

ELIJAH THE TISHBITE

by

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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

AHAB'S REPENTANCE

The Scripture repeatedly speaks of A BOOK OF LIFE; and Paul notices, Philippians 4:3, the names of his fellow laborer Clement and others, as inscribed in that book. It is, as its title imports, a book of life. No judgments are written in it; no sentences of death are recorded. It is full of the promise of life eternal; and they whose names are written in it never die; they have already passed from death into life; everlasting youth awaits them beyond the grave; and thrones of never-fading glory and joy stand prepared for them in heaven. This book is, in other words, the paternal heart of our almighty and most merciful Father.

In this book a number of names are inscribed; that is, a great multitude, which no man can number, are all individually and continually remembered before him; and everyone of them is infinitely dear to him, and eternally beloved. They are the names of his people, his chosen, his children, his heirs, being joint-heirs with Christ; and redeemed to himself by the blood of the Lamb. By a mystical union with Christ their Surety, they are bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord their God. In him, the Beloved, are they made accepted and glorious; and because he lives, they also live forever and ever.

The book of life is open in heaven. There it is read again and again, and they who read it are never weary of so doing. The Son of man himself sees in it the **“travail of his soul, and is satisfied.”** This book indicates to the Shepherd his sheep, to the Bridegroom his bride, to the High Priest his redeemed, and to the Prince of peace the people in whose heart is his law. Even to the holy angels is this book opened. They are sent forth to minister unto them who shall be heirs to salvation; for which purpose they must know the names that are written in this book. And continually are they becoming more and more acquainted with it, and they increasingly wonder and adore the God of all grace, as they behold the names of those whose sins have been many, and are forgiven.

Now, if there be any one object in the world more worthy of our curiosity than another, I think we shall all agree in saying what it is: surely it is the sight of our own names inscribed there. On the fact, whether our names shall be found there or not, is suspended our peace and happiness throughout eternity. But can this fact be ascertained here on earth? I answer, that even here on earth we may know from Scripture the characteristics of those whose names are in the book of life.

The chief of these is a contrite heart, longing after God. It must never be forgotten that there are two ways of crying for mercy, and it is not every kind of humiliation before the Lord which will justify us in concluding that our names are inscribed in his book. But if we seriously desire to know what it is which distinguishes true and gracious humiliation from that which is only the working of natural feelings, we may learn it very clearly from the portion of sacred history which we are now to consider.

“Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel, And will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked me to anger, and made Israel to sin.

“And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat. But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.

“And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly. And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house” (I Kings 21:21-29).

The prophet delivers his message in Naboth's vineyard, and announces to the trembling tyrant, with all boldness, the dreadful punishments which should come upon himself and his family. Here then let us consider the impression which this announcement made upon the guilty monarch; noticing,

- I. How Ahab's repentance was called forth;
- II. What kind of repentance it was;
- III. What were its consequences.

**I. Elijah's address evidently produced unusual terror
in Ahab's mind, and induced him to humble
himself in some degree before God**

Nor does this surprise us: for it contained not only an awful aeration which Ahab could not deny, but likewise an awful sentence upon himself and his posterity, pronounced, as from the mouth of God himself, with singular impressiveness and power.

A threefold crime is here laid to the charge of the king of Israel:

- That he had provoked God to anger;

- That he had made Israel to sin;
- That he had sold himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord.

It was for this cause that the sword of the Almighty had been whetted for the destruction of himself and his house.

Observe, then, how The Lord represented in the first part of the accusation, as a God who may be so provoked by continued insults and rebellions, that his longsuffering, like a bended bow, needs only to be drawn to a certain tension in order to break. This certainly sounds very human; but faith is far from stumbling at such language; for it stands in need of such representations of God. We need to be told of God in an intelligible manner, and to be addressed by him in the language of our nature; in expressions of mercy, sympathy, and displeasure; as caring for us; as taking cognizance of our very thoughts; as loving us; not as inaccessible to us, or unconcerned about us. Now just such is the God of the Scriptures.

