity; who wholly disregarded the royal law; who had stolen and oppressed, and defrauded, and murdered. Such is the one who is to drink the cup that has no mixture of sweetness,—whose portion shall be evil, and evil only. The world presents many such miserable men. You will find them in dens of infamy; in hovels of poverty; in the dark retreats of crime, and the dungeons of our prisons!—It was not one leap that brought them to that awful state; they went gradually down from the high eminences which they once occupied; it took a long time to throw off the restraints of early education, and to become so hardened that the voice of conscience ceased to startle them.

It is important, then, to guard against the beginnings of evil, for one vice leads to another; and he that yields to slight temptations has commenced a career which may render him one of the vilest sinners, and cause him to be scathed by the fiercest lightning of heaven!

That the judgment without mercy is that utter ruin to which sin reduces the abandoned, is evident from the last clause of the text,—*And mercy rejoiceth against judgment*. The apostle here puts the abstract for the concrete; he puts mercy in the place of the merciful man; his meaning is, not that divine mercy rescues some from judgments they have deserved, but that the merciful man exults over judgment; he has no fear of it; for he has obeyed the law; he has loved his neighbor; he has done as he would be done by; he has acted from true principles. He knows, therefore, that he is safe. God's heaviest thunderbolts may smite down those around him; curse upon curse may come in quick succession, and all the elements of destruction may be armed with special power, and the wailings of the ruined may be heard from a thousand hearts, yet as he is conscious that God is just, he knows that he stands upon a rock over which the surges of desolation can never sweep. The wicked may fall about him like soldiers of a conquered army; they may be smitten in their palaces of splendor, hurled from their high and honored stations, and dragged forth from their secret places to be slain; still he is unmoved, for he has kept the law; and he rejoices against judgment, for the sword of divine vengeance