

THE TILLAGE OF THE POOR

Preached at Trinity Chapel, Trinity Street, Southwark, on Thursday Evening, July 26, 1849.

“Much food is in the tillage of the poor; but there is that is destroyed for want of judgment.”- [Pr 13:23](#)

The Proverbs of Solomon contain an admirable code of moral instruction; and happy that man would be who could shape his life according to that divine code. But this we know no man can or will do, except so far as grace enables him. We can scarcely have a more vivid instance of this than the very author of the Proverbs himself. Where can we find a greater discrepancy between principles and practice than the case of Solomon affords? What! after all his warnings to beware of strange women, to be entangled in his old age, and through them to become an idolater!

But, besides this moral instruction, which I may call the upper stratum of the Proverbs, there is a deep mine of spiritual wisdom beneath. The top stratum, the surface soil, lies open to all; it requires no divine light, it needs no heavenly teaching to see what is above; but to see the deep wisdom which coucheth beneath, and to know experimentally the treasures of grace and truth that are stored below, this requires divine light to see, and divine life to feel. What is told of the fabled Midas is true of the child of God; whatever he touches by the hand of faith he turns into gold. The simplest moral instruction when touched by the hand of faith becomes a mine of spiritual wisdom.

“Much food is in the tillage of the poor; but there is that is destroyed for want of judgment.”

It will be necessary, before I enter into the spiritual and experimental meaning of these words, to explain their literal import; for this forms as it were the setting to the diamond, the ground-work on which the spiritual instruction is to be based. Only so far as we have a clear and definite view of the moral instruction enforced thereby, have we a clear and definite view of the spiritual instruction couched in it. I shall, therefore, with God’s help and blessing, endeavour,

I.-To explain the **moral** and **literal** instruction contained in our text. And,

II.-To build upon that, as my ground-work, its **spiritual** interpretation.

I.-“Much food is in the tillage of the poor.” Here we have the case of a man naturally poor described; his cultivation of the soil as to his main object and purpose. It is as though it ran thus: Here is a poor man, with a patch of

ground allotted to him. What is his object in tilling that ground? It is that he may procure food. The rich man has his parks and pleasure-grounds; he may ornament his beds and borders with shrubs and flowers; food is not his object; he can purchase that in the market. But the poor labourer must till his patch of ground: for out of that patch food is to come for his wife and family. He cannot afford any place for flowers and ornamental shrubs; he must devote every inch of his ground to one sole purpose, that of food; and he must employ all his care and industry to obtain out of it as much food as he possibly can.

And yet with all his industry, all his care, and all his attention, “there is that which is destroyed for want of judgment.” He may not possess agricultural skill; he may overcrop his ground; he may not use sufficient or proper manure; or “from want of judgment,” his wife or family may waste the food which the ground produces. For “want of judgment,” therefore in the cultivator, or in the cultivator’s family, “there is that is destroyed;” and thus, with all the labour and industry expended on this patch of ground, the result is not what might have been expected from one who has food for his object; “there is that is destroyed for the want of judgment.” This seems to me to be the **literal** meaning of the passage; and this is the ground-work upon which I shall build, as the Lord may enable me, a **spiritual** and **experimental** interpretation.

II.-Looking, then, to the **spiritual** and **experimental** interpretation of these words, we may divide our subject into two heads, corresponding with the two clauses before us. “Much food is in the tillage of the poor; but there is that is destroyed for want of judgment.”

By the “poor” we must understand the needy, naked, and destitute child of God; that character which is so often spoken of in God’s word, and to which such promises are made as this, “Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.” When John’s disciples were sent to the Lord, and a testimony of his mission was required, this was given among the marks and proofs that he was sent of God: “To the poor the gospel is preached.” “I am poor and needy” was the language of the Psalmist of old; and such will be the language of every truly God-taught soul.