Ahab is here further accused, of having made Israel to sin. This he had done by his impious example, and by those infamous decrees which had made the worship of Baal the religion of the state, and exposed the true worshippers of the Lord to the most cruel persecutions. Woe unto those, who, like Ahab; not satisfied with destroying themselves, seek to infect others with their pestilential errors, and to carry them along with them in their own fall!

Such men will not only have to bear their own burden, properly so called, but the guilt besides of all those unhappy victims who were led away by them, and who will pursue them forever with their vindictive execration. Such men will have hereafter the horrid distinction which their lives seem to be aiming at in this world—the distinction of being more like their father the devil, in whose works they have been so preeminent.

The remaining point of crimination which Elijah alleged against Ahab was, that he had sold himself **“to work evil in the sight of the Lord.”** And **“there was none,”** says the sacred historian, in another place, **“like unto Ahab, who did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.”** **“Sold himself to work evil!”** What a dreadful charge! Yet it is as true as it is dreadful, not only concerning Ahab, but concerning every unconverted man.

“I am carnal,” saith Paul, **“sold under sin;”** he means in reference to his natural condition; **“for that which do, I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; for what I hate, that do I.”**

Try, my brethren, an experiment, if you please, only for one day, with the law of God; labor to keep fully any one single command of God; and however it may grieve you, depend on it that, before evening, you will be obliged to take up for yourself the same humiliating confession with the great apostle.

It is a common proverb, whether true or not, that **“Every man has his price;”** that there is something for which everyone will be found willing to sell himself. These are words of awful import spiritually understood; and yet in this acceptance they are but too true concerning every natural man.

The children of this world, proud as they are of themselves, may always be bought with one temptation or another: honors, profits, pleasures of one class or another, will induce them to debase themselves more and more. The idol to which Ahab sacrificed was his affection for Jezebel. His own will, his honor, his peace of conscience, the salvation of his soul, the favor of God—all that he had or hoped for was laid at this idol's feet.

Would that he were singular in such infatuation or only one of a few! But alas, it is common in every age. Let anyone ask himself, why he is an unbeliever; why he despises the people of God, why he serves the world and the devil, and endeavors to stifle every good conviction. By what influence is he constrained thus to act? Ask him, and he will tell you that he feels the influence of custom and example, and of his own natural inclinations; that his connections, the favor of men, or the attachment by which he is bound to other persons and other things, are the causes which indispose him to the serious care of his immortal soul. But what impious constraints are these!

What an accursed alliance, though it be under the sacred name of friendship itself, must that be, which is connected with enmity against God? Whoever of us has hitherto walked in these human chains, let him extricate or rend himself from them without delay. **“If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” “He that loveth father or mother, or son, or daughter, more than me, is not worthy of me.”** Forget not the blessing of Moses upon Levi: **“Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant: they shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law; they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifices upon thine altar”** (Deuteronomy 33:9, 10. **“Ye are bought with a price,”** says the apostle; therefore **“be ye not the servants of men!”**

The heavy accusations which Elijah, in the Lord's name, brought against the king of Israel in the vineyard of Naboth, must have been the more terrific on account of those dreadful denunciations with which they were followed.

The first of these was, **“In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine!”** And so it came to pass, as is most strikingly shown in the subsequent history. For Ahab, though he had taken every precaution to secure himself in the battle which he stirred up against the Syrians, Was slain by an arrow shot at a venture, and the blood of his wound ran into the midst of the royal chariot which was afterwards washed in the pool of Samaria, the very place where Naboth was murdered; and there they washed his armor; so that the dogs of the city might easily have licked up his blood upon the very spot of the murder, as no doubt they did. Verily there is a God that judgeth! Have mercy upon us, O Lord Jesus!

The next **“curse of the Lord”** was **“upon the house of”** Ahab.

“Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Ahab every male, and him that is shut up and left in Israel, and will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah. Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field the fowls of the air shall eat.”

