

# *The Dreadful Results of Sin.*

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CHAPTER I.

THE RULE BY WHICH THE GUILT OF SIN IS ESTIMATED.

*"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."—Acts 17:30, 31.*

THE text declares that God will judge the world in righteousness. I shall not at this time dwell on the *fact* that God will judge the world, nor upon the fact that this judgment will be in righteousness; but shall endeavour to ascertain what is the rule by which our guilt is to be measured; or in other words what is implied in judging the world in righteousness. What is the righteous rule by which guilt is measured, and consequently the just punishment of the sinner allotted?

In pursuing this subject, I shall deem it important:

I. TO STATE BRIEFLY WHAT THE CONDITIONS OF MORAL OBLIGATION ARE; *and*

II. COME DIRECTLY TO THE MAIN POINT, THE RULE BY WHICH GUILT IS TO BE MEASURED.

***I. State briefly what the conditions of moral obligation are.***

1. Moral obligation has respect to the ultimate intention of the mind. The end had in view, and not the mere external act, must evermore be that to which law pertains and of which guilt is predicated. Surely guilt cannot be predicated of the outward act merely, apart from intention: for if the outward act be not according to the intention, as in the case of accidents, we never think of imputing guilt; and if it be according to the intention, we always, when we act rationally, ascribe the guilt to the intention, and not to the mere hand or tongue, which became the mind's organ in its wickedness.

This is a principle which everybody admits when he understands it. The thing itself lies among the intuitive affirmations of every child's mind. No sooner has a child the first idea of right and wrong, but he will excuse himself from blame by saying that he did not mean to do it, and he knows full well, that if this excuse be true it is valid and good as an excuse; and moreover he knows that you and everybody else both know this and must admit it. This sentiment thus pervades the minds of all men and none can intelligently deny it.

2. Having premised so much, I am prepared to remark that the first condition of moral obligation is the possession of the requisite powers of moral agency. There must be intelligence enough to understand in some measure the value of the end to be chosen or not chosen, else there can be no responsible choice. There must be some degree of sensibility to good sought, or evil shunned; else there never would be any action put forth, or effort made; and there must also be the power of choice between possible courses to be chosen. These are all most manifestly requisites for moral choice, or in other words for responsible moral action and obligation.

3. It is essential to moral obligation that the mind should know in some measure, what it ought to intend. It must have some apprehension of the value of the end to be chosen, else there can be no responsible choice of that end, or responsible neglect to choose it. Everybody must see this, for if the individual when asked, why he did not choose a given end, could answer truly, "I did not know that the end was valuable and worthy of choice"; all men would deem this a valid acquittal from moral delinquency.

4. Supposing the individual to know what he ought to choose, then his obligation to choose it does not grow out of the fact of God's requiring it, but lies in the value of the end to be chosen. I have said that he must perceive the end to be chosen, and in some measure understand its value. This is plain. And this apprehension of its value is that which binds him to choose it. In other words, the moral law which enjoins love, or good willing must be subjectively present to his mind. His mind must have a perception of good which he can will to others, in connection with which a sense of obligation to will it springs up, and this constitutes moral obligation. These are substantially the conditions of moral obligation; the requisite mental powers for moral action; and a knowledge of the intrinsic value of the good of being.

Before leaving this topic, let me remark that very probably, no two creatures in the moral universe have precisely the same degree of intelligence respecting the value of the end they ought to choose; yet shall moral obligation rest upon all these diverse degrees of knowledge, proportioned ever more in degree to the measure of this knowledge which any mind possesses. God alone has infinite and changeless knowledge on this point.

***II. I come now to speak of the rule by which the guilt of refusing to will or intend according to the law of God must be measured.***

1. Negatively, guilt is not to be measured by the fact that God who commands is an infinite being. The measure of guilt has sometimes been made to turn on this fact, and has been accounted infinite because God whose commands it violates is infinite. But this doctrine is inadmissible. It lies fatally open to this objection, that by it all sin is made to be equally guilty, because all sin is equally committed against an infinite being. But both the Bible and every man's intuitive reason proclaim that all sins are not equally

guilty. Hence the measure or rule of their guilt cannot be in the fact of their commission against an infinite being.

2. Guilt cannot be measured by the fact that God's authority against which sin is committed is infinite. Authority is the right to command. No one denies that this in God is infinite. But this fact cannot constitute the measure of guilt, for precisely the reason just given—namely, that then all sin becomes equally guilty, being all committed against infinite authority; which conclusion is false, and therefore the premises are also.

3. The degree of guilt cannot be estimated by the fact that all sin is committed against an infinitely holy and good being; for reasons of the same kind as just given.

4. Nor from the value of the law of which sin is a transgression; for though all admit that the law is infinitely good and valuable, yet since it is always equally so, all sin by this rule must be equally guilty—a conclusion which being false, vitiates and sets aside our premises.

5. The rule cannot lie in the value of that which the law requires us to will, intend or choose, considered apart from the mind's perception of the value; for the intrinsic value of this end is always the same, so that this rule too, as the preceding, would bring us to the conclusion that all sins are equally guilty.

6. Guilt is not to be measured by the tendency of sin. All sin tends to one result—unmingled evil. No created being can tell what sins have the most direct and powerful tendency to produce evil; since all sin tends to produce evil and only evil continually. Every modification of sin may for aught we know tend with equal directness to the same result—evil, and nothing but evil.

7. Guilt cannot be measured by the design or ultimate intention of the sinner. It does indeed lie in his design and in nothing else; yet you cannot determine the amount of it by merely knowing his design; for this design is always substantially the same thing—it is always self-gratification in some form, and nothing else. We need to get this idea thoroughly into our minds. The general design of the sinner being always self-gratification, and it making very little if any difference in his guilt what form of self-gratification he chooses, it follows that the measure of guilt cannot be sought here, and must therefore be sought elsewhere.

8. But it is time I should state, positively, that guilt is always to be estimated by the degree of light under which the sinful intention is formed, or in other words, it is to be measured by the mind's knowledge or perception of the value of that end which the law requires to be chosen. This end is the highest well-being of God and of the universe. This is of infinite value; and in some sense every moral agent must know it to be of

infinite value, and yet individuals may differ indefinitely in respect to the degree of clearness with which this great end is apprehended by the mind. Choosing this end—the highest well-being of God and of the universe—always implies the rejection of self-interest as an end; and on the other hand, the choice of self-interest or self-gratification as an end always and necessarily implies the rejection of the highest well-being of God and of the universe as an end. The choice of either implies the rejection of its opposite.

Now the sinfulness of a selfish choice consists not merely in its choice of good to self, but in its implying a rejection of the highest well-being of God and of the universe as a supreme and ultimate end. If selfishness did not imply the apprehension and rejection of other and higher interests as an end, it would not imply any guilt at all. The value of the interests rejected is that in which the guilt consists. In other words, the guilt consists in rejecting the infinitely valuable well-being of God and of the universe for the sake of selfish gratification.

Now it is plain that the amount of guilt is as the mind's apprehension of the value of the interests rejected. In some sense, as I have said, every moral agent has and must of necessity have the idea that the interests of God and of the universe are of infinite value. He has this idea, developed so clearly that every sin he commits deserves endless punishment, and yet the degree of his guilt may be greatly enhanced by additional light, so that he may deserve punishment not only endless in duration but indefinitely great in degree. Nor is there any contradiction in this. If the sinner cannot affirm that there is any limit to the value of the interests he refuses to will and to pursue, he cannot of course affirm that there is any limit to his guilt and desert of punishment. This is true and must be true of every sin and of every sinner; and yet as light increases and the mind gains a clearer apprehension of the infinite value of the highest well-being of God and of the universe, just in that proportion does the guilt of sin increase. Hence the measure of knowledge possessed of duty and its motives, is always and unalterably the rule by which guilt is to be measured.

The proof of this is twofold.

### **1. *The Scriptures assume and affirm it.***

The text affords a plain instance. The apostle alludes to those past ages when the heathen nations had no written revelation of God, and remarks that "those times of ignorance God winked at." This does not mean that God connived at their sin because of their darkness, but does mean that he passed over it with comparatively slight notice, regarding it as sin of far less aggravation than those which men would now commit if they turned away when God commanded them all to repent. True, sin is never absolutely a light thing; but comparatively, some sins incur small guilt when compared with the great guilt of other sins. This is implied in our text.

I next cite James 4:17. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." This plainly implies that knowledge is indispensable to moral obligation; and even more than this is implied; namely, that the guilt of any sinner is always equal to the amount of his knowledge on the subject. It always corresponds to the mind's perception of the value of the end which should have been chosen, but is rejected. If a man knows he ought in any given case to do good, and yet does not do it, to him this is sin—the sin plainly lying in the fact of not doing good when he knew he could do it, and being measured as to its guilt by the degree of that knowledge.

John 9:41—"Jesus said unto them, if ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, we see; therefore your sin remaineth." Here Christ asserts that men without knowledge would be without sin; and that men who have knowledge, and sin notwithstanding, are held guilty. This plainly affirms that the presence of light or knowledge is requisite to the existence of sin, and obviously implies that the amount of knowledge possessed is the measure of the guilt of sin.

It is remarkable that the Bible everywhere assumes first truths. It does not stop to prove them, or even assert them—it always assumes their truth, and seems to assume that every one knows and will admit them. As I have been recently writing on moral government and studying the Bible as to its teachings on this class of subjects, I have been often struck with this remarkable fact.

John 15:22, 24—"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sins. He that hateth me, hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hateth both me and my Father." Christ holds the same doctrine here as in the last passage cited—light essential to constitute sin, and the degree of light, constituting the measure of its aggravation. Let it be observed, however, that Christ probably did not mean to affirm in the absolute sense that if he had not come, the Jews would have had *no sin*; for they would have had some light if he had not come. He speaks as I suppose comparatively. Their sin if he had not come would have been so much less as to justify his strong language.

Luke 12:47, 48—"And that servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

Here we have the doctrine laid down and the truth assumed that men shall be punished according to knowledge. To whom much light is given, of him shall much obedience be

required. This is precisely the principle that God requires of men according to the light they have.

1 Tim. 1:13—"Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." Paul had done things intrinsically as bad as well they could be; yet his guilt was far less because he did them under the darkness of unbelief; hence he obtained mercy, when otherwise, he might not. The plain assumption is that his ignorance abated from the malignity of his sin, and favoured his obtaining mercy.

In another passage (Acts 26:9), Paul says of himself—"I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." This had everything to do with the degree of his guilt in rejecting the Messiah, and also with his obtaining pardon.

Luke 23:34—"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." This passage presents to us the suffering Jesus, surrounded with Roman soldiers and malicious scribes and priests, yet pouring out his prayer for them, and making the only plea in their behalf which could be made—"for they know not what they do." This does not imply that they had no guilt, for if that were true they would not have needed forgiveness; but it did imply that their guilt was greatly palliated by their ignorance. If they had known him to be the Messiah, their guilt might have been unpardonable.

Matt. 11:20-24—"Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazine, woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee." But why does Christ thus upbraid these cities? Why denounce so fearful a woe on Chorazin and Capernaum? Because most of his mighty works had been wrought there. His oft-repeated miracles which proved him the Messiah had been wrought before their eyes. Among them he had taught daily, and in their synagogues every Sabbath day. They had great light; hence their great—their unsurpassed guilt. Not even the men of Sodom had guilt to compare with theirs. The city most exalted, even as it were to heaven, must be brought down to the deepest hell. Guilt and punishment, evermore, according to light enjoyed but resisted.

Luke 11:47-51—"Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation. From the blood of Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation." Now here, I ask, on what principle was it that all the blood of martyred prophets ever since the world began was required of that generation? Because they deserved it; for God does no such thing as injustice. It never was known that He punished any people or any individual beyond their desert.

But why and how did they deserve this fearful and augmented visitation of the wrath of God for past centuries of persecution?

The answer is twofold: *they sinned against accumulated light: and they virtually endorsed all the persecuting deeds of their fathers*, and concurred most heartily in their guilt. They had all the oracles of God. The whole history of the nation lay in their hands. They knew the blameless and holy character of those prophets who had been martyred; they could read the guilt of their persecutors and murderers. Yet under all this light, themselves go straight on and perpetrate deeds of the same sort, but of far deeper malignity.

Again, in doing this they virtually endorse all that their fathers did. Their conduct towards the Man of Nazareth, put into words would read thus, "The holy men whom God sent to teach and rebuke our fathers, they maliciously traduced and put to death; *they did right*, and we will do the same thing towards Christ." Now it was not possible for them to give a more decided sanction to the bloody deeds of their fathers. They underwrote for every crime—assume upon their own consciences all the guilt of their fathers. *In intention*, they do those deeds over again. They say, "If we had lived then we should have done and sanctioned all they did."

On the same principle the accumulated guilt of all the blood and miseries of slavery since the world began rests on this nation now. The guilt involved in every pang, every tear, every blood-drop forced out by the knotted scourge—all lies at the door of this generation. Why? Because the history of all the past is before the pro-slavery men of this generation, and they endorse the whole by persisting in the practice of the same system and of the same wrongs. No generation before us ever had the light on the evils and the wrongs of Slavery that we have; hence our guilt exceeds that of any former generation of slave-holders; and, moreover, knowing all the cruel wrongs and miseries of the system from the history of the past, every persisting slave-holder endorses all the

crimes and assumes all the guilt involved in the system and evolved out of it since the world began.

Rom. 7:13—"Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, worketh death in me by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." The last clause of this verse brings out clearly the principle that under the light which the commandment, that is, the law, affords, sin becomes exceedingly guilty. This is the very principle, which, we have seen, is so clearly taught and implied in numerous passages of Scripture.

The diligent reader of the Bible knows that these are only a part of the texts which teach the same doctrine; we need not adduce any more.

2. I remark that this is the rule and the only just rule by which the guilt of sin can be measured. If I had time to turn the subject over and over—time to take up every other conceivable supposition—I could show that none of them can possibly be true. No supposition can abide a close examination except this, that the rule or measure of guilt is the mind's knowledge pertaining to the value of the end to be chosen.

There can be no other criterion by which guilt can be measured. It is the value of the end chosen which constitutes sin guilty, and the mind's estimate of that value measures its own guilt. This is true according to the Bible as we have seen; and every man needs only consult his own consciousness faithfully and he will see that it is equally affirmed by the mind's own intuition to be right.

A few *inferences* may be drawn from our doctrine.

1. Guilt is not to be measured by the *nature* of the intention; for sinful intention is always a unit—always one and the same thing—being nothing more nor less than self-gratification.

2. Nor can it be measured by the particular type of self-gratification which the mind may prefer. No matter which of his numerous appetites or propensities man may choose to indulge—whether for food, for strong drink—for power, pleasure or gain—it is the same thing in the end—self-gratification, and nothing else. For the sake of this he sacrifices every other conflicting interest, and herein lies his guilt. Yet since he tramples on the greater good of others with equal recklessness, whatever type of self-gratification he prefers, it is plain that we cannot find in this type any true measure of his guilt.

