

DAVID AND JONATHAN.

that he would save David's life, and on David's part that he would show kindness to Jonathan and his house forever. Here we have a *disproof of a familiar proverb*. The familiar proverb is, "Blood is thicker than water". Jonathan says, "Right is thicker than blood. David is no relation of mine physically; but David is an injured man, and my father is the individual who is injuring him, and I snap all ties that I may go and stand by the side of God and proclaim myself in favor of the right!" Consider no ties where righteousness is in question. There are secondary rights, and there are primary rights. You are your father's child, and you say you ought to be filial and obedient. The spirit of righteousness says, "No!" "Children obey your parents—in the Lord." That is the explanatory qualification. Whatever your father tells you to do; if it be not "in the Lord," you have a right to resist it. Whatever your government tells you to do that is not "in the Lord," you have a right to protest against, and to resist to the utmost. I fear we are serving some sub-gods, some under-deities, some little proxy kings, and forgetting the One Eternal, Absolute Ruler. We are measuring ourselves by false standards and not by the one great judgement. Will you do wrong for your father's sake, and call it filial obedience? There is only One Father. The term "father" that we use, we use only temporarily and with qualifications. One is your father—God! Let every tie be broken, let it go so that you serve Him who is clothed with righteousness, and who sits for ever in the light! Shall a man say, "If it had been anybody but my father, I certainly would have taken another course." I ask you what is the question in controversy? If it be a question of mere politeness, civility, honor due to age, attention required by the ordinary courtesies of life; then I honor you for honoring your father. But if it be a moral question, a question as between right and wrong, your father ceases to have any claim upon your conscience if so be, to indicate a course that is foul or questionable. The question is not between "Blood and water," the question is between blood and God, blood and righteousness, physical kinship and eternal alliance with the virtues and honesties of the universe. Are any of you at this moment detained from doing right because your father is on the other side? Tell me. Kept in a wrong church, where the truth is not spoken, because your father has a pew there? Kept from the open profession of Christianity, because your father would feel annoyed if you said

anything about it! Are you comforting yourself with this text from the fool's bible, "Blood is thicker than water." Then, if you have given me a momentary advantage over you in electing me as your afternoon teacher for this one occasion, let me use what you yourselves have put into my hands for the purpose of saying, give up your father, rather than give up conscience, righteousness, truth, purity. Do not make his shame public, if you can avoid it, but let everything be struck down, rather than the spirit of righteousness shall be grieved or quenched. "Grieve not the Spirit, quench not the Spirit." Inasmuch as you have had bitter experience of this kind of conduct from your father, see to it, that, in your turn, you give your children the benefit of a right example.

Jonathan kept his promise and died in the faith. From the time of his death there is a lapse of sixteen years before David proposes this inquiry. Why this delay? Reasons of state, the prevalence of wars, political disquietude, the danger which menaced his throne, and the multiplied engagements of his restless life are urged as an excuse. Let them be admitted to have their weight. But the duty of the man can never be merged in the duty of the statesman. The obligations of a private citizen are as strong upon the conscience of a man as a private citizen, a blessing is pronounced upon him that "sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not." This Benison, however, can have no application to the man who rashly and wickedly covenants with another, to compass an end which in itself is wrong, or which, if right, is to be compassed only by illegal or immoral means. Such a compact is, in law, a misdemeanor, and in morals, a crime. It cannot, therefore, be binding upon any man's conscience. That which we have no right to promise we can have no right to fulfil, but virtuous vows are binding for ever, and "in keeping of them there is great reward."

III. It supposes on the side of David a grateful and benevolent heart.—He sought information, for he wished to do a kindness. Had he been a selfish man, or ungrateful, the old friendship would have been forgotten and the promise broken. Is there yet any of the house of Saul? Yet Saul had been his enemy; had sought his life; had persecuted him with relentless fury, till his soul was like a "partridge on the mountains". This hatred of Saul he might have set off against the love of Jonathan, found the balance equal and cried quits with the whole family. No one would have blamed him had he left the

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