

ABIJAH, OR SOME GOOD THING TOWARDS THE LORD

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**A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And all Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him: for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam.”
1 Kings 14:13.*

JEROBOAM had proved false to the Lord who had placed him upon the throne of Israel, and the time was come for his overthrow. The Lord, who usually brings forth the rod before He lifts the axe, sent sickness into his house, his son Abijah was sorely sick. Then the parents remembered an old prophet of God and desired to know through him what would happen to the child. Fearful lest the prophet should denounce plagues upon him and his child if he knew that the inquirer was the wife of Jeroboam, the king begged the Egyptian princess whom he had married to disguise herself as a farmer's wife, and so get from the man of God a more favorable answer. Poor foolish king, to imagine that a prophet who could see into the future could not also see through any disguise with which his queen might surround herself! So anxious was the mother to know the fate of her son, that she left his sickbed to go to Shiloh to hear the sentence of the prophet. Vain was her clever disguise! The blind prophet was still a seer and not only discerned her before she entered the house, but saw the future of her family. She came full of superstition to be told her fortune, but she went away heavy, having been told her faults and her doom.

In the terrible tidings which the prophet delivered to this wife of Jeroboam, there was only one bright spot, only one word of solace. And I am greatly afraid that it gave no kind of comfort to the heathen queen. Her child was mercifully appointed to die, for in him there was “found some good thing toward Jehovah, God of Israel.” As an Egyptian, it is not likely that she appreciated the meaning of that sentence. She probably thought it of very small importance that her child should have regard towards the God of His people. She saw not the light which was full of joy. In what an unhappy condition is that person who cannot derive comfort from the salvation of his own child! Yet there are many men and women in such a state. They care nothing for the souls of their own offspring. It would bring no joy to them if they saw all their children walking in the truth; nor does it cause them any concern to see them otherwise. To see them sharp in business or fair in countenance is their main ambition, but to have them beloved of the Lord is no matter of desire. Poor souls their own carnality overflows and saturates their family! To some it would even cause anger and wrath to see their children turning to the Lord. They so despise true religion that if their sons and daughters were converted, they would rather hate them than love them the more. Such is the alienation which sin works in the human mind that it will in some instances curdle human affection into enmity, at the sight of the grace of God. That which should increase love has even created loathing. As Saul sought to slay Jonathan because he loved David, so do some hate their children because they love Jesus. Such persons make curses out of their blessings. They put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light and light for darkness, and therefore that which ought to be their comfort and joy becomes a source of disquietude. But, beloved, I think I could say of the most of us here present, that if we did but know for sure, that there was in our child some good thing toward Jehovah, God of Israel, we would be perfectly content to leave all the rest of his case at the absolute disposal of the Lord. If such a child should die, it would be well, for it is much better to have a child in heaven than to have one on earth breaking our hearts by his wicked ways. And if such a child shall live, what happy prospects open up before us, that as his years advance, he will grow in knowledge and in favor with both God and man! Assure us that there is in the young mind some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel, and we reckon that the grand matter is secured, and all else is regarded by us as a

mere matter of detail. We will bless the Lord, let Him send what He will to our children, so long as He has chosen them to be His own, and has put His fear in their hearts. This wretched wife of Jeroboam went her way in utter misery, for that sentence which would have been a sweet solace to us, had little or no charm for her. Oh the sinfulness of that heart which finds no comfort in the salvation of the soul of a dying child!

This morning we are going to look into the little that we know of the young prince Abijah. We know nothing more of him than the text tells us. His name was a suitable one. A good name may belong to a very bad man, but in this case a gracious name was worthily worn. He called God his Father, and his name signifies that fact. “Ab,” you know, is the word for “Father,” and “Jah” is “Jehovah”—Jehovah was his father. I would not have mentioned the name had not his life made it true. Oh, you who bear good Bible names, see that you do not dishonor them!

I. I shall ask you first of all, to follow me in studying the character of this prince while I say, LET US HERE ADMIRE WHAT WE CANNOT PRECISELY DESCRIBE.