3. Nor again is the guilt to be decided by the amount of evil which the sin may bring into the universe. An agent not enlightened may introduce great evil and yet no guilt attach to this agent. This is true of evil often done by brute animals. It is true of the mischiefs

effected by alcohol. In fact it matters not how much or how little evil may result from the misdeeds of a moral agent, you cannot determine the amount of his guilt from this circumstance. God may overrule the greatest sin so that but little evil shall result from it, or he may leave its tendencies uncounteracted so that great evils shall result from the least sin. Who can tell how much or how little overruling agency may interpose between any sin great or small and its legitimate results?

Satan sinned in betraying Judas, and Judas sinned in betraying Christ. Yet God so overruled these sins that most blessed results to the universe followed from Christ's betrayal and consequent death. Shall the sins of Satan and Judas be estimated by the evils actually resulting from them? If it should appear that the good immensely overbalanced the evil, does their sin thereby become holiness—meritorious holiness? Is their guilt at all the less for God's wisdom and love in overruling it for good? It is not therefore the amount of resulting good or evil which determines the amount of guilt, but is the degree of light enjoyed, under which the sin is committed.

4. Nor again can guilt be measured by the common opinions of men. Men associated in society are wont to form among themselves a sort of public sentiment which becomes a standard for estimating guilt; yet how often is it erroneous? Christ warns us against adopting this standard, and also against ever judging according to the outward appearance. Who does not know that the common opinions of men are exceedingly incorrect? It is indeed wonderful to see how far they diverge in all directions from the Bible standard.

5. The amount of guilt can be determined, as I have said, only by the degree in which those ideas are developed which throw light upon obligation. Just here sin lies, in resisting the light and acting in opposition to it, and therefore the degree of light should naturally measure the amount of guilt incurred.

### **REMARKS.**

1. We see from this subject the principle on which many passages of Scripture are to be explained. It might seem strange that Christ should charge the blood of all the martyred prophets of past ages on that generation. But the subject before us reveals the principle upon which this is done and ought to be done.

Whatever of apparent mystery may attach to the fact declared in our text, "The times of this ignorance God winked at"—finds in our subject an adequate explanation. Does it seem strange that for ages God should pass over almost without apparent notice the monstrous and reeking abominations of the Heathen world? The reason is found in their ignorance. Therefore God winks at those odious and cruel idolatries. For all, taken together, are a trifle compared with the guilt of a single generation of enlightened men.

2. One sinner may be in such circumstances as to have more light and knowledge than the whole Heathen world. Alas! how little the Heathen know! How little compared with what is known by sinners in this land, even by very young sinners!

Let me call up and question some impenitent sinner of Oberlin. It matters but little who—let it be any Sabbath-school child.

What do you know about God?

I know that there is one God and only one. The Heathen believe there are hundreds of thousands.

What do you know about this God?

I know that he is infinitely great and good. But the Heathen thinks some of his gods are both mean and mischievous—wicked as can be and the very patrons of wickedness among men.

What do you know about salvation?

I know that God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son to die that whosoever would believe in him might live for ever. Oh! the Heathen never heard of that. They would faint away methinks in amazement if they should hear and really believe the startling, glorious fact. And that Sabbath-school child knows that God gives his Spirit to convince of sin. He has perhaps often been sensible of the presence and power of that Spirit. But the Heathen know nothing of this.

You too know that you are immortal—that beyond death there is still a conscious unchanging state of existence, blissful or wretched according to the deeds done here. But the Heathen have no just ideas on this subject. It is to them as if all were a blank.

The amount of it then is that you know everything—the Heathen almost nothing. You know all you need to know to be saved, to be useful—to honour God and serve your generation according to his will. The Heathen sit in deep darkness, wedded to their abominations, groping, yet finding nothing.

As your light therefore, so is your guilt immeasurably greater than theirs. Be it so that their idolatries are monstrous—your guilt in your impenitence under the light you have is vastly more so. See that Heathen mother dragging her shrieking child and tumbling it into the Ganges! See her rush with another to throw him into the burning arms of Moloch. Mark: see that pile of wood flashing, lifting up its lurid flames toward heaven. Those men are dragging a dead husband—they heave his senseless corpse upon that

burning pile. There comes the widow—her hair disheveled and flying—gaily festooned for such a sacrifice; she dances on; she rends the air with her howls and her wailings; she shrinks and yet she does not shrink—she leaps on the pile, and the din of music with the yell of spectators buries her shrieks of agony; she is gone! Oh! my blood curdles and runs cold in my veins; my hair stands on end; I am horrified with such scenes—but what shall we say of their guilt? Ah yes! what do they know of God—of worship—of the claims of God upon their heart and life? Ah! you may well spare your censure of the Heathen for their fearful orgies of cruelty and lust, and give it where light has been enjoyed and resisted.

3. You see then that often a sinner in some of our congregations may know more than all the Heathen world know. If this be true, what follows from it as to the amount of his comparative guilt? This inevitably, *that such a sinner deserves a direr and deeper damnation than all the Heathen world!* This conclusion may seem startling; but how can we escape from it? We cannot escape. It is as plain as any mathematical demonstration. This is the principle asserted by Christ when he said, "That servant which knew his Lord's will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." How solemn and how pungent the application of this doctrine would be in this congregation! I could call out many a sinner in this place and show him that beyond question his guilt is greater than that of all the Heathen world. Yet how few ever estimated their own guilt thus.

Not long since an ungodly young man, trained in this country, wrote back from the Sandwich Islands a glowing and perhaps a just description of their horrible abominations, moralizing on their monstrous enormities and thanking God that he had been born and taught in a Christian land. Indeed! he might well have spared this censure of the dark-minded Heathen. His own guilt in remaining an impenitent sinner under all the light of Christian America was greater than the whole aggregate guilt of all those Islands.

So we may all well spare our expressions of abhorrence at the guilty abominations of idolatry. You are often perhaps saying in your heart, why does God endure these horrid abominations another day? See that rolling car of juggernaut. Its wheels move axle deep in the gushing blood and crushed bones of its deluded worshippers! And yet God looks on and no red bolt leaps from his right hand to smite such wickedness. They are indeed guilty; but Oh, how small their guilt compared with the guilt of those who know their duty perfectly, yet never do it! God sees their horrible abominations, yet does he wink at them because they are done in so much ignorance

But see that impenitent sinner. Convicted of his sin under the clear gospel light that shines all around him, he is driven to pray. He knows he ought to repent, and almost

thinks he wants to, and will try. Yet still he clings to his sins, and will not give up his heart to God. Still he holds his heart in a state of impenitence. Now mark here; his sin in thus withholding his heart from God under so much light, involves greater guilt than all the abominations of the Heathen world. Put together the guilt of all those widows who immolate themselves on the funeral pile—of those who hurl their children into the Ganges, or into the burning arms of Moloch—all does not begin to approach the guilt of that convicted sinner's prayer who comes before God under the pressure of his conscience, and prays a heartless prayer, determined all the while to withhold his heart from God. Oh! why does this sinner thus tempt God, and thus abuse his love, and thus trample on his known authority? Oh! that moment of impenitence, while his prayers are forced by conscience from his burning lips, and yet he will not yield the controversy with his Maker—that moment involves direr guilt than rests on all the Heathen world together! He knows more than they all, yet sins despite of all his knowledge. The many stripes belong to him—the few to them.

4. This leads me to remark again, that the Christian world may very well spare their revilings and condemnations of the Heathen. Of all the portions of earth's population, Christendom is infinitely the most guilty Christendom, where the gospels peal from ten thousand pulpits—where its praises are sung by a thousand choirs, but where many thousand hearts that know God and duty, refuse either to reverence the one or perform the other! All the abominations of the Heathen world are a mere trifle compared with the guilt of Christendom. We may look down upon the filth and meanness and degradation of a Heathen people, and feel a most polite disgust at the spectacle—and far be it from me, to excuse these degrading, filthy or cruel practices; but how small their light, and consequently their guilt, compared with our own! We therefore ask the Christian world to turn away from the spectacle of Heathen degradation, and look nearer home, upon the spectacle of Christian guilt! Let us look upon ourselves.

5. Again, let us fear not to say what you must all see to be true, that the nominal church is the most guilty part of Christendom. It cannot for a moment be questioned, that the church has more light than any other portion; therefore has she more guilt. Of course I speak of the nominal church—not the real church whom he has pardoned and cleansed from her sins. But in the nominal church, think of the sins that live and riot in their corruption. See that backslider? He has tasted the waters of life. He has been greatly enlightened. Perhaps he has really known the Lord by true faith—and then see, he turns away to beg the husks of earthly pleasure! He turns his back on the bleeding Lamb! Now, put together all the guilt of every Heathen soul that has gone to hell—of every soul that has gone from a state of utter moral darkness, and your guilt, backsliding Christian, is greater than all theirs!

Do you, therefore, say, may God then, have mercy on my soul? So say we all; but we must add if *it be possible*; for who can say that such guilt as yours can be forgiven! Can

Christ pray for you as he prayed for his murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do?" Can he plead in your behalf, that you knew not what you were doing? Awful! awful! Where is the sounding line that shall measure the ocean-depth of your guilt?

6. Again, if our children remain in sin, we may cease to congratulate ourselves that they were not born in Heathenism or slavery! How often have I done this! How often, as I have looked upon my sons and daughters, have I thanked God that they were not born to be thrown into the burning arms of a Moloch, or to be crushed under the wheels of juggernaut! But if they will live in sin, we must suspend our self-congratulations for their having Christian light and privileges. If they will not repent, it were infinitely better for them to have been born in the thickest Pagan darkness—better to have been thrown in their tender years into the Ganges, or into the fires which idolatry kindles—better be anything else, or suffer anything earthly, than have the gospel's light only to shut it out and go to hell despite of its admonitions.

Let us not, then, be hasty in congratulating ourselves, as if this great light enjoyed by us and by our children, were of course a certain good to them; but this we may do—we may rejoice that God will honour himself—his mercy if he can, and his justice if he must. God will be honoured, and we may glory in this. But Oh, the sinner, the sinner! Who can measure the depth of his guilt, or the terror of his final doom! It will be more tolerable for all the Heathen world together than for you.

7. It is time that we all understood this subject fully, and appreciated all its bearings. It is no doubt true, that however moral our children may be, they are more guilty than any other sinners under heaven, if they live in sin, and will not yield to the light under which they live. We may be perhaps congratulating ourselves on their fair morality; but if we saw their case in all its real bearings, our souls would groan with agony—our bowels would be all liquid with anguish—our very hearts within us would heave as if volcanic fires were kindled there—so deep a sense should we have of their fearful guilt and of the awful doom they incur in denying the Lord that bought them and setting at naught a known salvation. Oh! if we ever pray, we should pour out our prayers for our offspring as if nothing could ever satisfy us or stay our importunity, but the blessings of a full salvation realised in their souls.

Let the mind contemplate the guilt of these children. I could not find a Sabbath-school child, perhaps not one in all Christendom, who could not tell me more of God's salvation than all the Heathen world know. That dear little boy who comes from his Sabbath school knows all about the gospel. He is almost ready to be converted, but not quite ready; yet that little boy, if he knows his duty and yet will not do it, is covered with more guilt than all the Heathen world together. Yes, that boy, who goes alone and prays, yet holds back his heart from God, and then his mother comes and prays over him, and

pours her tears on his head, and his little heart almost melts, and he seems on the very point of giving up his whole heart to the Saviour; yet if he will not do it, he commits more sin in that refusal than all the sin of all the Heathen world—his guilt is more than the guilt of all the murders, all the drownings of children, and burnings of widows, and deeds of cruelty and violence in all the Heathen world. All this combination of guilt shall not be equal to the guilt of the lad who knows his duty, but will not yield his heart to its righteous claims.

8. "The Heathen," says an apostle, "sin without law, and shall therefore perish, without law." In their final doom they will be cast away from God; this will be perhaps about all. The bitter reflection, "I had the light of the gospel and would not yield to it. I knew all my duty, yet did not" this cannot be a part of their eternal doom. This is reserved for those who gather themselves into our sanctuaries and around our family altars, yet will not serve their own Infinite Father.

9. One more remark. Suppose I should call out a sinner by name—one of the sinners of this congregation, a son of pious parents—and should call up the father also. I might say, Is this your son? Yes. What testimony can you bear about this son of yours? I have endeavoured to teach him all the ways of the Lord. Son, what can you say? I know my duty. I have heard it a thousand times. I know I ought to repent, but I never would.

Oh! if we understood this matter in all its bearings, it would fill every bosom with consternation and grief. How would our bowels hum and heave as a volcano! There would be one universal outcry of anguish and terror at the awful guilt and fearful doom of such a sinner!

Young man, are you going away this day in your sins? Then, what angel can compute your guilt? Oh! how long has Jesus held out his hands, yes, his bleeding hands, and besought you to look and live! A thousand times, and in countless varied ways has he called, but you have refused; stretched out his hands, and you have not regarded. Oh! why will you not repent? Why not say at once, It is enough that I have sinned so long! I cannot live so any longer! *O sinner, why will you live so? Would you go down to hell—ah, to the deepest hell—where, if we would find you, we must work our way down a thousand years through ranks of lost spirits less guilty than you, ere we could reach the fearful depth to which you have sunk? O sinner, what a hell is that which can adequately punish such guilt as thine!*

## CHAPTER II.

### THE SELF-HARDENING SINNER'S DOOM.

*"He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."*—Proverbs 29:1.

IN discussing this subject I will consider:

I. WHEN AND HOW PERSONS ARE REPROVED;

II. GOD'S DESIGN IN REPROVING SINNERS;

III. WHAT IT IS TO HARDEN THE NECK;

IV. WHAT IS INTENDED BY THE SINNER'S BEING SUDDENLY DESTROYED; and

V. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN ITS BEING WITHOUT REMEDY.

### **I. *When and how persons are reprov'd.***

God's reproof of sinners may properly be considered as embracing three distinct departments; namely, reproof by means of *his word*, by means of his *providence*, and through his *Spirit*. My limits will allow me to make only a few suggestions under each of these heads.

1. God reprov's the sinner by his word whenever he in any way presents truth to his mind through his word, which shows the sinner his sins, which reveals to him duties that he is not performing. Any such revelation of duties not done, and of sins positively committed, is reproof from God. Suppose you are a parent, and you point out to your child some neglect of duty. You by this act reprove your child. There may be connected with this some degree of threatening explicitly announced, or there may not be; in either case it is reproof: for it must always be understood that threatening is involved. Hence if you call the attention of your child to anything in his conduct which displeases you, this very act is reproof. So when God by the revealed truth of his word calls the sinner's attention to the fact of sin, he virtually reprov's him, and this is God's intention in calling his mind to the fact of his sin.

2. By God's providence sinners are reprov'd, when their selfish projects are defeated. Sinful men are continually planning selfish schemes, and God often through his providence frustrates those schemes; and does so for the very purpose of reprov'ing their projectors. He could not rebuke them in a more emphatic way than this.