But how comes a man into this state? What brings him into this condition? How is this character written on his soul? Was he always so? It is with him, as with many poor persons literally; he has known richer days; he was once in opulent circumstances. Like the Laodicean church, he could once say, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” But the work of

grace coming into his soul, divine light shining into his heart, and divine life entering his conscience, have stripped him of all this fancied opulence, and reduced him to the very depth of poverty and necessity. But what flows from this? The same thing spiritually that follows naturally: he is now **in want of food**.

You will observe that **this** was the first characteristic of the returning prodigal; he “began to be in want.” It was famine that sent him home. Whilst he had “a riotous living,” the bread in his father’s house never occurred to his mind; but when he had spent all that he had, and a mighty famine arose in the land, he “began to be in want;” and when he began to be in want, the food which was in his father’s house came to his mind; and by that he was driven and drawn home.

Thus, the grand object of the poor spiritually is **food** -food for the soul; and until we are reduced to a state of spiritual poverty, spiritual food we shall not want. I may compare a mere professor of religion, without the life of God or the power of the Spirit, to the opulent landlord to whom I was alluding. The rich nobleman had his parks and pleasure grounds, his greenhouses and his hothouses, and beautiful flowers in every direction; his object is ornamental, not food. And so, what the carnal professor of the truth, without the life of God and the power of the Spirit, seeks, is ornament. Nay, how many preachers there are who cultivate flowers, and make the pulpit an ornamental garden, instead of setting before the people food-the blood, obedience, and love of the Lord Jesus Christ. It may be all very beautiful and ornamental, but it is not what a hungry soul wants. It may do for those who have not been reduced to poverty; but the spiritually poor want food, not ornament; bread, not a stone; the finest of wheat, not a greenhouse or a grotto. But we read, “Much food is in the **tillage** of the poor;” and therefore, we pass on to consider.

What is implied by the expression, “**tillage?**” By “**tillage**” I understand two things; first, what I may call **passive** tillage; and **secondly, active** tillage.

First. Look at the child of God as **passive** in the work of grace; as we read, “Ye are God’s husbandry” [1Co 3:9](#); he is the field in which the Lord works; the ground which the Lord cultivates; the garden out of which the Lord causes food to grow. Thus, he is “God’s husbandry;” and in this sense we consider him as tillage **passively**. God’s work in the soul, in our text is likened unto the process of husbandry. “Much food is in the tillage of the poor;” the heart of the poor being the spot which God tills and cultivates. Now, until the

heart be tilled and cultivated, there is no real food; but by tilling the heart, food is produced.

1. For instance, in the first dealings of God with the soul, there is a **breaking up** of the clods that are spread over the ground, a ploughing up of the hard soil. "Break up," we read, "your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns" [Jer 4:3](#). This is needful to form a seed-bed for the word of God to take root in. When the Lord is thus pleased to plough up the heart with conviction: to break it up; to soften and moisten it with the showers and dews of his grace, he thus prepares, so to speak, a bed, a tilth, for his word to take root in, to bear a blade upwards, and eventually to ripen into food; for his object is, to bring forth food, that what may be done in the soul may become food for the soul. Thus as the Lord keeps tilling the soul, and cultivating it by his divine hand, he is bringing forth food in it and for it.

2. Thus every admonition that God drops into the soul becomes food for it. It is not food for others. You may admonish and you may warn ungodly men, but they pay no attention to your admonition; they harden their neck against all advice. But when God tills the poor, he drops the word of admonition into his conscience; and it then becomes food for his soul; it is treasured up in his heart; it brings forth some solid profit there; it is not neglected, it is not rejected, not put aside; but it becomes an abiding word that guides and leads him. "Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom."

3. So, again, reproof. We read that "a reproof entereth more into a wise man than a hundred stripes into a fool" ([Pr 17:10](#).) You may reprove a man who is walking in a wrong or forbidden path, but it will have no effect upon him, except God is pleased to bless that reproof to his conscience. But when the Lord is pleased to apply his reproofs to the heart, and speak them into the conscience, there is food produced. "To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet:" and if the reproofs of God fall into a sinner's conscience, they produce food, afford matter for meditation, bring tears to the eye, and cause contrition and grief to be felt in the heart. Thus the very reproofs of God bring forth food that the soul finds to be profitable, and which it feeds upon when brought home by the power of the Spirit.