And I mean, first, by that, that there was in this child, “*some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel.*” But what was it? Who shall define it? A boundless field for conjecture opens before us. We know there was in him *some* good thing, but what form that good thing took we do not know. Tradition has made assertions, but as these are mere inventions to fill up a gap, they are scarcely worth mentioning here. Our own reflections will, probably, be as near the mark as these improbable traditions. Perhaps the obscurity was intentional. We may learn much from the silence of Scripture. We are not told precisely what the good thing was, because any good thing towards the Lord is a sufficient sign of grace. Where there is some good thing towards the Lord God, every good thing is present in seed and essence. The “some good thing” which is so fully developed as to be seen and noted is an index of the presence of all the rest, since the grace of God is not divided, but is present as a whole. God’s blessings come in groups, and if some good thing is apparent, all others which are really vital and essential are there. Though the child’s *faith* is not mentioned, we are sure that he had faith in the living God, since without it nothing in him would have been good towards God, for “without faith it is impossible to please God.” He was a child believer in Jehovah, the God of Israel. Perhaps his mother left him at his own request, to go to the Lord’s prophet to inquire about him. Many false prophets were around the palace, his father might not have sent to Shiloh had not the boy pleaded for it. Abijah believed in the great invisible God who made the heavens and the earth, and he worshipped him in faith. I should not wonder, however, if in that child his *love* was more apparent than his faith, for converted children more usually talk of loving Christ than they do of trusting in Him. Not because faith is not in them, but because the emotion of love is more congenial to the child’s nature than the more intellectual act of faith. The heart is large in a child, and therefore love becomes his most conspicuous fruit. I have no doubt this child showed an early affection towards the unseen Jehovah, and distaste for the idols of his father’s court. Possibly he displayed a holy horror of the worship of God under the figure of a calf. Even a child would have intelligence enough to perceive that it must be wrong to liken the great and glorious God to a bull which has horns and hoofs. Perhaps the child’s refined nature also started back from those base priests of the lowest of the land whom his father had raked together. We do not know exactly the form it took, but there it was, “some good thing” was in the child’s heart towards Jehovah, God of Israel.

Carefully note that it was not merely a good inclination which was in him, nor a good desire, but a really good, substantial virtue. There was in him a true and substantial existence of grace, and this is far more than a transient desire. What child is there that has not at some time or other, if it has been trained in the fear of God, felt a trembling of heart and desire towards God? Such goodness is as common as the early dew. But alas! It passes away quite as speedily. The young Abijah possessed something within him sufficiently real and substantial to be called a “good *thing.*” The Spirit of God had worked a sure work upon him, and left within him a priceless jewel of grace. Let us admire this good thing, though we cannot precisely describe it.

Let us admire, also, that this “some good thing” should have been in the child’s heart, for *its entrance is unknown.* We cannot tell how grace entered the palace of Tirzah and gained this youthful heart.

God saw the good thing, for He sees the least good thing in any of us, since He has a quick eye to perceive anything that looks toward Himself. But how did this gracious work come to the child? We are not told and this silence is a lesson to us. It is not essential to us to know *how* a child receives grace. We need not be painfully anxious to know when, or where, or how a child is converted. It may even be impossible to tell, for the work may have been so gradual that day and hour cannot be known. Even those who are converted in riper years cannot all describe their conversion in detail, much less can we expect to map out the experience of children who have never gone into outward sin, but under the restraints of godly education have kept the commandments from their youth up, like the young man in the gospel narrative. How came this child to have this good thing in his heart? So far we know, we are sure that God placed it there, but by what means? The child, in all probability, did not hear the teaching of the prophets of God. He was never, like young Samuel, taken up to the house of the Lord. His mother was an idolatrous princess. His father was among the wickedest of men, and yet the grace of God reached their child. Did the Spirit of the Lord operate upon his heart through his own thoughts? Did he think over the matter, and did he come to the conclusion that God was God, and that He must not be worshipped as his father worshipped Him, under the image of a calf? Even a child might see this. Had some hymn to Jehovah been sung under the palace wall by some lone worshipper? Had the child seen his father on that day when he lifted up his hand against the prophet of Jehovah at the altar of Bethel, when suddenly his right hand withered at his side? Did the tears start from the boy's eyes when he saw his father thus paralyzed in the arm of his strength? And did he laugh for very joy of heart when by the prophet's prayer his father was restored? Did that great miracle of mercy cause him to love the God of Israel? Is it a mere fancy that this may have been so? A withered right hand in a father, and that father a king, is a thing a child is pretty sure to be told of. And if it is restored by prayer the wonder would naturally fill the palace and be spoken of by everybody, and the prince would hear of it. Or what if this little child had a godly nurse? What if some girl like her that waited upon Naaman's wife was the messenger of love to him? As she carried him to and fro, did his nurse sing him one of the songs of Zion, and tell him of Joseph and Samuel? Israel had not yet so long forsaken her God as to be without many a faithful follower of the God of Abraham, and by some one of these, sufficient knowledge was conveyed to the child to become the means of conveying the love of God to his soul. We may conjecture with considerable probability, but we may not pretend to be sure that it was so, nor is there any need that we should be. If the sun has risen it matters little when the day first dawned. Be it ours when we see in children some good thing to rest content with that truth, even if we cannot tell how it came there. God's electing love is never short of means to carry out its purpose. He can send His effectual grace into the heart of Jeroboam's family, and while the father is prostrate before his idols, the Lord can find a true worshipper for Himself in the king's own child. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings have You ordained strength because of Your enemies." Your footsteps are not always seen, O God of grace, but we have learned to adore You in Your work, even when we discern not Your way.