Sinners often frame *ambitious* projects. The student seeks for himself a great name as a scholar; in other spheres, men seek the renown of the warrior, or the civilian—their aspiration being to enroll their names high above their fellows on the pillar of fame; but

God in his providence blasts their hopes, frustrates their plans, and would fain make them see that they had better by far get their names written in the Lamb's book of life. So he blots out their name on Ambition's scroll as fast as they can write it there—as if he would show them their folly, and allure them to write it where no power can ever erase it.

Again, it often happens that men by means of their selfishness become involved in difficulty; perhaps by a selfish use of their property, or by a selfish indulgence of their tongues; and God springs his net upon them and suddenly they are taken, and find themselves suddenly brought up to *think* of their ways, and to experience the mischiefs of their selfish schemes. How often do we see this! Men make haste to be rich, and start some grasping scheme of selfishness for this purpose; but God suddenly springs his net upon them—blasts their schemes, and sets them to thinking whether there be not "a God in heaven who minds the affairs of men."

Another man finds himself entangled in lawsuits, and his property melts away like an April snow; and another pushes into some hazardous speculation—till the frown of the Almighty rebukes his folly.

As men have a thousand ways to develop their selfishness, so God has a thousand ways to head them back in their schemes and suggest forcibly to their minds that "this their way is their folly." In all such cases men ought to regard themselves as taken in the net of God's providence. God meets them in the narrow way of their selfishness, to talk with them about the vanity and folly of their course.

Everything which is adapted to arrest the attention of men in their sins may be regarded as a providential reproof. Thus, when God comes among sinners and cuts down some of their companions in iniquity, how solemn often are those dispensations! Often have I had opportunity to notice these effects. Often have I seen how solemn the minds of sinners become under these reproofs of the Almighty. Their feelings become tender; their sensibilities to truth are strongly excited. Who can fail to see that such events are designed to arrest the attention, and to rebuke and reprove them in their course of sin?

Every obstacle which God in his providence interposes in your way of selfishness, is *his* reproof. You can regard it in no other light.

God sometimes reproves sinners in a way which may be deemed more pungent than any other. I allude to that way which the Bible describes as heaping coals of fire on an enemy's head. A man abuses you; and in retaliation you do him all the good in your power. Glorious retaliation! How it pours the scorching lava on his head! Now God often does this very thing with sinners. They sin against him most abusively and most outrageously; and what does he do? How does he retaliate upon them? Only by pouring

out upon them a yet richer flood of mercies! He pours new blessings into their lap till it runs over. He prospers their efforts for property, enlarges their families like a flock, and smiles on everything to which they put their hand. Oh, how strangely do these mercies contrast with the sinner's abuse of his great Benefactor!

I can recollect some cases of this sort in my own experience, when the deep consciousness of guilt made me apprehend some great judgments from God. But just then, God seemed in a most remarkable manner to reveal his kindness and his love, and to show the great meekness of his heart. Oh, what a rebuke of my sins was this! Could anything else so break my heart all to pieces? Who does not know the power of kindness to melt the heart?

So God rebukes the sinner for his sins, and seeks to subdue his hard heart by manifested love.

Often sickness is to be regarded as a rebuke from God. When persons for selfish purposes abuse their health and God snatches it away, he in a most forcible way rebukes them for their madness.

Sometimes he brings the lives of men into great peril, so that there shall be but a step between them and death; as if he would give this movement of his providence a voice of trumpet-power to forewarn them of their coming doom. So various and striking are the ways of God's providence in which he reproveth men for their sins.

3. God also reproveth men by his Spirit. According to our Saviour's teachings, the Spirit shall "reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." Hence when sinners are specially convicted of sin they should know that God has come in his own person to reprove them. His spirit comes to their very hearts, and makes impressions of truth and duty there—revealing to the sinner his own heart, and showing him how utterly at variance it is with a heart full of divine love.

Again, I have no doubt that in the present as in former days God reproveth men of their sins by means of dreams. If all the reliable cases of this sort which have occurred since the Bible was completed were recorded, I doubt not they would fill many volumes. I am aware that some suppose this mode of divine operation upon the human mind has long ago ceased; but I think otherwise. It may have ceased to be a medium of revealing new truth—doubtless it has; but it has not ceased to be employed as a means of impressing and enforcing truth already revealed. Sometimes the great realities of the coming judgment and of the world of doom are brought out and impressed upon the mind with overwhelming force by means of dreams. When this is the case, who shall say that the hand of the Lord is not in it?

A striking instance of a dream in which the hand of the Lord may be seen, is related by President Edwards. One of his neighbours, an intemperate man, dreamed that he died and went to hell. I will not attempt to relate here the circumstances that according to his dream occurred there. Suffice it to say that he obtained permission to return to earth on probation for one year, and was told distinctly that if he did not reform within one year, he must come back again. Upon this he awaked, under most solemn impressions of the dreadful realities of the sinner's hell. That very morning he went to see his pastor, Pres. Edwards, who said to him, "This is a solemn warning from God to your soul. You must give heed to it and forsake your sins, or you are a ruined man for eternity." The man made very solemn promises. When he had retired, Edwards opened his journal and made an entry of the principal facts: the dream, the conversation, and of course the *date* of these events. The inebriate reformed and ran well for a time; attended church and seemed serious; but long before the year came round, he relapsed, returned to his cups, and ultimately in a fit of intoxication opened a chamber door in a shop which led down an outside stairway—pitched headlong and broke his neck. Pres. Edwards turned to his journal and found that the one year from the date of his dream came round that very night, and the man's appointed time was up!

Now it is no doubt true that in general, dreams are under the control of physical law, and follow, though with much irregularity, the strain of our waking reveries; and for this reason many persons will not believe the hand of the Lord ever works in them; yet their inference is by no means legitimate; for God certainly *can* put his Hand upon the mind dreaming as well as upon the mind waking, and multitudes of instances in point show that he sometimes does.

Again, God reproves the sinner whenever his Spirit awakens in the mind a sense of the great danger of living in sin. I have often known sinners greatly affected with the thought of this danger—the terrible danger of passing along through life in sin, exposed every hour to an eternal and remediless hell.

Now these solemn impressions are God's kind warnings, impressed on the soul because he loves the sinner's well-being, and would fain save him if he wisely can.

Often God's Spirit gives sinners a most impressive view of the shortness of time. He makes them feel that this general truth applies in all its power *to themselves*—that their own time is short, and that they in all probability have not long to live. I am aware that this impression sometimes originates in one's state of health; but I also know that sometimes there is good reason to recognise God's own special hand in it; and that men sometimes ascribe to nervous depression of spirits what should be ascribed directly to God himself.

Again, God often makes the impression that the present is the sinner's last opportunity to secure salvation. I know not how many such cases have fallen under my own observation, cases in which sinners have been made to feel deeply that this is to be the very last offer of mercy, and these the very last strivings of the Spirit. My observation has taught me in such cases, to expect that the result will verify the warning—that this is none other than God's voice, and that God does not lie to man, but teaches most solemn and impressive truth. Oh, how does it become every sinner to listen and heed such timely warnings!

Again, God's Spirit reproveth sinners through their particular friends, or through gospel ministers. The affectionate admonitions of a brother or a sister, a parent or a child, a husband or a wife—how often have these been the vehicle through which God has spoken to the soul! His ministers also, God often employs for this purpose, so directing their minds that they in fact present to the sinner the very truth which fits his case, and he says, "It must be that somebody has told the minister all about my thoughts and feelings. Who can it be? I have never told anybody half so much of my heart as he has preached today." Now in such cases you may be safe in ascribing the fitting truth to the guiding hand of the divine Spirit. God is making use of his servant to reprove the sinner.

In all such cases as I have now been adducing, the reproofs administered should be ascribed to the Spirit of the Lord. In the same manner as God often in various ways administers consolation to penitent souls; so does he administer reproof to the impenitent. He has a thousand modes of making his voice audible to the sinner's conscience, and in his wisdom he always selects such as he deems best adapted to produce the desired result.

## ***II. The design of God in reproofing sinners.***

One thing aimed at is to press them with the means of reform. A benevolent God sincerely desires their salvation and honestly does all he wisely can to secure this desired result. Hence his oft-repeated reproofs and warnings. He will at least leave them without excuse. They shall never have it to say, "Oh, if we had only been forewarned of danger in those precious hours and years in which salvation was possible!" God designedly forestalls such exclamations by taking away all occasion, and putting in their mouths a very different one, "How have I hated instruction and my heart despised reproof."

For this purpose God forewarns the sinner in season. Take the case of the man who dreamed of going down to hell. This dream was a loud and timely warning, adapted as well perhaps as any warning could be to induce reform and real repentance. It effectually took away all excuse or apology for persisting in his sins.

God designs by these reproofs to prepare men for the solemn judgment. It is in his heart to do them good—secure their seasonable—that is, their present, immediate repentance, so that they may meet their God in peace at last. His benevolence prompts him to this course and he pursues it with all his heart.

It is no doubt equally true that the great God designs to be ready himself for the final judgment to meet every sinner there. He foresees that it will be important for him there to show how he has dealt with each sinner—how often and how faithfully he has acted towards them the part of a kind Father. For this end every reproof ever given to a sinner will come in place. That dream recorded by Pres. Edwards will then be found recorded also by an angel's pen—to be revealed before all worlds then and there! This is one step in the process of parental efforts for reclaiming one sinner. The admonition so faithfully given by Pres. Edwards is another. All will go to show that truly God has been "long suffering towards sinners because he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Thus will God in these providential warnings glorify Himself by exhibiting his true character and conduct. Nothing more is ever needful in order to glorify God than that his true character and conduct should be known as it is. The developments brought out at the judgment-day will thus reveal God, and of course will enhance his glory.

It is also interesting to see how God makes one warning create another. One providential event, sent as a judgment upon one sinner, multiplies its warning voice many fold as it falls upon the ears of hosts of other sinners. God cuts down one out of a class of hoary sinners, or of sinners in middle life, or in youth, and the event speaks in notes of solemn warning to hundreds. At Rome, N. Y., several years ago a great revival occurred, the power of which rocked and rent the stout hearts of many sinners, as the forest trees are rocked and rent by a tornado; but with it came some awful judgments revealing another form of the mighty hand of God. There were in that place a small class of hard drinkers who seemed determined to resist every call from God to repent. On the Sabbaths they would get together for drinking and revelling. On one of these occasions, one of their number suddenly fell down dead. Mr. Gillett, pastor of the church in that place, hastened to the spot, found the fallen man yet warm, but actually dead; and turning to the surrounding company of his associates, said, "There—who of you can doubt that this man has gone right down to hell!" This case made a deep and thrilling impression.

Another man, a famous apostate from a profession of religion, greatly opposed the revival. All at once God smote him with madness, and in his insane ravings he sought to take his own life. Men by turns had to watch him and restrain him by violence from committing suicide. Ere long he died a most horrid death—an awful warning to

hardened apostates of their impending doom! So God tries to reform and save guilty men.

Again, God would manifest the utter madness, recklessness, and folly of sinners. How striking it will appear in the judgment to see such a multitude of cases of reproof brought out to light, and then in connection to see the folly and madness of sinners in resisting so many reproofs! What a gazing-stock will sinners then be to the gathered myriads of intelligent beings! I have sometimes thought this will be the greatest wonder of the universe, to see the men who have displayed such perfect and long-continued infatuation in resisting so much love and so many kind and most heart-affecting appeals and reproofs! There they will stand monuments of the voluntary infatuation of a self-willed sinner! The intelligent universe will gaze at them as if they were the embodiment of all that is wondrous in madness and folly!

### **III. *What is it to harden the neck?***

The figure is taken from the effect of the yoke on the bullock. Under constant pressure and friction the skin becomes callous, and past feeling. So with the sinner's conscience. His will has resisted truth until his constant opposition has hardened his moral sensibility, and his will rests in the attitude of rebellion against God. His mind is now fixed; reproofs which have heretofore chafed his sensibilities no longer reach them; friction and resistance have hardened his heart till he is past feeling. No dispensations of providence alarm him; no voice from God disturbs him; under all appeals to his reason or conscience his will is doggedly fixed; his moral feelings are insensible.

In this state, one might well say, the neck is hardened. The figure is pertinent. Who has not seen cases of this sort? Cases of men who have become so hardened that every reproof passes by them as if it touched them not—as if their moral sensibility had ceased to be any sensibility at all. I was struck the other day in conversing with a man of seventy-five, with his apparent insensibility to religious considerations. "Are you a Christian?" said I. "No; I don't know anything about them things—what you call Christians. I never murdered anybody, and I guess I have been as honest as most folks in my way." "But are you prepared to enter heaven—to go into another state of existence, and meet God face to face?" "Oh! I don't believe anything about them things. If I only live about right, that's enough for me." I could make no impression on such a mind as his; but God will make such men know something about these things by and by. They will change their tone ere long!

You sometimes see men in this condition who have given their intelligence up to embrace error, and have of free choice put darkness for light, and light for darkness; have stultified themselves in their own iniquities, and have said to evil, "Be thou my

good." These have a seared conscience and a hard heart; their neck is an iron sinew, and they are fixed and fully set, never to yield to God's most reasonable demands.

What, then, shall God do with such men? The text tells us. They "shall be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy." This leads me to inquire:

#### **IV. *What is meant by being suddenly destroyed?***

It implies their being cut off *unexpectedly*, in such an hour as they think not. We often speak of things as coming suddenly; not because they come early in life, but because they fall upon men all suddenly and without being at all anticipated. In this sense the term *suddenly* seems to be used in our text. When some awful stroke of God's providence falls suddenly among us, smiting down some sinner in his sins, we say, What a sudden death! What an awful dispensation! So the Bible says, while they cry "Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, and they shall not escape." No forewarning is given; no herald with trumpet-call proclaims the coming of that death-shaft; but all suddenly it cuts the air and strikes its blow! It has no need to strike another! Noiseless as the falling dew it comes; with velvet step it enters his bed-chamber; in such forms as no skill or power of man can baffle, it makes its approaches; death raises his bony arm—poises that never-erring shaft in a moment, *where* is the victim? Gone; but *where*? The Bible says, he is "suddenly destroyed." Does this mean that he is borne up as on a chariot of fire to heaven? Were the wicked men of Sodom and Gomorrah "set forth as an ensample" of the doom of the wicked—caught away up to heaven in mounting columns of fire and brimstone? If that had been, methinks all heaven would have fainted at the sight! Or were the people of the old world, who had all corrupted their way before God, and who were so full of violence and bloodshed that God could not endure them on earth—were they all swept by the flood into heaven, while poor Noah, scorned by the men of his generation, must toil many long years to prepare him; an ark to save himself and family from being also *destroyed into heaven*?

What infinite trifling is this with God's words, to say that the sinner's destruction is only taking him by the shortest route and the quickest way to heaven!

Does God say or mean this? No! If it had been his purpose to deceive men, he could not have taken a more direct and certain method than this, of calling the taking of men suddenly to heaven, *destruction!* No, this mode of using language belongs to Satan and not to God! We should never confound the broad distinction between the God of truth and the Father of lies!