4. So with the **promises**. What is a promise to a man except he be in a state to receive it? Promises of a pardon only suit the guilty; promises of mercy only suit the criminal; promises of restoration only suit the backslider; promises of superabounding grace only suit him who knows that sin has abounded in him. The promise must have a seed-bed wherein to lie; and

that is, the heart that God tills and cultivates by his own hand. And thus the promises, as received into a broken heart and contrite spirit, afford food; they are thought upon; they bring sweet and blessed peace into the soul; they melt the heart with a sense of God's unceasing goodness and mercy; make our affections spiritual; lift us up out of trouble; bring us away from the world; and subdue the power of sin.

Thus, there is food in all these divine things; aye, **much** food; for in the tillage of the poor, as the Lord keeps tilling the heart, no little food is brought forth. The soul really under God's tillage finds fruit in well-nigh every incident; in the leadings of providence, as well as in those passages of Scripture that God brings home to the heart; yea, every incident in life, more or less, brings forth food to him. And why? Because he is poor; and his object is food. He wants something whereby his hungry soul can be fed; his tried mind relieved; his cast-down soul encouraged; in a word, he wants something of God's own giving, that he may feed upon the bread of life.

5. And for such a person **the bread of life**, the Lord Jesus Christ, is adapted. We therefore read of "Christ in you the hope of glory" [Col 1:27](#). This is our food. "My flesh," he says, "is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed" [Joh 6:55](#). But this food is not in the letter of truth; it is felt in the openings up and discovery of his love and mercy to the soul, as received into our heart spiritually, just as the bread whereby we celebrate him is received into our mouth naturally. "To the poor the gospel is preached" and Christ is only precious to such. He is suitable to them, and they are suitable to him; he loves them, and they love him: they hunger and thirst after his flesh and blood, and he feeds them with the bread of life. And thus, there is "much food in the tillage of the poor"-this food being, in different ways, Christ.

But all the various ways, whereby God carries on his process of tillage are but for one purpose-the bringing forth of food. It is so literally. How many implements do we find devised by skilful men for the process of agriculture! But the ploughs, the scarifiers, and the clod crushers are all for one purpose, the cheaper and easier production of food. When the skilful mechanic is devising some instrument of agriculture, his object is to produce food cheaply and easily; he has no other view; this is his sole aim. And so it is with the various tillings of the poor by the hand of God. His dealings in providence, in family afflictions, in soul trouble-his

admonitions, reproofs and promises are all so many instruments of divine husbandry whereby he tills the heart; and for this sole aim and object, to bring forth food for the “poor and needy.”

Hitherto we have viewed the poor under divine cultivation as a **passive** object of God’s tillage: but we may now view him, **secondly**, as an **active** instrument in carrying on the tillage. Let me explain my meaning. While we are passive in the hand of God, we are also working with God. Observe the distinction which the Apostle makes; speaking of himself as he takes an active position; “We are labourers together with God;” yet, he adds, “Ye are God’s husbandry: ye are God’s building” [1Co 3:9](#); the objects and subjects of God’s cultivating hand.

So we may say of this poor man; he is the object of God’s operations; and thus far he is passive; but so far as he works with God, by God working in him, he is active. This is not establishing freewill; this is not giving glory to the creature; for if we “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling,” still “it is God who worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure.” If we do anything, it is from God working in us. When he works in, then we work out.

The poor man in the text, then, tills as the Lord tills him. And as the Lord works in his soul to will and to do, so he also works out those things that God works in him. I will explain my meaning more clearly by mentioning definite instances.

1. A certain **providence** has happened to you; it may have been a very cross providence. You may have lost a large sum of money; you may be reduced in worldly circumstances; you may have had a very trying affliction in your family. Now, these must be viewed by the eye of a believer as the tillage of God; the Lord meaning by these providential circumstances to till and cultivate his heart for his spiritual good; to set before him food on which he may feed for many days. Now, as the Lord gives him faith to look at this providence, he tills it; that is, the deeper he digs into the providence the more he sees the hand of God in it.