How awful is it, when the iniquities of fathers are visited upon their children to the third and fourth generation! Nor did any part of the threatening fail of its accomplishment as you may see by consulting the 9th and 10th chapters of the Second book of Kings. Jehu was raised up by providence to put the Divine sentence in execution. Him God caused, by a prophet, to be anointed king over Israel, and Jehu lost no time in bringing the kingdom under his authority, but directed his first march to Jezreel, where king Joram the son of Ahab resided. Joram, perceiving his approach went out in his chariot to meet him; and, having met him in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite, he asked, **“Is it peace?”** To whom Jehu replied, **“What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?”**

Joram, hearing this, endeavored to escape; but Jehu drew a bow with all his strength, and smote Joram between his arms, so that the arrow went out at his heart, and sank down in his chariot. Then said Jehu to Bidkar his captain, **“Take up and cast him in the portion of the field of Naboth both the Jezreelite, according to the word of Lord.”** And it was done. There Ahab’s blood flowed, according to the letter of the divine threatening, from the veins of his son, upon the same ground which had been polluted by the blood of the innocent Naboth. In the same manner were Joram’s sons and all the relatives of Ahab extirpated by the sword, so that neither root nor branch remained of that idolatrous house.

The idol priests met with the same fate. In one day they were all slain by the sword; the images, together with the house of Baal in Samaria, were broken to pieces, and idolatry for a season was banished out of Israel.

The third judgment which Elijah announced to Ahab was to fall upon Jezebel. **“The dogs,”** said he, **“shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.”** And so it came to pass. For when Jehu entered the city Jezreel, the queen, having **“painted her face and tired her head, looked out at a window.”** But the infamous woman did not succeed this time with her meretricious arts; the heart of the rude captain remained unmoved and impenetrable as a rock. He lifted up his eyes and called to the chamberlains who stood near, to throw her down; and they threw her down, so that the wall and the horses were besprinkled with her blood, and she was trodden under foot, like the mire in the street. And it was not till after Jehu had gone into the city, and had eaten and drunk, that he said, **“Go, see now this cursed woman, and bury her, for she is a king’s daughter. And they went to bury her, but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands.”**

And they that were sent returned to Jehu and told him; then said he, **“This is the word of the Lord which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the suburbs of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel; and the carcass of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the suburbs of Jezreel, so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel!”**

Behold, my brethren, how the Lord fulfills his word! How ought this thought to strike all impenitent sinners with horror; for he who denounces against them everlasting punishment, the same God whose name is FAITHFUL AND TRUE; and it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than for one tittle of his word to fail.

II. The thunder of Elijah's denunciation produced on this occasion some effect

Ahab knew whom he had before him, and that it was not this man's custom to beat the air, and to utter vain words. The idolatrous monarch is astonished and deeply affected. He feels the load of guilt which lies upon him. His conscience is alarmed, and his past iniquities rise up in terrific array before him.

Doubtless it must have seemed to him as if he saw the spirit of the murdered Naboth standing before him; as if he heard from the graves of the massacred saints a thousand-fold cry ascending to heaven for vengeance against him; as if the lightnings of God's fiery jealousy already flashed upon his guilty head; and as if he heard behind him the howling of the dogs of Jezreel panting for his blood.

The feeling which overpowered him at the fiery sign on Carmel revives in all its liveliness with a thousand horrors. He is now but too assuredly convinced that the Lord is God, and that Elijah is his messenger. The poor powerless wretch feels as if he were already at the judgment-seat of the Almighty; as if the thunder of the divine rebuke was rolling over his head; as if the angels of justice were about to drag him to the place of torment.

He forgets his crown and his purple, conscious that he is an enormous sinner, and is not ashamed to express this consciousness before God and man. He descends into the dust, rends his clothes in token of the distress and wretchedness of his soul, puts on sackcloth, and falls down before the God of Elijah; appoints a fast, unconcerned whether it may please his heathen consort or not; even during the nights, his penitential exercises are continued; he goes softly and sorrowfully for a time, like a real subject of penitential grief. Joy is mute in the place which was ordinarily so full of merriment; the pipe and the viol no longer resound through the glittering saloons; the royal residence is like a house of mourning and death; and the gloom of the king seems to have spread itself like a black cloud over all his attendants.