#### **V. *What is meant when this destruction is said to be "without remedy?"***

1. That this destruction cannot be arrested. It comes with resistless and overwhelming power, and seems to mock all efforts made to withstand its progress. A most striking exemplification of this appeared in the *dreadful Cholera* which swept over many of our cities some years ago. I was then in New York City—an eye-witness and more than an eye-witness of its terrific power. My own system experienced its withering shock. A man of the strongest constitution occupied a room adjacent to mine; was attacked the same hour that I was, and within a few hours was a corpse. Its powerful sweep was appalling. You might as well put forth your hand to stay the tornado in its rush of power as think to withstand this messenger of the Almighty. So with those forms of destruction which come at God's behest to whelm the hardened sinner in destruction. They come with the strides and the momentum of Omnipotence. The awful hand of God is in them, and who can stand before him when once his wrath is moved?

Many other forms of disease, as well as the Cholera, evince the terror of Jehovah's arm. The strong man is bowed low; his physician sits by his bedside, powerless to help; disease mocks all efforts to withstand its progress; human skill can only sit by and chronicle its triumph. God is working, and none but a God could resist.

2. The very language shows that the principal idea of the writer is that this destruction is *endless*. It is *destruction*—the utter ruin of all good—the blighting and withering of all happiness for ever. No rescue shall be possible; recovery is hopeless; it is a grave beyond which dawns no resurrection. The destruction wrecks all hope in the common ruin, and in its very terms precludes the idea of remedy. Can you conceive of another element of terror, not already involved and developed in this most dire of all forms of destruction?

### REMARKS.

1. We see how to account for the sudden deaths of the wicked that occur often, and what we are to think of them. Some such deaths have occurred here which were exceedingly striking to me. Here we have seen young men, sons of pious parents, children of many prayers and many warnings; but they waxed hard under reproof; and their days were soon numbered. Away they go and we see them no more. There was one young man who came here to study. He had been warned and prayed for. Perhaps the Lord saw that there was no hope in any further effort. His sickness I can never forget; nor his horror as death drew on apace. Away he passed from the world of hope and mercy. I will not attempt to follow him, nor would I presume to know his final doom; but one thing I know: his companions in sin received in his death a most solemn and awful warning.

2. The danger of wicked men is in proportion to the light they have. Men of great light are much the most likely to be cut off in early life. Of this we have seen some very

striking instances in this place. Some young men have been raised here—were here when I came into the place, and then, in the tender years of childhood and youth they saw their companions converted, and were often affectionately warned themselves. But they seemed to resist every warning and come quick to maturity in moral insensibility. I need not give their names: you knew them once; where are they now? It is not for me to tell where they are; but I can tell where they are not. They are not grown up to bless the church and the world; they did not choose such a course and such an end to their life. They are not here among us. No! the places that knew them once shall know them no more for ever. You may call for them in our College halls; in the sad-hearted families where once they might be found; they respond to no call—till the blast of the final trumpet. They knew their duty but too well, and but too soon they apparently settled the question that they *would not do it*.

That old man of almost fourscore of whom I spake was not brought up in any Oberlin. His birthplace was in the dark places of the earth, in Canada, where he learned neither to read nor to write. There are children here not ten years old who have forty times as much knowledge on all religious subjects as he. He has lived to become hoary in sin; these children, brought up here, need expect no such thing. Tell me where you can find an old man who has been brought up in the midst of great light, who yet lives long and waxes more and more hard in sin and guilt. Usually such men as sin against great light in their youth will not live out half their days.

3. It is benevolent in God to make his providential judgments in cutting down hardened sinners a means of warning others. Often this is the most impressive warning God can give men. In some cases it is so terrible that sinners have not even dared to attend the funeral of their smitten associates. They have seemed afraid to go near the awful scene—so manifest has it been that God's hand is there. In many instances within my personal knowledge the hand of God has cut down in a most horrible manner men who were opposing revivals. I cannot now dwell upon these cases.

4. We may learn to expect the terrible destruction of those who under great light are hardening themselves in sin. I have learned, when I see persons passing through great trials, to keep my eye on them and see if they reform. If they do not, I expect to see them ere long cut down as hopeless cumberers of the ground. Being often reprov'd yet still hardening their neck, they speedily meet their doom according to the principle of God's government announced in our text.

5. Reproof administered either soon subdues, or rapidly ripens for destruction. This ripening process goes on rapidly in proportion to the pressure with which God follows them with frequent and solemn reproofs. When you see God following the sinner close with frequent reproofs, plying him with one dispensation after another, and all in vain, you may expect the lifted bolt to smite him next and speedily.

6. The nearer destruction is to men, the less as a general thing they fear or expect it. When you hear them cry "Peace and safety," then sudden destruction is at hand and they shall not escape. Just at the time when you are saying, "I never enjoyed better health"—just then when you are blessing yourself in the prospect of securing your favourite objects, then sudden destruction comes down like an Alpine avalanche, and there is neither time to escape nor strength to resist. How often do you hear it said — Alas! It was so unexpected, so sudden—who would have thought this blow was coming! Just when we least of all expected it, it fell with fatal power.

7. Sinners who live under great light are living very fast. Those who are rapidly acquiring knowledge of duty, standing in a focal centre of blazing light, with everything to arouse their attention—they, unless they yield to this light, must soon live out the short months of their probation. They must soon be converted, or soon pass the point of hope—the point within which it is morally possible that they shall be renewed. Men may under some circumstances live to the age of seventy and never get so much light as they can in a few days or weeks in some situations. Under one set of circumstances, a sinner might get more light, commit more sin, and become more hardened in a twelve-month than he would under other circumstances in a life of fourscore years. Under the former circumstances he lives fast. A Sabbath-school child might in this point of view die a hundred years old. The accumulations of a hundred years of sin and guilt and hardness might in his case be made in one short year. Where light is blazing as it has blazed here; where children have line upon line as they are wont to have here, how rapidly they live! How soon do they fill up the allotted years of probation for the reason that the great business of probation is driven through with prodigiously accelerated rapidity! Oh, how suddenly will your destruction come, unless you speedily repent! Of all places on earth, this should be the last to be chosen to live in, unless you mean to repent. I would as soon go to the very door of hell and pitch my tent to dwell there, as to come here to live, unless I purposed to serve God. Yet many parents bring or send their children here to be educated—in hope often that they will be converted too; and this is well; so would I; but by all means ply them with truth, and press them with appeals and entreaties, and give them no rest, till they embrace the great salvation. Let these parents see to it that their children are really converted. If they pass along without being converted, do you not expect they will soon break away and plunge into some of the dark mazes of error? Who does not know that this is the natural result of resisting great light? "Because they receive not the love of the truth that they may be saved, God shall send them strong delusion, that they may believe a lie, and all be damned who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Oh how they go on with rapid strides down to the depths of hell! You scarce can say they are here, before they are gone. And the knell of their early graves proclaims, "He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

### CHAPTER III.

## THE SALVATION OF SINNERS IMPOSSIBLE.

*"If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"—1 Peter 4:18.*

I SAID in a former sermon, that the doctrine of the text is that the salvation of the righteous is difficult and that of the sinner impossible. In that sermon I discussed at length the first part of this subject, showing how and why the salvation of the righteous is difficult. I am now to take up the remaining part and show how and *why the salvation of the wicked is impossible.*

Here let me premise in general that by the righteous is not meant those who have never sinned. It could not be difficult to save such as had not sinned against God. They are, in fact, already saved. But these righteous ones are those, who, having been sinners, now come to exercise faith in Christ, and of course become "heirs of that righteousness which is by faith." Vitally important to be considered here is the fact that the governmental difficulty in the way of being saved, growing out of your having sinned, even greatly, is all removed by Christ's atonement. No matter now how great your guilt, if you will only have faith in Jesus, and accept of his atonement as the ground of pardon for your sins.

Hence the difficulty in the way of saving sinners is not simply that they have sinned, but that they will not now cease from sinning and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

The salvation of sinners is therefore impossible.

1. Because it is impossible for God by any means he can wisely employ, to persuade them to desist from sinning. They are so wicked and so perverse that they abuse to greater sin the very best means God employs to bring them to repentance. Hence God cannot wisely save them.

When I say it is *impossible* for God to convert them, I do not imply that God lacks *physical* power to do anything which is the proper subject of such power. On this point there can be no question. But how can physical omnipotence be brought to bear directly upon mind and upon the heart?

Again, let us consider, that it may not be wise for God to bring all the moral power of his universe to bear upon the sinner in this world. If this were wise and practicable, it might avail—for aught we can know; but since he does not do it, we infer that he refrains for some wise reason.

Certain limitations are fixed in the divine wisdom to the amount of moral influence which God shall employ in the case of a sinner. It is in view of this fact that I say, God finds it impossible to gain the sinner's consent to the gospel by any means that he can wisely employ. He goes as far as is really wise and as far as is on the whole good. This is undoubtedly the fact in the case. Yet all this does not avail. Hence it becomes impossible that the sinner should be saved.

2. Again, the sinner cannot be saved, because salvation *from sin* is an indispensable condition of salvation *from hell*. The being saved from sin must come first in order. Every sinner knows, and on reflection and self-inspection he must see, that his state of mind is such that he cannot respect himself. The elements of blessedness are not therefore in him, and cannot be until he meets the demands of his own moral nature.

He knows, also, that he does not want to have anything to do with God—is afraid of God—both dreads and hates his presence—is afraid to die and go so near to God as death bears all men. He knows that all his relations to God are unpleasant in the extreme. How certainly, then, may he know that he is utterly unprepared for heaven.

Now the sinner must be saved from this guilty and abominable state of mind. No change is needed in God—neither in his character, government, or position towards sin; but the utmost possible change and all the needed change is requisite on the part of the sinner. If salvation implies fitness for heaven, and if this implies ceasing from sin, then, of course, it is naturally and for ever impossible that any sinner can be saved without holiness.

3. The peace of heaven forbids that you should go there in your sins. I know you think of going to heaven; you rather expect you shall go there at last; your parents are there, as you hope and believe, and for this reason you the more want to go, that you may behold them in their glory. Oh, say you, should I not like to be where my father and mother are? And do you think you can follow them, *in your sins*? What could you do in heaven if you were there? What could you say? What kind of songs could you sing there? What sort of happiness, congenial to your heart, could you hope to find there?

Your pious mother in heaven—oh, how changed—you heard her last words on earth for they were words of prayer for your poor guilty soul; but now she shines and sings above, all holy and pure. What sympathy could there be between you and her in heaven? Remember what Christ said when some one told him that his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to see him. "Who," said he, "*is my mother?* and who are my brethren? He that doeth the will of my Father, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." The law of sympathy, therefore, in heaven turns not on earthly relationship, but on oneness of heart—on the common and mutual spirit of love and obedience towards their great common Father.

Do you then expect that your mother would be glad to see you—that she would spread her mantle over you and take you up to heaven? Oh, if she were told that you were at the gate, she would hasten down to say, O my sinning child! you cannot enter heaven. Into this holy place nothing can by any means enter that "worketh abomination or maketh a lie." You cannot—no, you cannot come!

If it were left to your own mother to decide the question of your admission, you could not come in. She would not open heaven's gate for your admission. She knows you would disturb the bliss of heaven. She knows you would mar its purity and be an element of discord in its sympathies and in its songs.

You know it need not have been so. You might have given your heart to God in season, and then he would have shed his love abroad in your soul, and given you the Holy Ghost, and made you ripe for heaven. But you *would not*. All was done for you that God could wisely do; all that Christ could do; all that the spirit of God could consistently do. But all was vain: all came to naught and availed nothing, because you *would not* forego your sins—would not renounce them, even for everlasting life. And now will heaven let you in? No. Nothing that worketh abomination can by any means go in there.

4. Besides, it would not be for your own comfort to be there. You were never quite comfortable in spiritual society on earth; in the prayer-meeting you were unhappy. As one individual said here: "Oh, what a place this is! I cannot go across the street without being spoken to about my soul. How can I live here?"

Let me tell you, it will be just as bad, nay, much worse, for you in heaven. That can be no place for you, sinner, since you hate, worst of all things on earth, those places and scenes which are most like heaven.

5. The justice of God will not allow you to participate in the joys of the saints. His relations to the universe make it indispensable that he should protect his saints from such society as you. They have had their discipline of trial in such society long enough: the scenes of their eternal reward will bring everlasting relief from this torture of their holy sympathies. Oh, how will God, their Infinite Father, throw around them the shield of his protection upon the mountains of paradise, that lift their heads eternally under the sunlight of his glory!

His sense of propriety forbids that he should give you a place among his pure and trustful children. It would be so unfitting—so unsuitable! It would throw such discord into the sweet songs and sympathies of the holy!

Besides, as already hinted, it could be no kindness to you. It could not soothe, but only chafe and fret your spirit. Oh, if you were obliged to be there, how would it torment and irritate your soul!

If, then, the sinner cannot be saved and go to heaven, *where* shall he *appear*?

The question is a strong negation. They shall not appear among the righteous and the saved. This is a common form of speaking. Nehemiah said, "Shall such a man as I *flee*?" No, indeed. This form of question is one of the strongest forms of negation that can be expressed in our language.

Where, then, shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? In no desirable place or position certainly. Not with the righteous in the judgment, for so God's word has often and most solemnly affirmed. Christ himself affirms that, when all nations shall be gathered before him for judgment, he will separate them, one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. This separation, as the description shows, brings the righteous on the right hand and the wicked on the left. And it should be considered that this statement is made by Christ himself, and that if any being in the universe knows, it must be he to whom is "given authority to execute judgment." He says he will separate them one from another according not to their national relations, or their family connections, but according to their character as friends or enemies to God.

Oh, what a separation must this be in families and among dear earthly friends! On this side will be a husband—on that a wife; here a brother and there a sister; here one of two friends and there the other—parted for *ever—for ever!* If this great division were to be struck between you today according to present character, how fearful the line of separation it would draw! Ask yourselves where it would pass through your own families and among the friends you love. How would it divide College classes—and oh, how would it smite many hearts with terror and consternation!

It is asked, where shall the ungodly appear? *I answer, certainly not in heaven*, nor on the heavenly side. But they must be in the judgment, for God has said, he would bring all the race into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. All are to be there, but some are on the right hand and some on the left.

The ungodly and the sinner will appear in that day among the damned—among lost angels, doomed to the place prepared of old for their eternal abode. So Jesus has himself told us. The very words of their sentence are on record: "Then will he say to them on his left hand, Depart, from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." This is indeed the only place for which they are prepared; and this the only society to which their hearts are congenial. They have of choice belonged to Satan's government on earth: at least, in the sense of doing precisely what he would

have them do. Now, therefore, after such a training in selfishness and sin, they are manifestly fit for no other and better society than that of Satan and his angels.

Let it not surprise any of you to be told that the amiable sinners of earth are preparing themselves—(remaining enemies to God and radically selfish)—for the society of the arch spirit of evil. Just observe what restraints are thrown around sinners here. Mark how obviously they *feel* restrained, and show that they are restive and ill at ease. It may be read out of their very hearts that they would be glad to be vastly more wicked and selfish, that is, in their external life—if they might. It is wonderful to see in how many ways God's providence has walled around the sinner's pathway and hedged him in from outbreaking sin.

