

in it, they all the time so retained their sins, and kept in their hearts their ungodliness, that God said, "my soul abhorreth and hateth your services; they are a burden unto me, I am weary of bearing them."

You will observe then that the outward act, when alone, is of no use; but I ask you as carefully to mark that the outward act rightly used, (that is conducing to a humiliation of the soul before God, under a deeper sense of sin), is greatly beneficial. If a man feels "my aim is to obtain a name among my fellow-worshippers and to reap their praise and commendation," he may have his reward. But that reward will not be a reward that never entered into his mind—the praise of his Heavenly Father. Or if the man feels, "I will fast and by my fasting I will deserve my salvation," he may have his reward of quieting conscience, but you will not therefore expect that he will win the favour of God, and gain the help of the Holy Spirit. Or if a man says "I will fast, but I cannot give up my besetting sin. I cannot put away my every iniquity. I do not resolve to conquer the old man with his affections and lusts. I will fast, but I do not promise to fight unto victory;" the man may thus amuse himself, for a season with the thought that he is doing something for his soul, but he is not. By and bye his sin will return back upon him like a flood, and tyrannize with greater power for the temporary restraint. Subdual is not conversion.

Hunger will subdue for the moment the wild Indian, whose delight is in blood, whose excitement is the war dance or the human sacrifice; but if that season of hunger and subdual be not used for teaching and civilization, he will quickly return, with renewed appetite, to his savage enjoyments. So abstinence may bring low the professed Christian and subdue his animal spirits and lay him in the very dust.

But oh! if this time of outward humiliation be not made a season for turning to God with the whole heart and soul; if there be not a struggle to throw off the galling yoke of Satan, an energetic striving to overcome besetting sins; if there be not prayer for the influence and aid of the Holy Spirit, in dependence upon the strength promised to the faithful soldier of the cross, a resolute effort to break away from the iniquities which hold the soul in thralldom; if there be not then decided action, when the day of outward and formal fasting is closed, we shall return with redoubled zest to our worldliness and sin.

Dear friends, would you make the season of Lent, what our Church intended it should be, a time for solemn reflection, self-examination and prayer? Would you prepare for the commemoration of the awful vindication of God's justice, the death upon the cross, of the wondrous manifestation of God's love and mercy, the acceptance of that sacrifice? Let there be then, beloved, due preparation by every possible means, for