This "good thing" is described to us in the text in a certain measure. *It was "a good thing towards Jehovah, the God of Israel."* The good thing looked towards the living God. In children there often will be found good things towards their parents, let these be cultivated—but these are not sufficient evidences of grace. In children there will sometimes be found good things towards amiability and moral excellence, let all good things be commended and fostered, but they are not sure fruits of grace. It is towards God that the good thing must be that saves the soul. Remember how we read in the New Testament of repentance towards God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ? The way the face of the good thing looks is a main point about it. There is life in a look. If a man is traveling away from God, every step he takes increases his distance from Him. But if his face is toward the Lord, he may be only capable of a child's tottering step, but yet he is moving nearer and nearer every moment. There was some good thing in this child *towards God*, and that is the most distinguishing mark of a truly good thing. The child had love, and there was in it love to Jehovah. He had faith, but it was faith in Jehovah. His religious fear was the fear of the living God. His childlike thoughts and desires, and prayers, and hymns went towards the true God. This is what we desire to see not only in children, but in adults. We wish to see their hearts turned

to the Lord and their minds and wills moving towards the Most High. Strange that it should be wonderful for the creature man to look towards his Creator! And yet, it is so. Indeed there is no surer sign of a renewed heart than when a man exclaims, "I will arise and go to my Father."

In this dear child that "good thing" worked *such an outward character that he became exceedingly well-beloved*. We are sure of that, because it is said, "All Israel shall mourn for him." He was probably the heir to his father's crown, and there were godly but grieved hearts in Israel that hoped to see times of reform when that youth should come to the throne. And perhaps even those who did not care about religion, yet somehow had marked the youth, and observed his going in and out before them, had said, "He is Israel's hope. There will be better days when that boy becomes a man." So when Abijah died, he alone of his entire race received both tears and a tomb. He died lamented, and was buried with respect, whereas all the rest of Jeroboam's house was devoured by dogs and vultures. It is a very blessed thing when there is such a good thing in our children that they come to be beloved in their little spheres. They have not all the range which this young prince enjoyed so as to secure universal admiration, but still the grace of God in a child is a very lovely thing, and it draws forth general approval. I do not know how it is with you, but youthful piety is a very touching thing to me. I see the grace of God in men and women with much thankfulness, but I cannot perceive it in children without shedding tears of delight. There is an exceeding beauty about these rosebuds of the Lord's garden. They have a fragrance which we find not in the fairest of earth's lilies. Love is won for the Lord Jesus in many a heart by these tiny arrows of the Lord, whose very smallness is a part of their power to penetrate the heart. The ungodly may not love the grace which is in children, but since they love the children in whom that grace is found, they are no longer able to speak against religion as they otherwise would have done. Yes more, the Holy Spirit uses these children for yet higher ends, and those who see them are often impressed with desires for better things. Once again, let us admire what we cannot precisely describe, for I have not ventured upon any precise description, but I have closely followed the words of the text.