This mourning of the king of Samaria was real as far as it went. The wretched outward dress in which he appeared was a true expression of his inward temper and state of mind. Still, much was wanting in his repentance to render it a repentance unto life and salvation. It was not a mourning like that of the woman that was a sinner, at the feet of Jesus, like that of the thief on the cross, or that of the poor publican. Ahab's repentance was utterly destitute of LOVE; and it is love which hallows all our acts and deeds, and gives them a real value.

Let us take occasion, from this conduct Ahab, to learn what is a real gracious repentance. Paul describes the latter, when, in Galatians 2:19, he says, **"For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God."** By the law to which he is dead, is to be understood here, the sum of the divine demands on man, together with the threatenings and curses attached to it.

Now, the apostle here tells us not that he has escaped like a truant from his schoolmaster, or deserted the law like others; but that he is dead to it, lawfully delivered from it, even as a woman is no longer bound to her husband, but may contract a new marriage when her first marriage is terminated by the death of her husband.

Every man, whether he knows it or not, is thus, by nature, bound to the covenant of the law. That is to say, if he obey the law perfectly, the law will reward him; if he disobey it, which he always does, he becomes liable to the penalty of its curse.

As soon then as the law vindicates its injured majesty in the conscience of anyone, the bondage of that curse is felt. Consequently the terrified individual generally undertakes to satisfy the law in the way of obedience, by his own good works; and he thinks he has ability sufficient for the purpose. But here he sets his feet upon a path, from which no one ever brought anything back but broken bones, a wounded heart, and a troubled conscience.

Alas, what does he now experience! Instead of coming forth from the mire of sin, he daily sinks deeper into it; and instead of proceeding forwards, he hourly retrogrades. His best resolutions are rendered fruitless by his failure to fulfill them; and the mournful consciousness that he is a thousand times more corrupt than he had ever supposed, and, and the vexation, anger, trouble, and chagrin, which, as the Scripture says, the law is wont to cause in every one who ventures to cope with it in his own strength—these are the only and the bitter fruit which he derives from his labor. What then is to be done?

Perfect obedience can be thought of no more; he gives up the idea of it, and seeks to come to an agreement with the law in another manner. But how? He tries to flee from the law—he turns deserter. “Why,” thinks he, “should I torment myself any longer upon a path where my sincerest endeavors are perpetually defeated!” And with this desponding thought he returns to his former vain conversation, gives the reins to his flesh, and indulges freely the desires of his heart.

But though he forsakes the law, the law does not forsake him. It pursues him, disturbs him, and surprises him, from time to time, with its awful denunciations; for these are within him, and he cannot flee from them. What is he now to do?

One way still stands open to him. He endeavors to capitulate with the law, and to come off with it on amicable terms. He resolves to keep it as well as he is able, and seeks to live according to its requirements, as far as it lies in his power; and thus he hopes it will cease to curse him so dreadfully, and allow him to comfort himself with the mercy of God as to all wherein he may still be deficient. But, however reasonable such a proposal may seem, it proves unsuccessful.

The law will not be satisfied with any partial fulfillment. It demands a perfect obedience; and however much the sinner may do, as he thinks, to the utmost of his ability, the law does not at all lower its tone of malediction, but still disquiets the conscience. Hence the poor helpless man finds no resource left, but to plead guilty at once before the tribunal of heaven, confessing that the law is just in its demands and threatenings; declaring his own moral bankruptcy, and crying with the apostle, **“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”**

Nature, indeed, strives mightily against this condemnation, recoils from pronouncing sentence against herself, and trembles at the death she has deserved. But the light shines victoriously into her darkness. The convinced soul sinks, as a man slain in battle before the foot of the throne of grace, and; with dread, distress, and amazement, exclaims, **“Woe is me, for I am undone!”**

Now, when a sinner has thus, with heartfelt seriousness, pronounced sentence against himself before the throne of God, he has begun to die to the law. For here is an end of his supposed righteousness, and of his own supposed ability to rescue himself. But that true repentance, which the Scripture calls a godly sorrow, and a repentance which needeth not to be repented of, does not therefore as yet necessarily exist. This is but, it were, dying before the divine holiness; as we see was the case of Paul, in Romans 7, **“When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.”**

