

IV. A fourth lesson to be learned from this bitter bereavement is one of *humility and caution*. When men read with almost blinded vision the sad details of the atrocity, they were ready to hang the head with shame at the thought, that any one in the shape of a man could have done the murderous act. It seemed to many as if the history of the world had been reversed, and we had suddenly been thrown back into the darkness of the middle ages. And yet it was a man that did the deed. Call him fiend, murderer if you will, the fact remains the same, that he is still a wearer of our common nature. Shall I shock you, my dear hearers, if I say, that but for God's grace we might have been equally guilty? True, if either the thought or committal of such an act were laid to the charge of any man here, he would indignantly ask with Hazael, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" And yet that foul crime was the act of fallen humanity. We cannot tell with what temptation Satan may have plied the miserable assassin; we cannot tell whether placed in his circumstances and looking at the deed from his perverted light we might not have been equally guilty. While deeply thankful to God, that by his providence and his grace, he has hitherto restrained these hearts of ours, from which proceed all evil thoughts, let us pour forth our lamentations to-night over the defection of poor frail human nature, a defection that has been exhibited not only in this brutality, but in the history of the human family, from the days of Cain till now,—a history stained with crime and written in letters of blood.

And is not this the lesson of caution that we especially need, *Beware of indulging a revengeful spirit*. Justice is one thing; and justice demands, that "whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." Let the cold-blooded murderer, if caught alive, be made an example of; let crime be punished openly and without stint, according to the strict letter of the statute-book; but be it ever remembered, that a spirit of revenge is as impolitic as it is wicked. "Vengeance belongeth unto me: I will repay, saith the Lord." How hard it is to check the rising spirit, and to enter in at the strait gate of the Saviour's teaching, we all may find, when we come