But let these walls be torn away; let all regard to his reputation among the good perish for ever from his soul; let despair of ever gaining God's favour take full possession of his heart, and rivet its iron grasp upon him, then what will he become? Take away all the restraints of civil society—of laws and customs—of Christian example, and of Christian society; let there be no more prayer made for him by pitying Christian friends, no more counsel given, or entreaty used to persuade him towards the good, then tell me, where is the sinner? How terribly will sin work out its dreadful power to corrupt and madden the soul! Bring together myriads of desperate wretches, in the madness of their despair and rage and wrath against God and all the good, and Oh what a fearful world would they make! What can be conceived more awful! Yet this is the very world for which sinners are now preparing, and the only one for which they will be found in the judgment to be prepared.

As this is the only world for which the sinner is prepared, so is it the only one which is appropriate and fitting, the case being viewed in respect to his influence for mischief. Here only, here in this prison-house of woe and despair, can sinners be effectually prevented from doing any further mischief in God's kingdom. Here they are cut off from all possibility of doing any more harm in God's universe.

In this earthly state one sinner destroys much good each and every sinner does much evil. God looks on, not unconcerned, but with amazing patience. He suffers a great deal of evil to be done, for the sake of securing an opportunity to try the power of forbearance and love upon the sinner's heart. You are abusing his love and defeating all its kind designs, but still God waits, till the point is reached where forbearance ceases to be virtue. Beyond this point, how can God wait longer?

Here you find ample room for doing mischief. Many are around you whom you influence to evil and urge on towards hell. Some of them would be converted but for your influence to hold them back and ensnare their souls. If this were the place, I could name and call out some of you who are exerting a deadly influence upon your associates. Ah,

to think of the souls you may ruin for ever! God sees them, and sees how you are playing into the devil's hands to drag them down with you to an eternal hell. But ere long he will take you away from this sphere of doing evil. He will for ever cut off your connection with those who can be influenced to evil, and leave around you only those associates who are ruined, despairing, and maddened in sin, like yourself. There he will lock you up, throw away the key, and let you rave on, and swear on, and curse on, and madden your guilty soul more and more for ever! Oh! what inmates are those in this prison-house of the guilty and the lost! Why should not God fit up *such* a place for *such* beings, so lost to all good, and so given up to all the madness and guilt of rebellion?

There alone can sinners be made useful. They refused to make themselves useful by their voluntary agency on earth; now God will make use of them in hell for some good. Do you ask me if I talk about sin being made useful? Yes, to be sure I do. God never permits anything to occur in his universe but he extracts some good from it, overruling its influence, or making the correction and punishment of it a means of good. This is a great consolation to the holy, that no sinner can exist from whom God will not bring out some good. This principle is partially developed in society here, under civil government. The gallows is not the greatest evil in the world, nor the most unmixed evil. Murder is much worse. States' prisons are not the greatest earthly evils. Government can make great use of those men who will not obey law. It can make them examples and lift them up as beacons of warning, to show the evil of disobeying wholesome laws. A great many men have had strong and useful impressions made on their minds, as, riding through Auburn on the railroad, they have marked those lofty frowning walls and battlements which enclose and guard the culprits immured within. Many a hard heart has quailed before those walls, and the terrors of those cells behind. If the outside view does not avail to awe the spirit of transgression, give them the inside view and some of its heart-desolating experience. These things do good. They tame the passion for evil-doing, and impress a salutary fear on the hardened and reckless. If so under all the imperfections of human government, how much more under the perfect administration of the divine!

God cannot afford to lose your influence in his universe. He will rejoice to use you for the glory of his mercy, if you will; Oh yes! He will put away your sins far as the East is from the West, and will put a robe of beauty and glory upon you, and a sweet harp in your hands, and a song of praise on your lips, and the melody of heaven's love in your heart, all these, if you will. But if you will not, then he has other attributes besides mercy that need to be illustrated. Justice will come in for its claim, and to illustrate this he will make you an example of the bitter misery of sinning. He will put you deep in hell; and the holy, beholding you there, will see that God's kingdom is safe and pure, and in their everlasting song they will shout, "Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thy judgments are made manifest."

This is the only way in which God can make you useful in his kingdom, if you will not repent. He has tried every means of bringing you to repentance, but all in vain; he cannot get your consent. Of course there is no alternative but to make you an example to deter all other moral agents from sinning.

There is no other way for God to meet the demands of the public weal, but to make you an example to show his abhorrence of sin. God is most thoroughly economical of his resources. He husband everything to the very best account. Everything must, under his hand, be made conducive in some way to the general good. Even of your misery he will be as economical as he can, and will carefully turn it all to the very best account. Every groan and every throb and pang of your agonised soul will be turned to use. Yes, rely upon it; all this agony, which does you no good, but is to you only unmingled and unalleviated woe, will be a warning beacon, under God's hand, crying out in tones of thunder, Stand away! stand away! lest you come into this place of torment; stand afar from sin—fear this awful sin—watch against it, for it is an awful thing to sin against Jehovah. I have tried it and here I am in woe unutterable! Oh what a testimony, when all hell shall roll up one mighty accumulated groan! a groan whose awful voice shall be, Stand in awe and sin not, for God is terrible in his judgments upon the guilty.

O sinner, think of it. God wants you now to cry out to every fellow-sinner, and warn him away from the brink of hell. Will you do it? What are you in fact doing? Are you preparing yourself to go out as a missionary of light and love and mercy to the benighted? Are you pluming your wings, as an angel of mercy, to bear the messages of salvation? Oh no! you refuse to do this, or anything of the sort. You disdain to preach such a gospel and to preach it *so!* But God will make you preach it *in another way*; for, as I said, he is thoroughly economical of the resources of his kingdom, and all must do something in some way for his glory. He will have everything preach—saints preach and sinners preach; yea, sinners in hell must preach for God and for his truth. He will make your very groans and tears—those "tears that ever fall, but not in Mercy's sight" they will preach, and will tell over and over the dreadful story of mercy abused and sin persisted in, and waxing worse and worse, till the bolts of vengeance broke at last upon your guilty head! Over and over will those groans, and tears repeat the fearful story, so that when the angels shall come from the remotest regions of the universe, they shall cry out, What is here? What mean those groans? What mean those flames, wreathing around their miserable victims? Ah! the story told then will make them cry aloud, Why will God's creatures sin against his throne? Can there be such madness in beings gifted with reason's light?

These angels know that the only thing that can secure public confidence in a ruler is fidelity in the execution of his law. Hence it is to them no wonder that, there being sin to punish, God should punish it with most exemplary severity. They expect this and seeing

its awful demonstrations before their eyes only serves to impress the more deeply on their souls the holiness and justice of the great and blessed God.

### REMARKS.

1. From this standpoint we can easily see what we are to understand by the doctrine of election—a doctrine often misstated, and often perverted to a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. The simple and plain view of it is, that God, foreseeing all the future of your existence as perfectly as if all were in fact present, determined to deal with you according to your voluntary course; determined to offer you the gospel, and, on your refusal of it, to give you over to the doom of those who deny the Lord that bought them. Election is no new or different plan of divine administration, aside from and unlike what the Bible reveals as the plan of saving men through the gospel. It is this very plan of which the Bible is full, only that it contemplates this plan as framed by the divine Mind "before the world began."

2. If you will now consent to give your heart to God, you can be saved. No election will hinder you. The doctrine of election is simply the fact that God sends forth his Spirit to save as many as by the best system of influences he wisely can save; and surely this never can hinder any sinner from repenting and gaining salvation, for the very good reason that this plan contemplates saving and not damning men, as its object, and is in fact the sinner's only hope.

Come then, repent and believe the gospel, if you would be saved. No election will hinder you, and neither will it save you without your own repentance unto life.

How then shall the case turn with you? Almost all who are ever converted are brought in, early in life. Not one in a hundred is converted after the age of forty. The old among the converts are always few—only one among a host—one in a long space of time; like scattering beacon lights upon the mountain tops, that the aged may not quite despair of salvation. But God is intensely interested in saving the young, for he needs and loves to use them in his service. Oh how his heart goes forth after the young! How often has my soul been affected as I have thought of his parental interest for the salvation of this great multitude of youth! They come here from pious homes, freighted with the prayers of pious fathers and mothers, and what shall be the result? What has been the result, as thus far developed, *with you*? Has anything been really secured as yet? Is anything fixed and done for eternity? How many times have you been called to decide, but have decided wrong—all wrong? You have been pressed earnestly with God's claims, and many a time have prayers and groans gone forth from the Christian heart of this whole community; but ah! where are you still? Not yet safe; ah, in greater peril than ever! Often reprov'd, hardening your neck; and what next? Suddenly destroyed, and that

*without remedy.* Suppose even now the curtain should drop, *you are dead!* And whither, then, goes the undying, guilty soul?

3. How great the mistake made by Universalists, that all men will be saved, when the Bible holds that even the salvation of the righteous is difficult, and that of the sinner, impossible. How strangely they misread the whole Bible! Go not in their ways, O ye youth of Oberlin!

But what are you doing? Do you flatter yourselves that the work of salvation is all so easy that it may be safely and surely done during a few of life's last moments? Will you presume, as the man did who said he should need but five minutes to prepare to die? Hear his story. What was the result of his system? Disease came on. It smote him with its strong hand. Delirium set in. Reason tottered and fell from her throne, and so he died! Go on, thou young man; drive on, headlong and reckless; make a bold business of sinning, and bear it on with bold front and high hand; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Consider what tidings we hear of our former pupils who once sat as you now sit, and once heard the gospel as you may hear it now. There, one is dead; and now another—and now another. In rapid succession they drop from the stage of mortal life and what next? What more? Soon we shall meet them in the fearful judgment!

Brethren, what will the universe say of us, if we neglect to labour for the salvation of these precious youth? What will the parents of these dear youth say to us when we shall meet them at the Saviour's bar?

I have spoken to you of the difficulties and the struggles of the Christian—more and greater far than the ungodly are usually aware of; those agonies of prayer, those conflicts against temptation; out of all which it is only great grace that can bring him forth, conqueror and more than conqueror. If he is saved with so much difficulty, how does it become you to *strive* to enter in at the strait gate? Are you aware that the smooth sea of temptation bears you on to the breakers of death? Were you ever at Niagara? How smooth and deceitful those waters, as they move along quite up above the draft of the suction from below! But lower down, see how those same waters roar, and dash, and foam, and send up their thick mists to the heavens above you. Yet in the upper stream you glide gently and noiselessly along, dreaming of no danger, and making no effort to escape. In a moment you are in the awful current, dashing headlong down; and where are you now?

And what should you do? Like Bunyan's Christian pilgrim, put your fingers in both ears, and run, shouting, Life! life! eternal LIFE! How many of you are sliding along on the smooth, deceitful stream, above, yet only just above, the awful rapids and the dreadful cataract of death! What if, this night, delirium should seize upon you? Or what if the

Spirit should leave you for ever, and it should be said of you, "He is joined to his idols, let him alone?"

What do you say? Do I hear you saying, "If salvation is possible for me—if by putting forth the whole energy of my will I can ensure it, Oh let me do so! Help me, O ye ministers of Christ's gospel! Help me, ye Christians, who pray between the porch and the altar! Help me, O ye heavens, of heavens for this is a thing of life and death, and the redemption of the soul is most precious!"

Surely, O ye sinners, it is time that you should set down your foot in most fixed determination, and say, "*I must and I will have heaven!* How can I ever bear the *doom of the damned!*"

#### CHAPTER IV.

#### PROFIT AND LOSS; OR THE WORTH OF THE SOUL.

*"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"—Mark 8:36.*

*"For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?"—Luke 9:25*

#### ***I. In speaking from these words, I first call attention to several facts of consciousness and experience.***

1. That the human soul is immortal, seems to be one of the primitive beliefs of mankind. Certainly this belief has been well-nigh universal among men. We know by our own experience that men are hard to believe that to be true which they fear, or of which they have a dread.

All men are conscious of being sinners; and all men know themselves to deserve punishment. All men are aware that they are not dealt with as severely as they deserve to be in this life, hence the belief seems to be well-nigh, if not quite universal, that there is a future state of rewards and punishments. When we realize that men are guilty and know themselves deserving of punishment, we see at once that a future state of rewards and punishments must be to them a terrible idea. They would not believe in it were not the conviction forced upon them by their own nature; and hence it would seem from the fact of this universal conviction of the immortality of the soul, that such is the very nature of the soul as to force this belief upon the race of mankind.

2. Such a state is evidently demanded by the justice of God.

We irresistibly affirm that God is just. We cannot conceive of an unjust being as God; and the human soul revolts at, and indignantly rejects the idea that God is not just. A future state of rewards and punishments is an irresistible inference from the two facts, that men are not punished as they deserve to be in this world, and that God is a just moral governor.

If God is just, there must be a future state of rewards and punishments where men shall be dealt with according to their true characters.

3. The Bible affirms this irresistible conviction, or primitive belief of mankind; and abundantly teaches that the soul is immortal, that there is a state of future rewards and punishments.

4. I assume, therefore, the soul's immortality. Men seem to believe this truth, even if they deny it. Men that call it in question are after all afraid to meet God, afraid to die, afraid of the consequences of their sins in a future state. There is probably not a human being on the face of the earth, having a sound, well-balanced mind, who does not, at the bottom of his mind, assume and believe in a future state of rewards and punishments.

I say, I assume the soul's immortality: I do it because I cannot help assuming it; and I do it because everybody does assume it. Indeed, it is just because the nature of the soul forces this assumption upon mankind, that the Bible everywhere, in the Old Testament especially, assumes that men are aware of this, just as it assumes that God exists. The Bible does not begin by asserting the existence of God; it assumes it. So the moral government of God everywhere assumes that men know that they are under moral government; that the soul will exist in a future state; and that there is a future state of rewards and punishments.

I say, the Bible does not frequently, especially in the Old Testament, affirm this; but always and everywhere assumes it, because of its being an irresistible belief of mankind.

5. The soul must be happy or miserable as it is holy or sinful. The conscience affirms intuitively that misery ought to be the consequence of sin, and that happiness ought to be connected with holiness. Again, we have enough of experience in this life to indicate clearly that a sinful soul cannot be happy, and that a holy soul cannot be truly miserable. The reason is plainly this; the soul was made to be holy; sin is a violation of its own laws, inconsistent with the nature of the soul. It turns the soul upon itself, and produces inward discord; throws it out of harmony with itself, and with the universe in which it dwells. It is a violation of conscience, and must necessarily make the soul miserable. Holiness, on the other hand, is the soul's harmony with itself and with the

universe in which it lives,—especially with God and all holy beings. Hence the soul is out of harmony, and miserable, if it is sinful, and in harmony and happy, if it is holy.

