

previous act of getting drunk. So in regard to the suicide of Saul. The criminality of that act is to be carried back to the sin of which he was guilty when he determined to follow his own will instead of the will of God. It was through that sin that he was brought into his present position. Had he been dutiful to God he would never have been in such a dilemma. On the one hand he never would have been so defeated and humiliated in battle; and on the other hand he would have had a trust in the Divine protection even when a bloody enemy like the Philistines was about to seize him. It was the true source alike of his public defeat and of his private despair that he indicated when he said to Samuel, "God is departed from me;" and he might have been sure that God would not have departed from him if he had not first departed from God.

It is a most important principle of life we thus get sight of, when we see the bearing that one act of sin has upon another. It is very seldom indeed that the consequences of any sin terminate with itself. Sin has a marvellous power of begetting, of leading you on to other acts that you did not think of at first, of involving you in meshes that were then quite out of your view. And this multiplying process of sin is a course that may begin very early. Children are warned of it in the hymn—"He that does one fault at first, and lies to hide it, makes it two." A sin needs to be covered, and another sin is resorted to in order to provide the covering. Nor is that all. You have a partner in your sin, and to free yourself you perhaps betray your partner. That partner may be not only the weaker vessel, but also by far the heavier sufferer, and yet, in your wretched selfishness, you deny all share of the sin, or you leave your partner to be ruined. Alas!