Now thus dying *under* the law, and *by* the law, does not amount to dying *to* the law. The sinner, thus alarmed and humbled, is dead to the supposition of his moral excellences; but the marriage between him and law is not yet dissolved. On the contrary, this hard and severe husband and schoolmaster still rebukes and chastens him; for the sinner has yet an enmity against the law, as well as against Him who gave it. His whole nature murmurs at it; he is vexed and irritated that the law exists; he does not love it, he would rather see it destroyed, because it robs him of his peace, and puts a restraint upon his sinful flesh. Hence, his repentance is not of the right kind; he is not renewed in the spirit of his mind; and that DYING to the law, of which the apostle speaks, is still to come.

Now, this glorious and happy death comes by **“the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus”** (Romans 8:2). And this law is no other than the Gospel; whereby alone it is that true, divine, and saving repentance is called forth.

Let us, then, consider once more the case of the awakened and alarmed sinner, trembling almost on the verge of despair. His natural disposition is still opposed to the law, and the distress of his conscience forbids him to lift up his eyes to the Lord. But lo! The light of the New Testament begins to irradiate the darkness of his mind; the cross appears amidst the clouds of his distresses; the glad tidings of the Gospel sound in his ears, and reach his understanding and his heart.

And now observe what a wonderful change immediately takes place in his whole being. He hears that there is help and redemption for him; hears that the Father, in order to save him, has sent his only begotten Son into the world; hears that this Holy One has taken our sins upon himself; hears that he has paid the debt, suffered the deserved punishment, endured the wrath of God, in the sinner’s stead, and has thereby obtained eternal redemption for him.

The sinner hears it, is amazed, astonished, scarcely believes for joy, looks at his Surety, beholds his sufferings, his head crowned with thorns, his countenance beaming, with infinite love, and his heart, once pierced for sinners, full of compassion and mercy on their behalf. What feelings of gratitude spring up within him under such manifestations of the kindness and love of God his Saviour! He bows himself under the sceptre of his divine Deliverer!

Filial reverence and godly sorrow take the place of servile fear, and peaceful adoring humility supersedes the terrors of the broken law. His enmity against the law is departed. His hatred to it is changed into love; for it is the expression of the divine will of that same gracious God, to whose mercy he owes all his salvation.

Hence, he now delights in the law, and flees from sin as from a serpent. He flees from it; not because of terror and outward constraint; not from fear of punishment; but from love to the Saviour, whom he would now gladly obey in every respect, and to whose glory he heartily desires to dedicate his whole life. This, therefore, is true and divine repentance unto life; a repentance springing from faith and love.

A wonderful death has now taken place. The marriage between the law and the sinner is dissolved, and that lawfully. The law now leaves him in peace; for the believer in Christ is made **“the rightness of God in him;”** and what the law commands is now the very fruit which the good tree produces of itself, from the new principle of faith in the Son of God.

But the repentance of Ahab was not of this kind. His enmity against the law was not abolished and slain by faith and love. It was the *punishment*, and not the *sinfulness* of sin, that made him tremble. Had no curse followed, his transgressions would have pained him but little. Nay, because this punishment was delayed, he turned back into the path of destruction, and by so doing, furnished the clearest evidence that his sorrow proceeded only from selfishness, and that the dominion and love of sin still prevailed within him.

III. But though Ahab’s repentance was far from genuine, it was nevertheless regarded by the Almighty with some favor

He therefore sent his word to Elijah the Tishbite, and said to him, **“Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son’s days will I bring the evil upon his house.”**

Here was then a delay of execution; but no revocation of the sentence. The curse still rested upon Ahab and his house. Yet even this respect shown to a repentance which had so little intrinsic worth, this exemption of Ahab from personally experiencing those storms which impended over his house, was an instance of great condescension and favor.

But why, it may be asked, if Ahab’s humiliation was so little worth, was any divine regard shown towards it? This, we answer, was to show by a living example, that self-condemnation and abasement before God is the way to escape his anger, and obtain his favor. Just as a novice in any art or trade may be cheered by words of encouragement at the first favorable attempt which he makes, however far it may be from perfection; so the exemption which the Lord made in Ahab’s favor on his thus repenting was calculated, to encourage him to aim at something better. Self-condemnation, self-abasement, and giving God the glory are the first steps from spiritual death to spiritual life.

