

and a better character. I think that God would love me if there were some good works, and some redeeming traits in my character." Nay, but hear me, my brother, God loveth not man for anything in man. The saved ones are not saved on account of anything they did; but simply because he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion. Thou art in as good a place as any other unregenerate sinner on the face of the earth; that is unregenerate; why should not God have mercy upon thee? Thy merits or thy demerits have nought to do with the matter. If God intends to bless, he looks not to what thou art. He finds his motive in the depth of his own loving will, and not in thee. Oh, canst thou believe it, that black, and filthy, and diseased, and leprous though thou be, the love of God can shed itself abroad in thy heart? O my trembling bearer! do not despair, for he is able to save unto the very uttermost.

3. In continuing to regard this woman, I want you to notice that her condition was miserable too, in the very last degree. She had not only to suffer the famine which had fallen upon all her neighbours, but her husband was taken from her. He would have shared with her the last morsel that his weary limbs could earn; he would have bidden her lean her head upon his strong and faithful breast, and would have said, "My wife, if there be bread to be had thy mouth shall taste it; if there be water to drink thou shalt not thirst."—But alas! he was taken from her, and she was a widow. Besides this, he had left her no inheritance. She had no patrimony, no servant. You learn this from the fact that she had not even firewood. Now, there was no reason why she should not have had that even in time of famine of bread, for there was no famine of wood, unless she had been extremely poor.—Such was her extremity that she goes outside the city upon the common lands to pick up a few sticks with which she may cook her meal. She had, you see then, nothing wherewithal to buy bread, for even the fuel she must gather for herself. I told you that her husband had left her nothing, yes, he had left her something; but that something, though much beloved, was but another fountain of trouble to her.

He had left her a son, her only son, and this son has now to share her starvation. I believe he was too weak to accompany his mother upon this occasion. They had been so long without food that he could not rise from the bed, or else, good soul, she would have brought him with her, and he could have helped to gather a few sticks. But she had laid him upon the bed, fearing that he might die before she reached her home, knowing that he could not accompany her because his limbs were too feeble to carry the weight of his own poor emaciated body. And now she has come forth with a double trouble, to gather a handful of sticks to dress her last meal, that she may eat it and die.

Ah, my dear friends, this is just where sovereign grace finds us all—in the depth of poverty and misery. I do not mean, of course, temporal poverty, but I mean spiritual distress. So long as we have a full barrel of our own merits, God will have nothing to do with us. So long as the cruse of oil is full to overflowing, we shall never taste the mercy of God. For God will not fill us until we are emptied of self. Ah, what misery does conviction of sin cause in the breast of the sinner. I have known some so wretched, that all the torments of the inquisition could not equal their agony. If tyrants could invent the knife, the hot irons, the spear, splinters put beneath the nails, and the like, yet could not they equal the torment which some men have felt when under conviction of sin. They have been ready to make an end of themselves. They have dreamed of hell by night, and when they have awakened in the morning it was to feel what they have dreamed. But then it has been in this very time when all their hope was gone, and their misery was come to its utmost extremity, that God looked down in love and mercy on them. Have I such a hearer in this crowd this morning?—Have I not one who is smitten in his heart, whose life is blasted, who walks about in the weariness of his spirit, crying, "Oh, that I were gone out of this world, that I might be rid of sin; for oh, my burden presses upon me as though it would sink me to the lowest hell. My sin is like a millstone round my neck and I cannot get rid of it." My hearer, I am glad to hear thee speak thus; I rejoice in thy un-