When the providence first came; when the first heavy bill became due; when the sickness first seized the child or the beloved partner, the hand of God could not be seen. We could not till the providence; we wanted wisdom and strength to do so; but after a time, as the Lord begins to till us with this providential circumstance, to open our hearts to instruction, and to give us to see his hand therein-as the Lord works thus in our souls,

we begin to till it too; we dig into it, turn it up, and ask, ‘Why did this come? What is it to do? What purpose does it serve?’ And, as faith works, we say, ‘Here is the hand of God: I was getting into a very covetous, worldly spirit; but this providential circumstance has taken place, and brought me off from that speculative pursuit or that covetous spirit in which I was indulging. There was my partner, child, or substance, on which I was idolatrously fixing my affections. When the stroke came, I could not see the hand of God in it; it cut me very deeply; I could not see then that God was tilling my heart thereby, and bringing food to my soul out of the affliction; but now I can see it; I know it was for my profit, and it has done me good.’ This is tilling the providence.

2. So again, with the **admonition** of God’s word. You have been walking in some crooked path; but an admonition has dropped into your conscience, perhaps from the pulpit, through some book, by some conversation, or some passage of Scripture applied to your heart. It has cut you deeply. You cannot see at first why and whence it is, but it works in you, and secretly stirs up the spirit of prayer in your soul; it takes you to the footstool of mercy, and causes much exercise of mind. Now you begin to till this, to dig into it, and to say, ‘How thankful I am that the Lord did admonish me.’ I might have gone I know not where; but he was pleased to admonish me through that conversation, through reading that book, or through that sermon; and through this admonition I have been brought off that path in which I was walking.

3. Or, there has been a **reproof**, and by that the Lord tilled your conscience. It was very trying; but you have put your spade into it, dug it up, and begun to till it; you now see that the reproof was from the hand of God; and you feel how good it was to be reproofed. You now say, ‘I might have hardened my neck, and perished without remedy; but now I have learnt instruction, am able to see and confess my sin and to forsake it; and by this reproof I have obtained good. It has been food to my soul.’ This is tilling it.

4. So again, some **promise** the Lord may apply to our heart. At first, faith may be very weak; we can scarcely receive it; it does not come with that sweetness and power that we want; it is almost too great for us; but still it works. It is bringing forth food. God by it is tilling the heart. But now we begin to till it ourselves, to dig into this promise; and as it is tilled, food begins to spring out of it; and that food is sweet to our taste.

5. So the **Lord Jesus Christ as the bread of life**, is brought into the heart with a divine power. The Lord having tilled the soul by afflictions and

convictions, brings into it the bread of life, and makes the Lord Jesus Christ very dear and precious. Now, as he is made thus precious to the soul, there is a tilling of him, a ploughing deeply into this rich soil of wisdom and truth, a digging as it were into the Person of Christ, an opening up of his glory and beauty, an entering into the treasure of his atoning blood, into the suitability of his covenant offices, and into the perfection of his obedience and righteousness. And the more these things are dug into, tilled, and cultivated, and the more they are opened up, the more food is brought into the soul out of them.

“Much food is in the tillage of the poor.” Others overlook these things; their hearts are not tilled by the hand of God; and thus they do not till the precious things of God which are brought forth in the heart of his children. All their religion is mere surface work; there is no breaking up of the fallow ground; it is all sowing among thorns, which spring up and choke the word; so that no fruit is brought forth to perfection.

Will you let me, with all affection and simplicity, attempt to try your state and condition by this test? It is good to have our state and condition brought to the test of God’s word. What is your soul deeply intent upon, then, when you come to hear, or read the word of God, or take up any book written upon the things of God, or when you are upon your knees before God in secret? What is the great aim of your soul in these things, so far as you are led and taught spiritually? Is it **food**? Who has come here this evening, crying, ‘Lord, let it be thy gracious pleasure to give me a smile; I want something, Lord, to feed my soul; let it please thee to cast a light upon my case; to bring some portion of thy precious word to my heart; to clear up my doubts and perplexities; to reveal Christ in me; to shed abroad thy love in my soul; and to feed me with the bread of life?’