The piety of this young child was every way of the right kind. It was inward and sincere, for the "good thing" that is spoken of was not found about him, but "in him." He did not wear the broad phylactery, but he had a meek and quiet spirit. He may not have been much of a speaker, else it might have been said "He has spoken good things concerning the God of Israel." He may have been a timid, retiring, almost silent boy, but the good thing was "in Him." And this is the kind of thing which we desire for every one of our friends, a work of grace *within*. The grand point is not to wear the garb, nor use the brogue of religion, but to possess the life of God *within*, and feel and think as Jesus would have done because of that inner life. Small is the value of external religion unless it is the outcome of a life within. True grace is not as a garment, to be put on and taken off, but it is an integral part of the person who possesses it. This child's piety was of the true, personal, inward kind, may all our children have some good thing *in* them!

We are told by our text that this good thing "was found" in him. This means that it was discernible in him, discernible without much difficulty, for the expression "found" is used even when it does not imply any great search. Does not the Lord say, "I am found of them that sought Me not?" Zealous, child-like piety soon shows itself. A child is usually far less reticent than a man. The little lips are not frozen by cold prudence, but reveal the heart. Godliness in a child appears even upon the surface, so that persons who come into the house as visitors are surprised by the artless statements which betray the young Christian. There were many in Tirzah who could not help knowing that this child had in him some good thing towards Jehovah. They may not have cared to see it, they may have hoped that it would be crushed out of him by the example of the court around him, but still they knew that it was there, they had found it without difficulty.

Still, the expression bears another shade of meaning, it implies that when God, the strict heart-searcher, who tries the reins of the children of men, visited this child, He found in him somewhat unto praise and glory, "some good thing" was discovered in him by those eyes which cannot be deceived. It is not all gold that glitters, but that which was in this child was genuine metal. Oh that the same may be

true of each of us when we are tried as by fire! It may be that his father was angry with him for serving Jehovah, but whatever his trial may have been he came out of it unharmed.

The expression suggests to me somewhat of the idea of surprise. How did this good thing get into the child? "In him there is *found* some good thing"—as when a man finds a treasure in a field. The farmer was thinking of nothing but his oxen, his acres, and his harvest, when all of a sudden his plow laid bare a hidden treasure. He found it where it was, but how it came to be there he could not tell. So in this child, so disadvantageously placed, to the surprise of everybody there was found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel. His conversion, you see, is veiled in mystery. We are not told of the grace in his heart what it was, nor from where it came, nor what special actions it produced, but there it was, *found* where none expected it. I believe that this case is typical of many of the elect children whom God calls by His grace in the courts and alleys of London. You must not expect that you shall jot down their experience, and their feelings, and their lives and total them all up. You must not reckon to know specific dates and means, but you must take the child as we have to take Abijah, rejoicing to find in him a little wonder of grace with God's own seal upon him. The old prophet in the name of the Lord attested the young prince as a true-hearted follower of the Most High. And in like manner the Lord sets His attesting mark of grace on regenerated children, and we must be content to see it, even if some other things are lacking. Let us welcome with delight those works of the Holy Spirit which we cannot precisely describe.

II. Now, changing the line of our thought a little, I come to a second remark, in this case LET US HEARTILY PRIZE WHAT WE ARE TOO APT TO OVERLOOK.