We are not, therefore, to regard it as any decisive mark of our state of grace, that we at any time experience the forbearance of God upon humbling ourselves before him; or that he at any time vouchsafes a signal answer to our cry of distress, and disperses some of the heavy clouds which impend over us. For, all this may be only as an encouragement to true and sincere repentance; it by no means proves that our praying and humbling ourselves contain anything spiritual, or that we are really restored to true friendship with God.

All history shows, that whenever any prince or people have given glory to God and his word, though only by an outward confession, it has been attended with signal blessings of Providence” But to infer from this, that, nations and princes were in special favor with God would be found unsupported by Scripture proof.

We often see persons, whom we dare not regard as truly converted to God, who nevertheless agree to all the statements and confessions of Scripture truth; they are evidently controlled by a certain dread of God’s displeasure; but they do not live in obedience to the commandments of Christ: contrary, they love the world, and the things that are in the world; and yet God temporally blesses them and their household, and they enjoy the respect and regard of persons far more piously disposed than themselves; but these external blessings must never be accounted an argument of their own state of grace; for, if they be so regarded, men may find themselves one day miserably undeceived.

God often gives many temporal blessings to such persons, that his goodness may lead to true repentance. But these temporal favors are no seals of Divine adoption. Let no one, therefore, deceive himself; for, **“except ye be born again, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.”** The best that can be said of multitudes, is what was here said of Ahab: ***“Seest thou how they humble themselves before me? because they humble themselves before me, I will not bring evil upon them in their lifetime; but at length that day shall come upon them as a thief, and they shall hear it said unto them, I know you not; depart from me!”***

Many, it is to be feared, are still in a situation similar to that of Ahab in the field of Naboth. Dreadful curses are pronounced upon them; awful judgments hang over their guilty heads; snares, fire and brimstone, storm and tempest; all which will one day discharge themselves upon such unhappy people. Only one outlet stands open to them; and this consists in true self-condemnation and self-abasement. Not that these things have any merit belonging to them; but they imply a hunger and a thirst after righteousness, and that righteousness is to be found in the Lord Jesus Christ. The moment we stretch out the hand of faith to lay hold on this righteousness, the curse is removed, and we are made accepted in the Beloved.

Let Ahab’s example ever be a warning to ourselves, lest, notwithstanding the most remarkable visitations of the Almighty, the strongest allurements, the most lively emotions—yea, notwithstanding much penitential conflict, and many answers received to our prayers—still we should fall short at last.

Take heed that your repentance exceed the repentance of Ahab, lest it should have to be repented of when it is too late. When you come to your deathbed, and with an awakened mind tremblingly behold the gates of eternity open before you, you may indeed perform a repentance which may not be unto life, except you repent now.

At such an hour there may be no word of comfort for you that will reach your heart, or heal your wounded spirit. For the repentance of a deathbed is a very ambiguous matter; it may contain no true repentance towards God, nor any true faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And this may even be made evident by the defects which it manifests.

For how often do we see such a repentance, unaccompanied by any heartfelt lamentation over the man's spiritual corruption, by any hungering or thirsting after righteousness, by any longing after fellowship with God, or by any desire of love to God!

It is nothing more than the mere shudder of nature; it is only that awful dread of the Most High which the evil spirits felt, when they besought Jesus not to command them away into the deep!

But, may God be gracious to us, and fill now us with that **“godly sorrow, which worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of!”** Let our repentance be that of affectionate children, who can have no rest till the kind but justly offended parent again looks kindly upon them; let faith and love be the life and soul of our repentance; let it prove its genuineness by an unfeigned surrender of ourselves into the Lord's hands. Then shall there be joy in heaven over us among the angels of God; then shall we have an indubitable pledge and seal of our adoption into the family of God; and hereafter all tears shall be wiped away from our eyes.

~ end of chapter 18 ~

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