This too is what all the servants of God should seek after-to bring forth food for the people of God. And this they will do just in proportion as God tills their hearts. As he tills their heart by afflictions, trials, and exercises, and by corresponding blessings and mercies, they will bring forth food; for recollect, “Much food is in the tillage of the poor.” There is to be “seed to the sower,” as well as “bread to the eater;” and the minister who is the sower must not only have bread for himself; he must have seed also put into his seed-basket for the benefit of others.

As he, then, is tilled in his own soul, he will till the souls of the people: he will sometimes bring out the plough, and instrumentally plough up the heart with convictions; he will sometimes take the hoe or the spade, and

hoe up the weeds of pride, self-righteousness, and covetousness which overspread the soil. In various ways, as the Lord may enable him, will he be tilling the consciences of the people, and thus food will be produced: they will feel a divine power accompanying the word and applying it to their hearts; and thus it will become food to their souls.

But we pass on to consider our **second** point, which is, “There is much that is destroyed for want of judgment.” We should hardly think that the poor would commit this waste. You that are in business do not like to see waste in your shop; you that are really industrious and frugal, and have an eye to your temporal concerns, will take care there should be as little waste as possible; waste there must be, but you make as little as you can. Should we not think, then, that the poor would take special care that there might not be waste in his department? Yes; he may take care. But we do not read, ‘There is that is destroyed for want of **care;**’ it is “the want of **judgment**” that occasions the loss. He may be very careful; but if he lack judgment, the waste will go on.

‘How do you apply this spiritually?’ it may be asked. I will endeavour to shew.

There are various ways in which waste is produced-in which food is “destroyed for want of judgment.” But, bear in mind when the Lord speaks of food being “destroyed for want of judgment,” he means it only so in a figurative sense. For instance; we read in [1Co 3:17](#); “If any man defile” **or, as it is in the margin,** destroy “the temple of God, him shall God destroy.” Again, “Destroy not with thy meat thy brother, for whom Christ died” [Ro 14:15](#). It might be asked, ‘Can the temple of God be destroyed? Can the brother for whom Christ died perish, and be destroyed by my eating meat? Can the purchase of the blood of Christ perish because I touch unclean food?’ No one who knows anything of divine truth can admit such a position for a moment. We must, therefore, explain the words in accordance with the analogy of faith. The food, then, is not really but seemingly destroyed. As to its present use, peace, and comfort it is destroyed; but there is no real destruction of it. Just as the temple of God is not destroyed, but defiled, tarnished, and its beauty marred; or, as the weak brother is not destroyed in body and soul, but though his person is not injured, his comfort and enjoyment are destroyed: so with the food in our text, “There is that is destroyed for want of judgment;” not eternally; but the comfort, the sweetness, and the enjoyment of it may be and often are “destroyed for want of judgment.”

1. Now this “want of judgment” may be seen in a case of this kind. Here is a man who perhaps once has been a flourishing professor, who thought, as Hart speaks of himself, ‘to make himself a Christian by doctrine;’ and was so beguiled by his flesh-pleasing delusion, that he thought if he received the truth in his judgment it was the same thing as embracing truth with his heart. The Lord has a purpose of mercy and love to that man; he shall not perish in this delusion; therefore to bring about these purposes of mercy and love, he reduces him to spiritual poverty and ploughs up his conscience by the plough-share of his holy law. But “for want of judgment” he cannot take a spiritual view of his own case; he does not know what God is doing to him; he feels convictions, dismal apprehensions and heart-sinkings; but does not know that God by these things is tilling his heart to bring forth food; and therefore, it is destroyed “for want of judgment.” The comfort that he might take, the blessedness in store, the real profit couched in these dealings of God with him, as to the faith and hope of his soul, are “destroyed for want of judgment” upon his own case.