First, *let us heartily prize "some good thing" towards the Lord God of Israel whenever we perceive it.* All that is said of this case was that there was in him "some good thing." And this reads as if the divine work was as yet only a spark of grace, the beginning of spiritual life. There was nothing very striking in him, or it would have been more definitely mentioned. He was not a heroic follower of Jehovah, and his deeds of loyalty to God are not written, because by reason of his tender years he had neither power nor opportunity to do much which could be written. Inasmuch as we read that in him was "some good thing," it is implied that it was not a perfect thing, and that it was not attended with all the good things one might wish for. Many good things were missing, but "some good thing" was manifest, and therefore the child was accepted and by divine love rescued from a shameful death. Do you not think that there is a tendency with many Christian people when they are talking with inquirers to look for every good thing in them, instead of looking for *some* good thing? Here is a person professing to be converted. He is evidently sincere and honest, and therefore he is very cautious not to say more than he feels, and this makes him say little, and that little, tremblingly. You ask him a question which everybody ought to be able to answer, but this nervous one fails to answer it, and therefore by a severe judgment it is thought that he is ignorant and unenlightened. Cold prudence decrees that a person who cannot answer such a question cannot be a child of God, and little allowance is made for timidity and flutter of mind. Suppose the inquirer could answer the question and a dozen others? Might he not still be a deceiver? Is it not sufficient for you that there is some good thing in him, even though he has no great stock of knowledge and very slender power of expression? Grace grows. The grain of mustard seed becomes a tree, the little leaven, leavens the whole lump. "Some good thing," will by-and-by breed every good thing. The life of God is sure to conquer the whole nature. And ought we not to be much more hopeful than we are, and at the same time more tender, more gentle, more considerate? Does God bid His prophet say that this child shall escape the judgment that was to come upon Jeroboam's family because there was some good thing in him? Ought we not to conclude that if we see some good thing in any towards God, towards His Christ, towards eternal things, it is a token to us not to condemn but to commend, not to judge with severity but to treat with kindness and care? I fear that in many a case, harshness has worked serious mischief to those who were with all their hearts coming to Jesus. That harshness may have been thought to be fidelity by him, who exercised it, and perhaps it was, but there is such a thing as mistaken fidelity, and faithfulness is not the only virtue needed by a soul-winner. I would not have you err, beloved brothers and sisters, when you are talking with seekers by whispering in their ears, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace, but on the other hand, I would not have you sin against the child by a

hard, suspicious manner, and by demanding more of a youthful heart than the Lord Jesus would have looked for. There is a happy medium, may God help us to follow it—hoping but not flattering, examining with care but not chilling with suspicion. Again I say, let us prize anything we see of Christ, anything we see of the Spirit's work in anyone who comes before us, being satisfied that all is well so long as we can see "some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel."

Further, I am afraid we are too apt to overlook "*some good thing*" in a child. "Oh, he is only a child!" Pray, what are you? You are a man? Well, I suppose that a man is a child who has grown older, and has lost many of his best points of character. A child is at no disadvantage in the things of God from being a child, for "of such are the kingdom of heaven." Men have to grow back into children before they enter the kingdom at all. If there is some good thing, it ought not to be doubted and thought to be questionable because it is in a child, for in Holy Scripture it is very common to find good things in children. Do we not find some good things in Joseph while he was still a youth? In Samuel, with whom God spoke while he was yet a young child? In David, who, as a boy, slew the giant Goliath? In Obadiah, the governor of the house of Ahab, who said to Elijah, "I your servant fear the Lord from my youth"? In King Josiah who worked so great a reformation in Judah? In young Timothy who knew the Scriptures from his youth? Was there not, also, early piety in John, of whom Jerome says that one reason why our Lord loved John better than the other apostles was because he was younger than the rest. I am not sure of that, but there is a peculiar child-likeness about John which might well attract the closest fellowship of the Holy Child Jesus. Do not, therefore, be surprised to find grace in children, but look for it eagerly. Why should we not have Samuels and Timothys among us? Do not let us trample pearls under our feet by refusing to see the Lord's work of grace in children. Watch for grace in them as sentinels watch for the first gleams of the morning. I say watch for it more than they that watch for the morning.

