

the word of the Lord, as coming home to *ourselves*. "Is not this the fast which I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to *undo* the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye *break* every yoke, etc." (Isaiah lviii. 6-14) A new and searching word for our hearts it is. I pray you, let us leave off this *usury*. (Neh. v. 10) On another side, how often, if one preaches the word of God simply and faithfully, many will say it will not do to have that man, and he loses the favor of the people; but you *cannot cook God's manna to suit worldly and corrupted tastes*.

Here, Naboth will not give up his vineyard, nor Elijah the word of the Lord—the *portion and testimony* of God for His people. What a sight of moral grandeur does Elijah present, declaring to Ahab God's solemn testimony, in view of the fact of his having fled from the threat of Jezebel. It is not likely to give Elijah more money in his pocket, nor increased favor at Court, but *what?* He is a man who has the word of the Lord and has spoken it faithfully, and can sleep with a good conscience, now that he has delivered his message. Happy Elijah! just as ready to deliver another message also, if God bids him do it. When God sees the idolatrous King humble himself, He says, "Elijah! I have another errand for you." Elijah is always near to him now, not as a short time before—he is right on the spot to *suffer, do, or serve* God's will. God is going to prove to Ahab that He is a God of mercy, and Elijah is just as ready to deliver the message of mercy as of judgment, to preach the *love* of God to a repentant one, as His judgement to one hardening his heart against Him. He knows "the time to embrace, and to refrain from embracing." Imagine him going to tell Ahab this message of mercy, when his past greeting was, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" He could tell him "there is a way that even *you* can have hope, Ahab," "forgiveness with God that He may be feared." Thus there is "a time to keep, a time to cast away, a time to love, and a time to hate." Elijah would not put his arms around Ahab's iniquity. No, he thunders judgment against his sin, but when that same man humbles himself, he goes to him with a message of *mercy*.

Next, we have Ahaziah, fallen through a lattice and sick, sending to enquire of the god of Ekron; he knows that the God of Israel will not answer him,—his conscience is not right with God, and he cannot assure his heart before Him.