2. Again, the Lord may be **admonishing** another. Some friend may have seen him walking in a perverse, inconsistent path, may have gone to him in brotherly love, and said, ‘I think, my friend, this is not a right step you are taking; this is not agreeable to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.’ But this admonition may not be well received; though it may touch his conscience, it may stir up bitter feelings in his mind. Thus for “want of judgment,” he not seeing what good this admonition is to bring about, is “destroyed,” and the food that might have come out of it is put away; and, as far as regards the individual, seems for a time wasted and lost.

3. Or, there may be a laying of him upon a **bed of affliction**. Now when thus laid there, his mind perhaps is filled with rebellion. He may be a minister; he may have been, as he thought, useful to the church of God; he may have had an affectionate church, and a large congregation; and the Lord may have blessed the word from time to time in an especial manner from his lips to the people. But he is laid aside by sickness; he can preach no longer; his heart may now rise in rebellion against God, and say ‘Why is it that I am laid aside? I see other ministers healthy and strong, who only preach confusion and error; why should I, who have been made a blessing, and endeavour to preach the truth, be laid aside?’ I say, carnal reason and rebellion may work thus in his mind. And thus, much good that might have been done to his soul, and food administered by the affliction, may be “destroyed for want of judgment.”

But during the illness, perhaps, the Lord may be teaching this minister, and leading him deeper into his vile self, and higher into the mystery of redeeming love; so that when he comes forth he may be more blessed in his work, and of greater usefulness than before? And yet, “for want of judgment” the food that might have been drawn from this affliction is, for a time “destroyed,” nor does he receive the comfort and benefit of it, because he could not pass a right judgment upon his own case.

4. So it may be with a **promise** from God’s word. We may be in a state to which a promise is very suitable; but because it does not come with all the power and sweetness we think it ought to come with, we put it away, and say, ‘This cannot be from God.’ And yet the promise was from God; for it was suitable to our case; and though it might not take the burden wholly away, it brought a measure of sweet relief. Now here again food is “destroyed,” and we lose the sweetness of it “for want of judgment.”

5. So there may be a believer who has had **sweet views of the Lord Jesus Christ**, had blessed manifestations of his goodness and love, received him into his heart, and yet because his experience was not exactly the same with Huntington’s, or Hart’s, or something of a very extraordinary nature, doubts and fears rise up in his mind whether it was a real manifestation of Christ to his soul; so that he puts it away, and does not take out of it all the sweetness and blessedness belonging to it. Here again is another instance of food “destroyed for want of judgment.”

6. So as regards the **convictions** that God implants in the conscience; the discoveries that he gives us of the evils of our heart; the acquaintance with the pride, the hypocrisy, the self-righteousness, the carnality, and wickedness of our fallen nature that he furnishes us with—there is real food in these things. And why? Because through them we are made to look out of ourselves unto the Lord Jesus Christ, as able to save us unto the uttermost from every corruption of our fallen nature. Yet it is put away “for want of judgment.” We say, ‘This cannot be the teaching of the Spirit; the Spirit exalts the Lord Jesus Christ; the Spirit makes him precious to the soul. If he were giving me sweet views of his blood and love, I might believe it was the Spirit’s teaching; but to have such a daily conflict with the evils of my heart, and to see myself so internally vile, can this be the teaching of the Spirit?’ Thus it is “destroyed,” or put away, for “want of judgment.”

With respect to the poor man literally, I intimated that the food to be produced from his patch of ground might be “destroyed” not only by his

own want of skill, but after it is raised by his industry, it might be wasted by his wife or children; and in each case from “want of judgment.” The wife may not be a good manager: or she may not keep a strict watch upon the children: and they may throw the food about, as we know children will do. And thus, “for want of judgment” in the poor, either of the husband or wife, good food might be destroyed. So it is spiritually. It is not only a man’s own want of judgment that destroys spiritual food; it is often the want of judgment **in others**. Let us apply this.