6. Cut off from the pleasures of sense, happiness or misery will naturally be as is the moral state of the soul. In the present state of existence there is much pleasure or pain connected with sense; but in the future state, there is no reason to believe that the pleasures and pains of sense will be at all as they now are, for the material organs will be removed.

Sinners take pleasure in some forms of sin, and have much in this life that they call happiness; but take them away from the brief pleasures of sense, and what can be the source of their enjoyment! Here they enjoy a degree of pleasure in spite of their sinfulness. But remove them from their friends, their business, their worldly pleasures, their associations in this life,—and what then can make them happy? All the sources from which they received any enjoyment are cut off. They must then derive happiness or misery from the moral state of their souls, and the society in which they dwell. If holy, they will naturally be at peace; they will have the society of the holy, and will therefore be happy. If sinful, peace to them will be impossible; they will be surrounded with those of their own character, and must be miserable.

7. Progress is the law of finite existences; progress both in knowledge, and in sin and holiness. All finite creatures begin to be. They have their first thought, their first feeling; their faculties are gradually developed; and progress is the unalterable law of their existence. Having new thoughts and new experiences, and passing from one to another, and another forever,—thus they accumulate new knowledge as long as they exist. Holiness is conformity to truth; sin is disconformity to truth. If the soul conforms itself to truth as fast as it is received, it is holy and grows in holiness. If on the contrary, it fails to conform to truth, and conforms itself to error, and is under the influence of lies, it violates its own nature and is miserable; and as knowledge increases, sin or holiness must increase as long as the soul exists. Again, as holiness or sin increases, so must happiness or misery increase. As sin is a violation of the laws of the soul's nature, therefore as sin increases, misery must increase. As holiness is conformity to the soul's nature, and conformity to truth, therefore as knowledge increases, and holiness increases, happiness must increase.

These are truths which most men will readily admit. They are so self-evident as not to need proof; they are in fact assumed by mankind in general.

Having premised these things, I proceed,

**II. To show that the question suggested by the text is one of profit and loss.**

"What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

The question of profit and loss is one that is much agitated in this world; and it behooves us to apply this to the great question of the soul. Christ puts the question in all solemnity. Now the real question is, at which would we look in the first place? What is each worth to us? that is, what is the world's value to us, and what is the soul's value?

First, what is the real value of this world to us?

It is said that the richest man in the nation to which he belonged, was once complimented by a friend for his great wealth. This friend expressed the thought that he must be very happy in the enjoyment of his great wealth. He replied; "What will you ask to take the charge of all my business, and have all the care and concern of it, and relieve me of any concern about it?"

His friend replied, "I do not know." "But," said the rich man, "will you do it for your food and clothing? if you can be well fed, and well clothed,—have just as much as you can eat, and drink, and wear?"

"O no!" said his friend, "I could not do it for that." "Well," responded the rich man, "this is all that I get."

Yes, this is all that we get for all our labor, and toil, and responsibility. So far as we are concerned, all that we can get from this world is our food and clothing, and drink.

It is also said of this same man, that near the close of life he was asked by another friend, what, upon the whole, he thought of his whole life. As he had been very successful in business, had accumulated great wealth, and had seemed to secure all that was desirable in this life,—how his life appeared to him.

His answer was, "My life is a failure." What an answer!

But take the case of Solomon. Solomon set himself, it appears, purposely to see what could be gotten from this world, and what it was really worth. He had all the means of testing it that could be conceived of. He had greater wealth than any other man living. He tried what science could do; he surrounded himself with singing men and singing women; he made beautiful gardens; in short, he exhausted all the resources of wealth and all the pleasures of this life. He tried what could be obtained from every source of worldly enjoyment that we can conceive. He tells us, that he deliberately intended to test every source of worldly enjoyment, and to see what could be realized from it. He tried it to his heart's content, and then came to this mournful conclusion—that "all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." This, then, is the best testimony that

can be given of the value of the world to us. All that we can obtain from it is merely the gratification of sense.

Secondly, The worth of the soul.

We can answer the question proposed in the text only as we estimate first, the real value of the world, and secondly the real value of the immortal soul.

But how shall we estimate this? An immortal soul, ever increasing in sin or holiness, and consequently, in happiness or misery! The thought is overwhelming.

To get a glimpse of the truth on this subject, I observe that to lose the soul is,

1. To lose, or fail of, eternal happiness. (1.) Eternal happiness is an ever-growing quantity. However small the beginning, and however gradual the development and the increase,—still there is no end to the development of the soul, and to the increase of happiness if the soul is holy.

Consequently, (2.) Each soul must arrive, in the progress of its existence, at a point where he can truly say, taking the whole of his past existence, that he has enjoyed more happiness than all the creatures of God, comprising the whole universe of created beings, had enjoyed previous to his existence. The last one that arrives in heaven from this world, will surely arrive at a point in the progress of his existence, in which he can truly say that he has enjoyed more of heaven—that the amount of his enjoyment in the aggregate far exceeds all that had been enjoyed by all its inhabitants before he arrived there.

(3.) It is true that each soul will be able to say, in the progress of his existence, that he has enjoyed millions of times more happiness than all creatures had enjoyed before he began to be.

The aggregate of their enjoyment together did not amount to so much as the aggregate of his single enjoyment since he began to be. And this will be true of the whole of the holy universe; such will be their progress in an ever-growing holiness and happiness.

(4.) Not only will they be able to say that they have enjoyed millions of times more, but inconceivably more than all creatures had enjoyed before they began to be. That is, each soul will, in the progress of his existence, be able to say, that the amount of his happiness will be inconceivably greater than that enjoyed by all creatures before he began to be.

And (5.) This is only the beginning. For remember, the soul is immortal; and when it has been increasing in holiness and happiness for millions of ages, for cycles which the arithmetic of angels cannot compute, it has not a moment less to grow in knowledge, holiness, and happiness.

When the amount of this happiness has swelled to be so great as to overwhelm all thought,—so far as calculating or apprehending this amount is concerned—this is but the vestibule of enjoyment, the beginning of happiness which shall have no end.

But again, I remark, (6.) That this is true whether happiness in the future state accumulates slowly or rapidly. In this respect it makes no real difference.

If the accumulation of knowledge, and holiness, and happiness, be very slow, but a little gain in even a cycle of ages, it would only take longer; but the result must be the same. As the soul is immortal, there is no end to its progress. Yet there is reason to believe that knowledge, holiness, and happiness will increase more rapidly in the future state. But whether this is true or not, all that I have said before of the amount of its real enjoyment, must be true.

But (7.) It is true, also whatever be the cause of this happiness,—whether the reward be purely natural, or whether it be governmental; whether the cause be partly physical and partly moral,—or whatever be the immediate cause, it must be true, that as the quantity is ever-growing there can be no bound ever set to the increasing happiness of the holy soul. It can only fall short of absolute infinity.

But 2. To lose the soul is to exist in endless sin and misery.

(1.) It has been said that sin is necessarily connected with misery. Now to lose the soul, in the Bible sense of the phrase is, manifestly, not annihilation. It is to lose all that is valuable to the soul; to fail of the great end of its existence, and to incur all the miseries of an endlessly perverted existence.

(2.) As I said of happiness, so I say of misery, that each soul must, in the progress of its existence, arrive at a point at which it can truly say that it has suffered more than the entire universe had known of suffering before it began to suffer.

However great the sufferings of the whole universe of creatures may have been, take the aggregate of all the sufferings of hell and earth, and all that creatures have known in any part, and every part, of God's dominions, each soul may arrive at a point where it will be true of it. That the amount of its sufferings, taken as a whole, is greater than the aggregate of all the sufferings that had been endured in the universe before its sufferings commenced. What a dreadful thought! an ever-growing quantity of suffering!

(3.) As I said of happiness, so I say of misery, that each soul will arrive at a point where it must say that it has suffered millions of times more in its own experience than all creatures had experienced before it began to suffer.

Yes, (4.) Inconceivably more than all the creatures of God had known, or even conceived of, previous to its beginning to suffer.

But, (5.) This is only the beginning. As I said of happiness, so I say of misery, that when the lost soul has suffered millions of ages, cycles which no arithmetic in heaven or earth can compute, this is but the vestibule of its sufferings; it is but the beginning. An eternal ocean of misery rolls its waves ahead; its progress is onward and downward, and onward and downward forever and ever.

Again, (6.) This is true, whether the amount of misery accumulates slowly or rapidly. If the accumulation be very slow, it will only take a longer period; but the misery at last must be the same. If the accumulation be rapid, the misery at last must be the same. The amount of misery endured by the lost soul can only fall short of the absolutely infinite.

(7.) Evidently the same is true whatever be the law or cause of this suffering,—whether the suffering be a natural consequence of sin, or a governmental consequence of sin.

Whether it be caused by fire or any physical cause whatever, or whether these altogether comprise the cause or causes of this misery, it matters not. The fact remains that, whatever is the cause, whether it be fire or sin, or both, whether it be a natural or governmental consequence, or both—the fact remains, the soul's enduring an ever increasing amount of misery.

An old writer has attempted to illustrate, what in fact cannot be adequately illustrated from its very nature, by the following supposition.

Suppose a bird were commissioned to remove this globe of earth by the slow process of taking a single grain of sand, and carrying it to such a distance that it would take a thousand years for the bird to go and return. She takes a single grain of sand, and goes her long journey of five hundred years out, and deposits it; and then she spends five hundred years more in her return; making in all a thousand years consumed in conveying away but a single grain and returning for another.

Now suppose she was obliged to remove the entire globe of earth in this way, what an amazing period it would take! It seems to swallow up all thought and conception.

But I add to this supposition—suppose the old bird were commissioned to remove the entire universe in this way—myriads of systems that are now known to exist in the material universe, for it is now known that this world is but a mere speck in the material creation. Now suppose that this old bird were to continue her labor until she had removed the entire physical universe, at the rate of one grain of sand for a thousand years. And now let me add to this, that suppose there were hundreds of thousands of such universes as this, and her commission extended to removing them all;—this would not be eternity. It would be only time, and not eternity. When the whole of this universe should be removed at this rate, there would be not one moment less than at first. And suppose a sinful soul had suffered all this time—all the time that the bird was coming and going, removing a grain of sand once in a thousand years;—first, this globe—and then the other planets—and then the vast sun, and then the myriads of systems which compose the universe, with all their innumerable planets and suns—and suppose that of such universes there were more in number than the angels could compute, and she continued to remove them all,—when that bird had continued her labors until she has removed this vast and inconceivable amount of matter at the rate of one grain in a thousand years, this vast period cannot for one moment be compared to eternity. The suffering soul has only begun to suffer. To be sure the amount which it has already suffered is inconceivably great.

Yet this is but the vestibule of its sufferings; the beginning of that which has no end. It is an ever-increasing quantity. How the soul shudders at this, and faints, and withers!

Yet such is the destiny of the immortal soul.

### **III. *Answer of the question, What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his soul?***

The answer itself is, nothing. The question itself is an emphatic negative. This is a common form of expressing the strongest denial.

### **IV. *But how much would he lose, if he should gain the whole world and lose his soul?***

I answer —

1. The two things cannot be compared. We have already seen that the loss of the soul is the loss of endless happiness, and that it incurs endless misery.

Whatever is endless is boundless in that direction; and whatever is bounded can never be compared with that which is boundless. In this case the law of contrast, and not that of comparison, applies. The loss and the gain can be contrasted, but never compared.

It is true that the loss of the soul is not an infinite evil, in an absolute sense. Neither the happiness nor the misery of finite creatures, can ever become in amount absolutely infinite.

Yet as the quantity is ever growing—although at every period of the future it will fall short of being absolutely infinite—still, as it has no bounds, it is to all purposes of comparison, infinite; because it is an ever growing quantity, having no bounds beyond which it does not pass.

The worth of the world is a finite quantity, and can therefore be easily measured and estimated. But the worth of the soul is an ever-growing, and in this sense a boundless, or infinite quantity, and can, therefore, never be estimated. The world is estimable; the soul is literally inestimable. No arithmetic can compute it; no finite mind grasp it. Indeed, God Himself must see that that which is an ever-growing quantity can never be compared with that the amount of which can be estimated, and expressed in numbers. The value of the world, then, is as nothing against infinity.

2. To gain the whole world would be to gain, after all, but little. And in fact, for a human being to possess the world, would be to him really no good at all; it would only load him with an ocean of cares, and anxieties, and perplexities, from which he could reap really no solid benefit. It would prove to him only what it did to Solomon; and Solomon, be it remembered, possessed as much of it as he knew what to do with. Like Solomon, he would find it vanity of vanities, and vexation of spirit.

It would really be worse for a man, as far as his own happiness was concerned, than the most abject poverty.

But the loss of the soul is really a boundless evil. It is as immeasurable as infinity. No finite mind can grasp it; the contemplation of it is overwhelming. No contemplation can reach the amount of loss that would be incurred by losing the soul; nor could it in the least approach it.

You cannot, by calculation, approach a limit, where there is none. This is so simple a statement that even a child can understand it. Let any schoolboy in this assembly attempt to exhaust the number five, by dividing it by three, and he will find that he may divide it by three forever without exhausting it, or in the least degree approaching a termination. This is a curious, but a well-known fact. Even in so simple a case as this, you cannot exhaust five by dividing it by three, should you continue the process to all eternity.

I make this remark for the sake of illustration. To lose the soul is to incur an ever-growing quantity of misery, and to lose an ever-growing quantity of happiness.

Neither of these, happiness or misery, can have any bound in the case supposed. There is no line in that direction. In degree there is limit, both in the case of happiness and misery; but in duration, there is no limit in either case. Therefore comparison is out of the question. All that can be said is, the gain is really nothing in case you gain the world. The more a man has of the world beyond a certain amount, the worse it is for him. It becomes to him a real trouble and a burden; and beyond a certain amount, he can neither enjoy nor dispose of it.

Possessing too much of the world, is like a man's eating too much for his dinner. A certain amount is useful to him; but let him go beyond that, and all that he eats is an injury to him, and he may easily proceed to surfeiting and death in that direction.

That man is as really mad, who attempts to get more of the world than is good for him, as that man is who eats enormously, and much more than he can digest, for the sake of gratifying his appetite.

Mr. Law has said, that a man is as poorly employed in attempting to lay up a hundred thousand pounds sterling, as he would be in providing for himself a hundred thousand pairs of boots and shoes.

Let it be understood, then, that whenever a man possesses more of the world than he can usefully use and appropriate for the good of mankind and for the glory of God, he is contributing to his own misery, and not to his own happiness. He is loading himself down with cares and anxieties, that will crush and ruin him.

***V. Let us, for a moment, reverse the question in the text. What will it profit to lose the world and save your soul?***

Suppose you do not gain this world's goods; suppose you barely possess the necessaries of life; nay, suppose you live in the most abject poverty for the few days you have to remain in this world, and save your soul.

In a few days you will rest from all your poverty, and enter upon the possession of eternal riches, and heir of God and a joint heir with Christ, surrounded with all the wealth, and glories, and blessedness of heaven, and that to all eternity.

How much, then, do you gain, over and above the loss sustained by not having the world?

