

the things which He suffered, and arm ourselves with the same mind. It is the only way of escaping the far greater, more enduring suffering which, when by God's grace we are penitent, the memory of our past sins must bring upon us. Forgiven they will be; blotted out, so as not to rise against us in judgment hereafter, in the blood of Christ; but undone they cannot be. They must run their course, and produce their consequences: and one of the most unfailing of these is the bitter recollections of them in time to come: a bitterness which will be all the greater the more perfect our repentance, the more spiritualized and subdued, and conformed to the law of Christ our affections. It is then simply a choice between the suffering which present self-denial entails, and that which follows, as the reward of disobedience and rebellion.

Do you not think that the eldest son in the parable had naturally the same desires, the same impatience of control, the same wish to be his own master as the younger one. There is no reason for doubting it. He however repressed them, and his brother indulged them, Hence the difference in their lives. And we have no reason to suppose that it was easier for him to act thus than for the prodigal; rather as the elder son the contrary would very likely be the case. It is a wonderful lesson, and one that demands that we ponder it well.

Try to realize the position of the two brothers the day, or the week, or the year, after the prodigal's return. I have said, we have no reason to suppose that the elder brother's jealousy endured longer than his father's answer. Conceive them then both living with their father—both doing his will—both receiving daily proofs of his love and tenderness. Doubtless both were supremely happy. But is there one here present who can doubt that often the younger son's heart must have been wrung by a sense of his own unworthiness, that every loving care of him, every affectionate word, every token of his Father's love,