i Ministers for example, need a good sound judgment not to destroy food in the hearts of their hearers, whether publicly or privately. For instance, a child of God may come to a minister in private, and tell him his case; but he may not be able to enter into it. Perhaps this child of God may be tempted in a way that the minister himself was never tempted in; or he may be passing through an experience that the minister himself is unacquainted with; and “for want of judgment” he may be making the miserable man more miserable still; he may not pour that healing balm into his wounds which he requires. There may have been much food in the tillage of this poor man’s heart; but the minister may cut at it publicly, or trample it under foot privately, and thus destroy food “for want of judgment.”

ii But again, another man may **come before a church** with a real blessed work of grace upon his soul. But there may be a “want of judgment” in the deacons or members of the church; they may not be able to see the work of grace clearly in the man’s soul; yet it shall be clear, and perhaps a deeper work than they themselves ever knew. But they may “for want of judgment” put him back, treat him even as a hypocrite, wound his conscience, grieve his spirit, and thus destroy food “for want of judgment.”

iii It may be so also with **our professed friends**. We may have told them our temptations, and they themselves not having been exercised thereby, instead of affording us any comfort, they may turn our temptations into transgressions, and our conflicts into persecutions; and thus, where we hoped to find food, it is “destroyed for want of judgment.”

iv Or, we may have consulted a spiritual friend about a **particular leading in providence**; and he “for want of judgment” to see the leadings of God may, as far as in him lies, destroy the food which we might have received from this providential leading.

Thus whatever food there may be in the tillage of the poor **and the Lord says there is “much food in the tillage of the poor”**, too often there is that is “destroyed for want of judgment.”

But is it really destroyed? May we not fancy such a case as this? A poor man, with great industry raises a crop of wheat; it is reaped; but in the reaping or carrying there is a part wasted. The wheat he has been carefully gathering to take to the miller to make bread of, is by negligence spilt upon the soil. But is it lost? No. It may spring up, and bear a crop-though, as far as man can see, it is utterly wasted and destroyed. Or take another view. There is nothing that is really destroyed. Science tells us there is not a single particle of matter destroyed, but that every particle is as perfect now as it was in the day of creation; it assumes various forms; but it is not destroyed, being incorporated into some other body. Thus, the very smoke that curls up out of our chimneys forms food for the leaves on the trees; the very manure cast out into the street serves to fertilize the fields, and become corn.

So spiritually. There is nothing really destroyed. If I have not received from the affliction, the admonition, the reproof, the promise, all the blessings which are in it, and might reasonably have flowed from it into my soul, is it therefore destroyed? No: it assumes another shape, it is turned into another channel, it becomes food in another way. I learn lessons thereby.

If any **convictions** are cutting me up, and I cannot see the hand of God in them, I may get this food from them-they may keep me from such things again. If I have not reaped from an **admonition** all the instruction that is contained therein, it may serve me this purpose, not to walk in that path from which the admonition warned me. If I have not got from the **promise** all the sweetness that promise contained; if it be destroyed for want of judgment, that promise may come again, and the loss I may have thus sustained from unbelievably putting that promise away, may make me more careful not to put it away again. If I have **told** my friend my temptation, and my friend has betrayed my confidence, and thus destroyed that food for want of judgment, it may teach me not to commit my secrets into the ear of a friend too rashly again. If I have not derived from the **affliction** all the benefits that might have been derived from it, I have learnt this lesson from it, that only grace can make affliction profitable. Thus, there is no food absolutely destroyed; it may appear so for a time, but it comes out in another shape: it becomes food in another form.

Yet the “want of judgment,” as far as man is concerned, remains the same. Though God overrules the evil and brings good out of it, the “want of judgment” in man is the same; the sin lies at his door. The murder of Abel only delivered his soul from the sins and miseries of the world; but the sin of Cain was the same. The stones that mangled the body of Stephen, the first martyr, fell from the hands of the wicked murderers; though they only sent his soul to soar more speedily upon the wings of love into the mansions of the blest. So, if food be “destroyed for want of judgment,” let the guilt and shame fall upon the creature; for it is God’s prerogative to bring good out of evil, and from all things get to himself glory.