The answer is plainly that there is no comparison in the case. Only it may be said, that you have gained infinite riches, and have really lost nothing that was of any importance. You have all the necessaries of life; and if at any time you were straitened in

circumstances and had not food enough to eat, this very poverty was made useful to you, and was upon the whole a benefit rather than a loss.

Talk of material wealth! Why you gain more thus, if you lose the world and save your soul, than the whole material universe is worth—really, infinitely more. The loss is as nothing; the gain, infinite.

### REMARKS

1. You have only to neglect your soul, and its loss is inevitable. The apostle asks, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

This question also is an emphatic one, as if the Apostle had said, It is impossible to escape if we neglect so great salvation.

The fact is, the soul of every unconverted sinner is in a lost state. Without faith in Christ, it is condemned already, under the law, and exposed to eternal destruction. A man need not go about to commit this, and that, and the other heinous sin. He is already a sinner; he is condemned, awaiting his execution; and he has only to remain in this impenitent, unbelieving state, and the loss of his soul is as certain as his existence. Sinner, now remember that if you neglect your soul, and neglect the gospel, your damnation is as certain and as inevitable as if you had already been in hell for a thousand years.

Do not forget this; for a great many persons talk as if—why, they do not do anything very bad. They do not know, they say, if they should die in their present state, whether God could justly send them to hell. They seem to think it a doubtful question whether they should lose their souls, if they should die in their present situation. Now this is an awful infatuation.

The soul is already in a lost condition, already condemned, already under sentence of eternal death. Sinner, you need only to die instantly, to wake up in hell. Hence you are expected to escape, to lay hold of eternal life, to give all diligence to repent and believe the gospel, and what you do, to do quickly. How, then, can you escape, if you neglect to attend, and that effectually, to the salvation of your soul!

2. It is wise for every sinner to inquire, What are my prospects? Am I likely to be saved; or much more likely to be lost? How is it with me thus far? Have I done anything effectually for the salvation of my soul? Or have I been trying to gain the world while I have neglected my soul? Business men inquire into their business prospects. They calculate the chances for and against them; they look the matter over, examine their books, look into their business relations, and look at their debts and credits, and see how their matters stand.

Now, Sinner, have you ever done this in regard to your soul? You look over your matters in a worldly point of view, to see how much you are gaining or losing; but have you ever looked over your spiritual concerns, to see what they are? Have you cared for your soul? or are you only caring for your body? Are you laying up treasures for eternity or only for time?

3. The folly of neglecting the soul is infinite. I know of no other word than infinite that can express it. There can be no limit to the absolute madness of neglecting the soul.

To save the soul is the great errand of life, the infinitely important concern, the one thing needful, the great business and errand upon which God has sent us into this world. If we attend to the soul, eternity is secure; if we neglect the soul, eternity is lost. And to think of a soul's being ushered into this life, and commanded to prepare for an eternal state; and then to neglect it, to die in sin, and be obliged at last to say, "I have been an infinite fool, I have lost my soul!"

4. It is time to take a stand against the spirit of delay in this matter.

We sometimes see men, in worldly matters, act as if they were in a kind of infatuation. There is some important matter to which they ought to attend; but somehow or other the spirit of delay takes possession of them, and they keep putting it off, and putting it off. Some persons seem to have this infirmity in regard to almost everything of a worldly nature.

They delay, and delay; and delay becomes with them a habit, so that you can really depend on them for nothing. This habit of delay in worldly matters, is sure to bring ruin in its train. No person will ever prosper in worldly matters who contracts this habit of delay in worldly business. Persons are peculiarly in danger of contracting this habit in respect to things which are not congenial to their feelings, things to which they dread to attend.

Now in regard to spiritual things—the carnal mind being enmity against God, spiritual religion is repulsive to the feelings of the unconverted soul. The mind is set upon worldly gratifications, and to deny these and enter into sympathy with Christ, is that to which the sinner has no heart. Hence the infinite danger of contracting the habit of delay.

Indeed, this is the great sin that ruins the millions—it is simply this habit of delay.

When very young, they think there is time enough, of course; and as they grow older, they contract the habit of delay more and more firmly, flattering themselves that there is time enough. They always expect, at some future time to attend to their souls. They do

not mean always to neglect it; but as it is not congenial to their feelings, they put it off for the present.

Now for this there is no remedy, but for men to set reason to work, as we say, and take a decided stand against the spirit of delay. I say, this spirit of delay; for it seems as if there was a spirit in it, an evil spirit. It is a strange infatuation, a moral insanity that seems to take possession of the soul.

There seems to be no end to this delay, delay, delay.

You talk with a Sabbath School child, and he will put it off; you talk with him when he is a young man, and he will still delay. You talk with him in middle age, and exhort him in an earnest manner—there is still time enough. Talk with him in the decline of life, and his habit of delay has become so strong, that he will finally put it off till his death-bed. And when he can put it off no longer for years, he will adjourn the question from day to day, and then from hour to hour, till at last he will sink down to hell under this horrible infatuation of delay.

5. Every man should act in regard to the salvation of his soul, as prudent men do in worldly matters.

Prudent business men do not allow things to be put off where they run a great risk.

Should one of you learn tonight that your whole estate was liable to be lost through some fraud or some defect in your title, and should you understand that if now attended to thoroughly, all might be secure, but that every hour's delay exposed you to the loss of all you have, would you sleep till you had made all secure, if possible? If you would, you are not a prudent man.

Would you allow things to run on in this loose way from day to day? No, indeed! you would not give sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids, till you had satisfied yourself that all was secure. Now this is prudence in worldly matters. Great interests are at stake; and it is remarkable that a man should be prudent, and wise, and energetic in attending to such matters in such circumstances.

But what is the reason that you are not acting thus in regard to your spiritual concerns? Are you neglecting your soul? Then you know that this is infinite imprudence.

If you should lose your worldly estate, you might, by industry, and economy, and greater prudence, recover yourself; and obtain at least a competency for this life. The loss might not be irreparable; it might not plunge you into endless poverty. But remember that if you lose your soul, the loss is eternal; it is irreparable; there is no remedy for it; there is

no recovering yourself; you have lost all that is valuable, and that to all eternity; you have incurred all that is dreadful and horrible, and that to all eternity.

6. What change would a realizing belief in this fundamental truth necessarily secure!

While men profess to believe in the truths of religion, in the worth of the soul, they in fact do not believe it. That is, they do not believe it in such a sense that they realize its truth. They admit it; but they do not truly believe it. It is by them in a certain sense admitted—in a misty, unrealizing sense; but as soon as this truth is believed in the sense of its becoming to the mind a fact, a reality, it arouses all the energies of the soul. Just think how differently men would conduct themselves, did they believe that every moment's delay exposes them to the loss of the soul.

How serious, how earnest, how devout, how feeling, how tender, how truthful, how honest, would men become! Indeed, it would greatly change all the business operations of the world; and human society would become another affair. Instead of the vast scramble after the world, the lusting after earthly pleasures, the incessant cry for more, and more, and more of earthly good, the world would lose its hold upon mankind in a great measure.

The whole world would take on a type of behavior, of spirit, and life, so fundamentally different from what we now see, that we should hardly recognize this as the same world. Even the Church, did she but steadily realize this great truth, would become so changed as hardly to be known as the same people.

But 7. It is maintained by some, that the souls of the wicked will be annihilated at death; or if not at death, that still they will not be immortal, and will not suffer forever. Now suppose this to be true—which surely, if reason or Revelation are to be trusted, it cannot be—but suppose that it is true, what then would a man gain if he should gain the whole world, and be annihilated?

Suppose he did not incur eternal death—as in this case he would not—still he would lose eternal happiness, eternal glory, eternal holiness and communion with God. He would lose, at least, an infinite amount of good—and what would he gain? Nothing, of any real value to him.

There would be, in this case, no computing the loss, no possibility of any finite conception of it.

He has lost his existence; it is blotted out; he has no more life, no more consciousness, no more good. Instead of an eternal existence of ever-growing enjoyment, he is cut short; and, like the beast that perisheth, he is lost in annihilation.

8. But let me ask one more question. What are the chances, either in your favor or against you, in this case? How old are you? How many years have you lived in sin? How much privilege, and how much light have you enjoyed? How many times have you resisted your conscience, and the strivings of the Holy Spirit?

How many prayers have been offered for you? and how much has God done that you have resisted and condemned?

Are you aware how great a proportion of mankind that are ever converted, are converted when they are young? Are you not, many of you, at least, past the age that leaves you much room for a rational expectation that you will ever be converted? Have you not already hardened your heart, resisted the Spirit, and gone so far in sin as that the habit of delay has become so fixed, that you stand but a very slight chance of ever being converted?

Now, so far as we see the grace of God taking effect among men, by far the majority of men live and die in sin. Again, of those that are converted, by far the majority of them are converted under twenty years of age. Comparatively few are converted that live on in sin to be forty years of age; and only now and then one in old age is converted. How many chances, then, to one, do you think some of you stand of losing your soul?

Can you rationally expect to be saved any farther than as a mere peradventure, a possibility that you may be? You know that if you make sure of the present moment, you may be saved. But hitherto you have put it off; and are you not likely to put it off?

Some of you may have quenched the Spirit already, may have extinguished His light; you may already be reprobate because the Lord has rejected you for your spirit of delay. But suppose you are not already given up of God, is there much reason to believe you will ever effectually attend to your salvation?

When will you do so?

9. Are not worldly men mad? They call Christians crazy; they say that we are insane. But they know better. They know that if any men have any claim to rationality, it is those who seriously attend to the salvation of their souls.

But I ask the question, are not worldly men insane? Should they treat their worldly interests as they do their spiritual interests, would not any court in Christendom, upon proof, pronounce them insane?

Yes, indeed. Go in to any court, having jurisdiction in the case, and prove that any man treats his worldly interests as sinners treat their spiritual and eternal interests, and the

court would pronounce them insane, and grant them a commission of lunacy to prevent them from ruining themselves in a worldly point of view. O that a commission of lunacy could be sued out in the high Court of Chancery above, and men compelled to attend to the salvation of their souls! But this is a question that can never be taken out of their hands. In worldly matters, the earthly courts can take the possessions of a mad man and dispose of them in such a way that he cannot squander them. But in spiritual things, the madness is moral; it is culpable; it is the madness of a moral agent. God will not issue a commission of lunacy to compel him to attend to the salvation of his soul. He will warn him, and urge him, and strive with him; but after all He must leave him free to act for himself, and take the consequences.

O Sinner! take care what you do! and let this question in the text ring in your ears, and murmur in your deepest soul—"What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

And this other question—"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

## CHAPTER V.

### GOD'S ANGER AGAINST THE WICKED.

*"God is angry with the wicked every day."*—Psalms 7:11.

In speaking from this text I design to show briefly:

- I. WHO ARE "WICKED" IN THE SCRIPTURE SENSE OF THIS TERM;
- II. THAT GOD IS ANGRY WITH THEM;
- III. THE NATURE OF THIS ANGER;
- IV. THE REASONS FOR IT;
- V. ITS DEGREE;
- VI. ITS DURATION;
- VII. THE TERRIBLE CONDITION OF SINNERS UNDER IT.

***I. The Bible divides all the human race into two classes only, the righteous and the wicked.***

Those are righteous who have true faith in Christ, whose spirit is consecrated to God, who live a heavenly life on earth, and who have been renewed by the Holy Ghost. Their original selfishness is subdued and slain and they live a new life through the ever-present grace of Christ Jesus.

Right over against them in character are the wicked, who have not been renewed in heart; who live in selfishness, under the dominion of appetite in some of its forms, and it matters not in which, out of all possible forms, it may be, but self is the great and only ultimate end of their life. These are, in the scriptural sense, the wicked.

## ***II. God is angry with the wicked.***

Our text explicitly affirms this. The same truth is affirmed and implied in numerous other passages. Let the sinner remember that this is the testimony of God himself. Who should better know the feelings of God towards sinners than God himself does? Who on this point can gainsay what God affirms?

But this truth is also taught by reason. Every man in the exercise of his reason knows it ought to be true. If God were not opposed to the wicked, he would be wicked himself for not opposing them. What would you think of a judge who did not hate and oppose lawbreakers? Would you think him an honest man if he did not take sides against transgressors? Everybody knows that this is the dictate of reason and of common sense. Sinners know this, and always assume it in their practical judgments. They know that God is angry with them, and ought to be—though they may not realise it. Sinners know many things which they do not realise. For instance, you who are in sin know that you must die; but you have more reason to be assured that God is angry with you than you have to be sure that you must die; for it is not necessarily so certain that you will die as it is that God is angry with you for your sin. God may possibly translate you from this world to another without your death, as he has some others; but there never was, and never can be, any exception to the universal law of his anger against all the wicked. You know this, therefore, with an absolute certainty, which precludes all possibility of rational doubt.

Sinners do know this, as I have said, and always assume it in their practical judgments. Else why are they afraid to die? Why afraid to meet God face to face in the world of retribution? Would they have this fear if they did not know that God is angry with them for their sin? It would be gratuitous, therefore, to prove this truth to the sinner. He already knows it—knows it not only as a thing that is, but as what ought to be.

## ***III. The nature of God's anger.***

The nature of this anger demands our attention. On this point it is important to notice negatively:

1. It is not a malicious anger. God is never malicious; never has a disposition to do any wrong in any way to any being. He is infinitely far from such feelings, and from any such developments of anger.

2. His anger is not passion in the sense in which men are wont to exhibit passion in anger. You may often have seen men whose sensibility is lashed into fury under an excitement of anger; their very souls seem to be boiling with fermentation, so intense is their excitement. Reason for the time is displaced, and passion reigns. Now God is never angry in such a way. His anger against the wicked involves no such excitement of passion.

3. God's anger cannot be in any sense a selfish anger; for God is not selfish in the least degree, but infinitely the reverse of it. Of course his anger against the wicked must be entirely devoid of selfishness.

But positively his anger against the wicked implies:

1. An entire disapprobation of their conduct and character. He disapproves most intensely and utterly everything in either their heart or their life. He loathes the wicked with infinite loathing.

2. He feels the strongest opposition of will to their character. It is so utterly opposed to his own character and to his own views of right that his will arrays itself in the strongest form of opposition against it.

3. God's anger involves also strong opposition of feeling against sinners. Undoubtedly God must have feelings of anger against the wicked. We cannot suppose it possible that God should behold sin without feelings of anger.

In our attempts to conceive of the mental faculties of the divine mind, we are under a sort of necessity of reasoning analogically from our own minds. Revelation has told us that we are "made in the image of God." Of course the mind of God is the antitype from which ours was cast. The great constituent elements of mind, we must suppose, are therefore alike in both the infinite and the finite. As we have intellect, sensibility, and will, so has God.

From our own minds, moreover, we infer not only what the faculties of the divine mind are, but also the laws under which they act. We know that in the presence of certain objects we naturally feel strong opposition. Those objects are so related to our

sensibility that anger and indignation are the natural result. We could not act according to the fixed laws of our own minds if we did not utterly disapprove wrong-doing, and if our disapproval of it, moreover, did not awaken some real *sensibility* in the form of displeasure and indignation against the wrong-doer.