Another thing we are apt to overlook, and that is, "*some good thing*" in a bad house. This was the most wonderful thing of all, that there should be a gracious child in Jeroboam's palace. The mother usually sways the house, but the queen was a princess of Egypt and an idolater. A father has great influence, but in this case Jeroboam sinned and made Israel to sin. It strikes me as a wonder that he should make Israel sin but could not make his child sin. All the land feels the pestilent influence of Jeroboam, and yet, close at his feet, there is a bright spot which sovereign grace has kept from the plague. His first-born child, who naturally would imitate his father, is the very reverse of him—there is found in Jeroboam's heir "some good thing toward Jehovah, God of Israel." In such a place we do not look for grace and are apt to pass it by. If you go to the courts of our great cities, which are anything but palatial, you will see that they swarm with the children of the poor, and you hardly expect to see grace where sin evidently abounds. In the fever-dens and pestilent alleys of the great city, you hear blasphemy and see drunkenness on all sides, but do not therefore conclude that no child of God is there. Do not say within yourself, "The electing love of God has never pitched upon any of these." How do you know? One of those poor little ragged children playing on a dust heap may have found Christ in the Ragged School, and may be destined to a place at Christ's right hand. Precious is that gem, though cast amidst these pebbles. Bright is that diamond, though it is upon a dunghill. If in the child there is "some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel," he is none the less to be valued because his father is a thief and his mother is a drunk. Never despise the most ragged child. A clergyman in Ireland, ministering to a little Protestant congregation, noticed for several Sundays, standing in the aisle near the door, a very ragged boy who listened to the sermon most eagerly. He wished to know who the boy was, but he always vanished as soon as the sermon was over. He asked a friend or two to watch, but somehow the boy always escaped, and could not be discovered. It came to pass one Sunday that the minister preached a sermon from this text, "His own right hand and His holy arm has gotten Him the victory," and after that time he missed the boy altogether. Six weeks elapsed and the child did not come any more, but a man appeared from the hills, and begged the minister to come and see his boy, who was dying. He lived in a miserable hovel up in the mountains. A six-mile walk in the rain, through bogs and over hills, and the minister came to the door of the hut. As he entered, the poor lad was sitting up in bed, and as soon as he caught sight of the preacher, he waved his arm and cried out, "His own right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory."

That was his closing speech on earth, his dying shout of triumph. Who knows, but in many and many a case the Lord's right hand and holy arm have gotten Him the victory, despite the poverty and the sin and the ignorance that may have surrounded the young convert? Let us not therefore despise grace wherever it is, but heartily prize what we are apt to overlook!

III. Lastly, LET US CAREFULLY CONSIDER WHAT WE CANNOT FULLY UNDERSTAND. I want you first to consider the very singular fact which you cannot understand, *that holy children should be often placed in ungodly families*. God's providence has arranged it so, yet the consequences are painful to the young believer. You would think that if God loved a child, He would not allow it to be born in Jeroboam's court, and that He would not send His own chosen down into a back slum to be surrounded by everything that will grieve its tender heart. And yet God does send His dear children into such places. Why is this?

Well first they are God's protest against sin where no other protest would be heard—a tender touching message from God to let the ungodly know that there is something better than the sin in which they wallow. Holy children are as angels amid demons, by their innocence rebuking sin. Does not God send children there also to make a display of His divine grace that we may see that He chooses whom He wills, and takes one of a family according to His good pleasure? Does He not also show us that He can keep grace alive in the most unlikely places where all things war against the soul? The grace of God can live where you and I would die. The life of grace can continue under conditions which threaten death. Some of the brightest and most gracious people have been found where there was nothing to keep them, but everything to hinder them. Does not the Lord permit this to show what His grace can do? And is it not intended to be an encouragement to each of us to be faithful? For if this dear child could be faithful to God with such a father and mother, and in such a court, ought you and I to be afraid? Oh, you big man, let a child shame you—you were afraid to speak out before your work mates the other day! What a coward you must be, when this child displayed his love to the Lord God of Israel where all opposed!

Is it not remarkable how God distributes His people as we scatter salt? He sets one of them down in each den of evil. Saul the king is a great rebel against God, but close at his side is Jonathan, thus the sweetest flower that ever bloomed is found growing near the roughest bramble that could be found. What a sty of filthiness was the court of Ahab! And yet he had for his chamberlain Obadiah, who hid the servants of God by fifties in a cave, and fed them from Jezebel's table. Nebuchadnezzar must not be left without three holy champions who can go into the fire for God. Look at Belshazzar drinking wine out of the cups of the sanctuary, and yet a Daniel is employed in his court. Even in the court of Ahasuerus, Esther is placed to confront that wicked Haman. Oh, I think there is never an Uz without a Job, or a Chaldea without an Abraham, or a Sodom without a Lot, or an Egypt without a Moses, or a house of Eli that has gone astray without some little Samuel sent of God to bear His protest. Think over the ways of God to man and admire what you cannot understand.

