

consecration of the man, for he was a brewer, and was not satisfied that his business was "holy unto the Lord." So anything, whether it be money, or business, or pleasures, or companions, if we are not willing to give up these for Christ, if they come before him, they become idols set up in our hearts as surely as the images before which Solomon bowed.

II. SOLOMON'S SENTENCE. The sentence reveals the enormity of the crime and at the same time points out its inevitable consequences. Solomon had alienated the affections of the pious and exhausted the patience of the oppressed. He had conciliated the heathen but he taught his people to look with tolerance upon, and share in the "vile affections" (Rom. 1: 26), horrid cruelty, and diabolical revelries of devil-worship. He forgot the watchword of Israel "The Lord our God is our Lord" (Deut. 6: 4) and gave His glory to another and His praise to graven images (Isa. 42: 8; he degraded "the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man" (Rom. 1: 23). The "Mount of Corruption" was an insulting defiance of Mount Moriah.

9. *The Lord was angry with Solomon.* We don't think anybody need apologize for the Lord under the circumstances. There are times when not to be angry is to be false to all that is pure, and holy, and good. A story is told of the late Dr. Spencer of Brooklyn that he was met by a parishioner hurriedly urging his way down the street one day; his lip was set, and there was something strange in that gray eye, "How are you to-day Doctor?" he said pleasantly. He waked as from a dream and replied soberly "I am mad!" It was a new word for a mild true hearted Christian; but he waited, and, with a deep, earnest voice, went on, "I found a widow standing by her goods thrown in the street. She could not pay the month's rent; the landlord turned her out; and one of her children is going to die, and that man is a member of the church! I told her to take her things back again. I am on my way to see him. Solomon had been richly endowed, often warned, and well knew the evils resulting from his evil conduct. Yet let us not condemn Solomon without remembering our own greater guilt if we are faithless to our better light and less perilous surroundings. God is "slow to anger" but the wrath which flamed out at Solomon will not slumber if we are ungrateful for our mercies and do not

improve our privileges. We too have a covenant to keep, sealed to us in baptism, let us not be faithless to it but remember that we are the Lord's by covenant bonds which only apostasy can break.

12, 13. *Notwithstanding.....Howbeit.* What gracious words! In wrath mercy is remembered (Hab. 3: 2). Solomon did not deserve this, but there were the original parties to the covenant, David and David's God. This covenant must stand for in it is bound up the eternal purpose of God's grace to sinful men. The unworthiness of one must not break the hallowed entail until the second "David" shall come with Hosannas to Jerusalem. To Solomon time was given for repentance which he doubtless improved, for Ecclesiastes does not end in despair. Yet there has always been doubt upon this point. Farrar tells us that in his great picture in the Campo Santo at Florence, Orcagna represents Solomon rising slowly and painfully out of his sepulchre at the archangel's trumpet, ignorant whether to turn to the right or to the left, uncertain whether his place is to be among the saved or among the lost. Was his lot to be with Jerusalem or the Hill of Sandal? Is he to count as a servant of the Lord or a votary of Molech fires and Ashtaroth abominations? On the other hand, the great poet of the Divine Comedy was no lenient judge, and he places the soul of Solomon in Paradise among the souls of the greatest teachers. However that may be, "He stands out to kings as a conspicuous warning against the way in which they should *not* walk. He found a people free, he left them enslaved; he found them unburdened, he left them oppressed; he found them simple, he left them luxurious; he found them inclined to be faithful to one God, he left them indifferent to the abominations of heathenism which they saw practised under the very shadow of his palace and his shrine; he found them occupying a unique position as providential witnesses to one saving truth, he left them as a nation like other nations, only weaker in power and exhausted in resources." (Farrar). The practical lesson of such a fall is that perseverance in God's service is not a matter of course with any of us, but that it is a distinct gift or grace of God, to be secured by watchfulness and prayer. We who are neither kings or sages may well take warning by this history of the wisest of kings. Let us