

portion." The blessings we enjoy, even of an earthly sort, are the *gifts* of our heavenly Father. They are His by right—ours only by favour. And though we may ignore this truth, and by an unholy appropriation call them our own, and use them only according to our own will, only for ourselves, and for our own pleasure and glory; yet we are to remember that they are ours only by grace, the gifts of our Father above; to be enjoyed with Him and used for His glory.

This *demand*, for such it is essentially rather than a prayer—selfish, unfilial, and unfounded though it was, is not denied.—It plainly indicated apostacy of heart on the part of the son, that he had fallen from filial love and duty: but yet the father remains a father still, he will not now become a hard and despotic master. He is not willing to have only a servant in the place of a son, and when he finds that he cannot keep him as his child, he will yield the point, and allow him the freedom of of his own chosen way. Thus does the blessed God deal with men who have forsaken Him, with His rebellious children. He leaves them to the freedom of their own way. He does not lay any outward restraint upon them. He does not constrain them by mere authority to an unwilling obedience. Neither does he withhold their portion of earthly good. His mercy is not taken away, it follows them in all their wanderings here. God is still a Father, whatever they may have become.

The extinction of the true filial sentiment in the heart, indicated by this demand of the younger son in the parable, is the hidden root of sin, but we now begin to see the process, or development of sin.—The secret root in the heart soon begins to bear its appropriate fruit, for "Not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far

country." What! Had he become so dead to every feeling which a son should cherish, that he could not remain under the same roof with his father? Had such a neighbourhood become so irksome, and unpleasant, that he was in haste to leave it? was it possible that though he had got his portion by paternal grace, yet he could not enjoy it according to his own heart until he had placed a long distance between himself and home? It was even so. The hidden apostacy of the heart now begins to discover itself, and to be developed in outward action, which is

SIN IN ITS PROCESS.

A son may leave his father's house, taking with him a father's blessing. In a distant land his heart often fondly turns to that still beloved home, it is a green and fragrant spot; the remembrance of it is his solace in a land of strangers; and the presence of those there, wherewith a living, because a loving, memory surrounds him, with all their well-remembered words of hope and counsel, are a shield and buckler against evil. Filial love and duty still live in his heart. But a son may seek to leave his father's house because to all filial love and duty his heart has become apostate. He receives his portion thanklessly, and, with a heavy heart, the parent sees him go his way. He is glad to be rid of the restraints of his father's house, in haste to drown the memory of its words and ways; no sooner does he set his foot in the far country to which he has gone, than he gives the rein to all his pent-up desires, and pursues their chosen path with eager step. Among strangers he feels at liberty; at liberty for words and deeds which would load every heart at home with shame and grief. And what is it that so darkens this picture, that makes it one of such exceeding baseness? What is the essential aggravation of his sin? Is