The next thing that we cannot understand is this, *that God's dear little children who love Him should often be called to suffer*. We say, "Well, if it were my child, I should heal him and ease his sufferings at once." Yet the Almighty Father allows His dear ones to be afflicted. The godly child of Jeroboam lies sick, and yet his wicked father is not sick, and his mother is not sick. We could almost wish they were that they might do less evil. Only one godly one is in the family, and he lies sick! Why was it so? Why is it so in other cases? You shall see a gracious child a cripple, you shall see a heavenly-minded girl a consumptive; you shall often see the heavy hand of God resting where His eternal love has fixed its choice. There is a meaning in all this, and we know somewhat of it, but if we knew nothing, we would believe all the same in the goodness of the Lord. Jeroboam's son was like the fig of the sycamore tree, which does not ripen till it is bruised; by his sickness he was speedily ripened for glory. Besides, it was for his father's good and his mother's good that he was sick, if they had been willing to learn from the sorrow, it might have greatly blessed them. It did drive them to the prophet of God. Oh, that it had driven them to God Himself! A sick child has led many a blinded parent to the Savior, and eyes have thereby been opened.

There is something more remarkable still, and that is *that some of God's dearest children should die while they are yet young*. I should have said let Jeroboam die and his wife too, but spare the child. Yes, but the child must go, he is the fittest. His departure was intended to give glory to God's grace in saving such a child, and making him so soon perfect. It was to be the reward of grace, for the child was taken from the evil to come. He was to die in peace and be buried, whereas the rest of the family would be slain with the sword and given to the jackals and the vultures to tear to pieces. In this child's case his early death was a proof of grace. If any say that converted children ought not to be taken into the church, I answer, how is it the Lord takes so many of them into heaven? If they are fit for the one, they surely are fit for the other. The Lord, in infinite mercy, often takes children home to Himself, and saves them from the trials of a long life and temptation, because not only is there grace in them, but there is so much more grace than usual that there is no need for delay, they are already ripe for the harvest. It is wonderful what great grace may dwell in a boy or girl's heart; child piety is by no means of an inferior kind, it is sometimes ripe for heaven.

Once more, it does strike me as a very singular thing *that such a child as this should die and yet produce no effect whatever on his parents*, for neither Jeroboam nor his wife repented of their sins because their child was taken home to God. I may be addressing some here who have lost a darling in whom the grace of God was from his youth. Do you mean to lose the benefit of such a costly experience upon your heart? Shall such bitter medicine be given to you in vain? Why, there is a great power for good about a living child, much more ought there to be about a dying one. A sailor landed in New York one day, and he said to himself, "I'll have a fine time of it before I go to sea again." It was Sunday morning, and in the madness of his wickedness, he went up to a girl who was going to her Sunday school class, and he spoke to her with mocking and wicked words. She turned round and looked at him with her beautiful, sad eyes, and said, "Sir, you will have to meet me at the bar of God!" The sailor started back, turned on his heels, and made the best of his way to his vessel that he might get out of temptation. He said afterwards, "I never had such a broadside in my life as that girl gave me. She raked me fore and aft, and swept by the board every sail and spar with which I had got ready for a wicked cruise." He went on his knees, repented of his sins, and found the Savior. Shall a strange child have such power by her looks and words, and shall not your own child impress you by its death? A father was swearing dreadfully one day, he had often been rebuked for it but never felt the rebuke. But on that occasion, using a most horrible expression to his wife, his little daughter in fright ran behind the door and began to cry. She sobbed aloud until her father heard her. He said to her, "What are you crying for?" "Please, Father," she said, and kept on crying. He cried out roughly, "I will know what you are crying about." And the child replied, "Dear father, I was crying because I am so afraid you will go to hell, for Teacher says that swearers must go there." "There," said the man. "Dry your eyes, child—I will never swear anymore." He kept his word, and soon he went to see where his daughter had learned her holy lesson. Now, if children living among the roughest can by their tears win the victory, your dear child, with whose curls you used to play, but who has now been taken home to heaven, ought to touch your heart if you are not following in the way to glory! Your child beckons you from above and bids you "come up here." Will you turn away? There is but one way. It is by faith in Jesus that men are saved. May Christ the Lord lead you to it now, if you are unconverted, and may there this day be found in you "some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel." Amen.

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