

the example of others for warning. The tribes of Israel, he intimates, were delivered from Egypt, and yet through unbelief they did not enter the promised land. They set out from bondage at God's command; they experienced miracles through God's mercy; they journeyed so far in the wilderness, under God's conduct, and for a time, all no doubt, cherished the firm hope of arriving in Canaan. Yet when tried, they disbelieved God's word, and "so he swore in his wrath they should not enter into his rest." "These things are written for our example, on whom the ends of the world are come." Here were fair beginnings, but these were followed by serious failure. And yet is not this the history of multitudes of Gospel hearers still? How many are there among us, who make shipwreck of the faith, and after appearing to run well, come short of the heavenly prize. In their early life they seemed interested in divine things. They were attenders in the Sabbath School, were often seen reading the Bible, and appeared to have given their hearts to Christ. But as they grew up to maturity, their religious affections became cold, the world spread its lures before them, their godless companions gained an influence over their mind, and the buds of promise fell from their soul like the blossoms from a young tree, under the withering blasts of an unpropitious spring. Look at them now, and you see they are far from God, walking in the counsel of the ungodly, if not sitting in the seat of the scornful. Oh, these are histories full of warning to all, who, in like manner, barter away their birthright. Reader, remember you are moving in the very world where all these have made the profane exchange. You possess the same deceitful heart; you are assailed by the same temptations; you are beset with the same dangers as they. "Take heed therefore, lest there be in you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." Do you ask how, and who are they that thus sell their birthright in offered mercy? *They* do it, who live in the practice of gross error, or in love with the smallest sin. *They* do it, who harden themselves against Divine reproof, or mind the world more than God. *They* do it, who have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof. Let us, therefore, fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you shall seem to come short of it.

(2) Be warned not to sell your birthright—it is *easy in this to be deceived*. There is infinite meaning in the Scripture words "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." They remind us that sin is a most blinding and bewildering thing to us, as well as wicked in the sight of God. The traveller who climbs a Scottish mountain without a guide, and is overtaken by a dense fog on its summit, feels himself in a perilous situation. The mist completely veils the sun from his view, and he cannot find his path. He starts, as he thinks, in a right direction downwards, but after groping his way long among rocks and crags, he finds he has come to the very stone from which he set out. He soon grows confused and bewildered, and unless that mist-cloud is drawn aside, it is much if he does not perish beneath its shadow. But yet far more bewildering than this, is the mist-power of sin in the human soul. Then the same fatal influence has effected also the mind that looks through the mist. Not only is the light around dimmed, but the eye is darkened and perverted. That is an alarming sentence of Scripture, to this effect: "The heart is deceitful above all things." Let the careless ponder over it. Yes, there are many deceitful things in this fallen world of ours, but the heart within each one of us, is "deceitful" above them all. It is those two things combined—the deceitfulness of sin and the deceitfulness of the heart that render it so easy to be beguiled in selling the best birthright. And hence how many are blinded and befooled, while making the profane exchange. They have no idea that they are duped and deceived, the very moment they barter away their cherished right for what cannot profit. How many that excel in worldly wisdom, are yet deceived in this bargain by Satan and their own hearts. How many poor souls are there now in hell, who never thought of going there. Many men of strong minds, of great sagacity in present things, of profound learning