Some suppose that these results of the excited sensibility against wrong would not develop themselves if our hearts were right. This is a great mistake. The nearer right our hearts are, the more certainly shall we disapprove wrong, the more intensely shall we feel opposed to it, and the greater will be our displeasure against the wrong-doer. Hence we must not only suppose that God is angry in the sense of a will opposed to sin, but in the further sense of a sensibility enkindled against it. This must be the case if God is truly a moral agent.

4. God is not angry merely against the sin abstracted from the sinner, but against the sinner himself. Some persons have laboured hard to set up this ridiculous and absurd abstraction, and would fain make it appear that God is angry at the sin, yet not at the sinner. He hates the theft, but loves the thief. He abhors adultery, but is pleased with the adulterer. Now this is supreme nonsense. The sin has no moral character apart from the sinner. The act is nothing apart from the actor. The very thing that God hates and disapproves is not the mere event—the thing done in distinction from the doer; but it is the *doer himself*. It grieves and displeases Him that a rational moral agent, under his government, should array himself against his own God and Father, against all that is right and just in the universe. This is the thing that offends God. The sinner himself is the direct and the only object of his anger.

So the Bible shows. God is angry with the wicked, not with the abstract sin. If the wicked turn not, God will whet his sword, he hath bent his bow and made it ready, not to shoot the *sin*, however, but the *sinner*—the wicked man who has done the abominable thing. This is the only doctrine of either the Bible or of common sense on this subject.

5. The anger of God against the wicked implies all that properly belongs to anger when it exists *with good reason*. We know by our own experience that when we are angry with good reason, we have strong opposition of will, and also strong feelings of displeasure and disapprobation, against wrong-doers. Hence we may infer that under the same circumstances the same is true of God.

#### **IV. *The reasons of God's anger against the wicked.***

His anger is never excited without good reasons. Causeless anger is always sinful. "Whoever is angry with his brother without a cause is in danger of the judgment." God never himself violates his own laws—founded as they are in infinite right and justice. Hence God's anger always has good reasons.

Good reasons exist for his anger, and he is angry for those reasons. It is not uncommon for persons to be angry, under circumstances, too, which are good reasons for anger, but still they are not angry for those good reasons, but for other reasons which are not good. For example, every sinner has good reasons for being angry with every other sinner for his wickedness against God. But sinners are not angry against other sinners for those reasons. Although these reasons actually exist, yet when angry at sinners, it is not for these good reasons, but for some selfish reasons, which are not good. This is a common case. You see persons angry, and if you reprove them for their anger as sinful, they seek to justify themselves by affirming that they are angry with the man for his sins—for his wrong-doing against God. Now this is indeed a good and sufficient reason for anger, and the justification would be a good one if the anger were really excited by this cause. But often, although this reason exists, and is pleaded by the man as his excuse for anger, yet it is no excuse, for, in fact, he is not angry for this cause, but has some selfish reason for his anger. Not so with God. God is angry with the wicked, not irrespective of his sins, but for his sins.

1. Wicked men are entirely unreasonable. Their conduct is at war with all reason and with all right. God has given them intelligence and conscience; but they act in opposition to both. God has given them a pure and good law, yet this they recklessly violate. Hence their conduct is in every point of view utterly unreasonable.

Now we all know that, by a fixed law of our being, nothing can be a greater temptation to anger than to see persons act unreasonably. This is one of the greatest trials that can occur, and one of the strongest incentives to anger. So when God looks at the unreasonable conduct of sinners, he feels the strongest indignation and displeasure. If they were not rational beings endowed with reason, no anger would be awakened and called forth. But since God knows them to be endowed with reason, and to be capable of true and noble-hearted obedience, he cannot fail of being displeased with their transgression.

2. The course of the wicked is utterly ruinous. No thanks to the sinner if his influence does not ruin the whole world. By the very laws of mind, the sin of any one man tends to influence other men to sin, and they spread far and wide the dreadful contagion of his example. It may truly be said that the sinner does the worst thing possible to him to ruin the universe. He sets the example of rebellion against the supreme government of all worlds. And what influence can be more potent than that of example? What worse thing, therefore, can the sinner do to destroy all good than he is doing by his sin? No thanks to him if every man who sees his sin does not imitate it to his own ruin, and throw the power of his own example broadcast over all his associates. No thanks to any sinner if his own influence for ruin does not run like fire on the prairies, over all the world, and then over every other world of moral beings in the universe of God.

Think of the father of a family, living in his sins and exerting his great influence over his household to make them all as wicked as himself. Who can estimate the power of his influence over his wife and his children? Does he pray with them and seek to lead them to God? No; his example is prayerless. It proclaims every day to his family, "You have no occasion at all to pray. You see I can live without prayer." Does he read the Bible to them or with them? No; his constant example before them sets the Bible at naught, and continually suggests that they will be as well off without reading the Bible as with. His whole influence, therefore, is ruinous to the souls of his family. No thanks to him, if they do not all go down to hell along with himself. If they do not scream around him with yells of mingled imprecation and despair, cursing him as the guilty author of their ruin, he will have other agencies to thank besides his own. Surely he has done what he well could do to secure results so dreadful as these. Has not God good reason to be angry with him? Why not? Would not you feel that you have good reasons to be angry with a man who should come into your family to destroy its peace—to seduce your wife and daughters, and to entice your sons into some pathway of crime and ruin? Certainly you would. Now do not all families belong to God in a far higher sense than any man's family belongs to him? Why, then, has not God as good reasons for anger against a wicked father as you could have against a villain who should plot and seek to effect the mischief and ruin of your family? Is it wonderful to you that God should be angry with every wicked father? Just consider what that father is doing by his bare example—even supposing that his words are well-guarded and not particularly liable to objection. Who does not know that example is the very highest and strongest moral power? It does not need the help of teaching to make its power felt for terrible mischief. The prayerless husband and father! The devil could not do worse—nay, more, not so bad; for the devil never had mercy offered him, never stood related as this wicked father does, to offered pardon and to the glorious gospel. If, then, God would have good reason to be angry at the devil, much more has he for anger against this wicked father.

The same substantially is true of other classes of sinners. It is essential to their very course as sinners, that they are in rebellion against God, and are doing the very worst thing in the universe by drawing other moral beings into sin.

3. Again, God is so good and sinners are so wicked, he cannot help being angry at them. If he were not angry at the wicked, he would be as much worse than they as he is wiser than they. Since, in his wisdom and knowledge, he knows more fully than they do the great evil of sin, by so much the more is he under obligation to be displeased with sin and angry at the sinner. We sometimes hear men say, "God is too good to be angry at sinners." What do men mean by this language? Do they mean that God is too good to be opposed to all evil? too good to be displeased with all evil-doers? This were indeed a strange goodness! God too good to hate sin—too good to oppose sinners! What sort of goodness can this be?

I have sometimes heard men say that if God should be angry with sinners, he would be as bad as the devil himself. Now this is not only horrible language on the score of its blasphemy, but it is monstrous absurdity on the score of its logic. The amount of its logic is that God would be himself wicked if he should be displeased at wickedness. So wrong it must be to hate the wrong-doer! Pray, who is it that holds such doctrine? Is it not possible that they feel some interest in sustaining wrong-doers even against God himself?

Really there is no force, no plausibility even, in this language about the wrong of God's being angry at sinners, except what arises from misconceiving and misrepresenting the true idea of the divine anger in this case. If God's anger were in itself sinful—as is the case often with man's anger—then, of course, nothing more can be said in its vindication. But since his anger is never sinful, never selfish, never malicious, never unholy or wrong in any degree whatever, nothing can be more false, nothing more sophistical, nothing more ungenerous and vile and Satanic, than to imply that it is. But this is just what men do when they say that for God to be angry at sinners is to be himself wicked.

The true view of this case is not by any means abstruse or difficult of apprehension. Who does not know that good men are, by virtue of their goodness, opposed to wicked men? Surely all wicked men know this well enough. Else why the fear they have of good and law-abiding men? Why do all horse-thieves and counterfeiters keep dark from good men, dread their presence, commonly feel a strong dislike to them, and always dread their influence as hostile to their own wicked schemes?

So wicked men feel towards God. They know that his goodness places him in hostile array against themselves. This fact seems to be implied in the Psalmist's expostulation, "Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? The goodness of God endureth continually." God is always good; how can you be proud of your wickedness? God is too good and too constantly good to afford you any scope for sin, any ground of hope for peace with him in your iniquity.

#### ***V. The degree of God's anger against sin.***

It is plain that the degree of God's anger against the wicked ought to be equal to the degree of their wickedness, and must be if God is what he should be. The times of heathen ignorance and darkness "God winked at;" the degree of their guilt being less, by as much as their light is less, than that of such cities as Chorazin and Bethsaida. God does not hold them innocent *absolutely*; but relatively they might almost be called innocent, compared with the great guilt of sinners in gospel lands. Against those who sin amidst the clearest light, his anger must burn most intensely; for example, against sinners in this place and congregation. You may be outwardly a decent and moral man,

respected and beloved by your friends; but if you are a selfish, impenitent sinner, the pure and holy God loathes and abhors you. He sees more real guilt in you than in ten thousand of those dark-minded heathen who are bowing down to idol gods, and whose crimes you read of with loathing and disgust. Think of it. God may be more angry against you for your great wickedness than against a nation of idolators whose ignorance he winks at, while he measures your light and consequent guilt in the balances of his own eternal justice. Oh! are you living here amid the blazing sunlight of truth; knowing your duty every day and every day refusing to do it; do you not know that in the eye of God you are one of the wickedest beings out of hell, or in hell, either, and that God's hatred against your sin is equal to your great guilt? But you say perhaps, Am I not moral and honest? Suppose you are moral. *For whose sake* are you moral, and for what reason? Is it not for your reputation's sake only? The devil might be as moral for such a purpose as you are. Mark, it is not for God's sake, not for Christ's sake, that you are a moral man, but because you love yourself. You might be just as moral if there were no God, or if you were an atheist. Of course if so, you are saying in your heart, Let there be no fear of God before my eyes, no love of God in my heart. Let me live, and have my own way, as if there were no God. And all this you do, not under the darkness of heathenism, but amid the broadest sunlight of heaven's truth blazing all around you. Do you still ask, What have I done? You have arrayed yourself against God, rejected the gospel of his Son, and done despite to the Spirit of his grace. What heathen has ever done this, or anything that could compare with this in guilt? The vilest heathen people that ever wallowed in the filth of their own abominations are pure compared with you. Do you start back and rebel against this view of your case? Then let us ask again, by what rule are we to estimate guilt? You pass along the street and you see the lower animals doing what you would be horrified to see human beings do, but you never think of them as *guilty*. You see those dogs try to tear each other to pieces; you will perhaps try to part them; but you will not think of feeling moral indignation or moral displeasure against them; and why? Because you instinctively judge of their guilt by their light, and by their capacity for governing themselves by light and reason. On nearly the same principle you might see the heathen reeking in their abominations, quarrelling, and practising the most loathsome forms of vice and selfishness; but their guilt is only a glimmering taper compared with yours, and therefore you cannot but estimate their guilt as by so much less than your own as their light is less! Your reason demands that you should estimate guilt on this principle, and you know that you cannot rightly estimate it on any other. For the very same reason you must conclude that God estimates guilt on the same principles, and that his anger against sin is in proportion to the sinner's guilt, estimated in view of the light he enjoys and sins against. The degree of God's anger against the wicked is not measured by their outward conduct, but by their real guilt as seen by him whose eye is on the heart.

## **VI. *The duration of God's anger against the wicked.***

It manifestly must continue as long as the wickedness itself continues. As long as wicked men continue wicked, so long must God be angry at them every day. If they turn not, there can be no abatement, no cessation, of his anger. This is so plain that everybody must know it.

### **VII. *The terrible condition of the sinner against whom God is angry.***

This dreadful truth that God is angry with the wicked every day, sinners know, but do not realize. Yet it were well for you who are sinners to apprehend and estimate this just as it is.

Look then at the attributes of God. Who and what is God? Is he not a Being whose wrath against you is to be dreaded? You often feel that it is a terrible thing to incur the displeasure of some men. Children are often exceedingly afraid of the anger of their parents. Any child has reason to feel that it is a terrible state of things, when he has done wrong and knows it must come to the knowledge of his father and his mother, and must arouse their keenest displeasure against himself—this is terrible, and no wonder a child should dread it. How much more has the sinner reason to fear and tremble when by his sin he has made the Almighty God his enemy! Think of his state! Think of the case of the sinner's exposing himself to the indignation of the great and dreadful God! Look at God's natural attributes. Who can measure the extent of his power? Who or what can resist his will? He taketh up the isles as a very little thing, and the nations before him are only as the small dust of the balance. When his wrath is kindled, who can stand before it, or stay its dreadful fury?

Think also of his omniscience. He knows all you have done. Every act has passed underneath his eye; and not every external act, merely, but, what is far more dreadful to you, every motive lying back of every act—all the most hidden workings of your heart. Oh, if you were only dealing with some one whom you could deceive, how would you set yourself at work to plan some deep scheme of deception! But all in vain here, for God knows it all. If it were a case between yourself and some human tribunal, you might cover up many things; you might perjure yourself; or might smuggle away the dreaded witnesses; but before God, no such measures can avail you for one moment. The whole truth will come out, dread its disclosure as much as you may. The darkness and the light are both alike to him, and nothing can be hidden from his eye.

Again, not only does God know everything you have done, and not only is he abundantly able to punish you, but he is as much disposed as he is able, or omniscient. You will find he has no disposition to overlook your guilt. He is so good that he never can let sin unrepented of pass unnoticed and unpunished. It would be an infinite wrong to the universe if he should! If he were to do it, he would at once cease to be a good and holy God!

O sinner! do you ever think of God's perfect holiness—the infinite purity of his heart? Do you ever think how intensely strong must be his opposition to your sin? to those sins of yours, which are so bad even in your own view that you cannot bear to have many of your fellowmen know them? How do you suppose your guilty soul appears in the eye of the pure and holy God?

You often hear of God's mercy. You hope for some good to yourself, perhaps, from this attribute of his nature. Ah! if you had not spurned it, and trampled it under your feet; if you had not slighted and abused its manifestations to you, it might befriend you in your day of need. But ah, how can you meet insulted mercy! What can you say for yourself in defence for having sinned against the richest mercy the world ever saw? Can you hope that God's injured mercy will befriend you? Nay, verily; God has not one attribute which is not armed against you. Such is his nature, and such his character, that you have nothing to hope, but everything to fear. His dreadful anger against you must be expressed. He may withhold its expression for a season, to give the utmost scope for efforts to reclaim and save you. But when these efforts shall have failed, then will not justice take her course? Will not insulted Majesty utter her awful voice? Will not the infinite God arise in his awful purity, and proclaim, "I hate all wickedness, my anger burns against the sinner to the lowest hell?" Will not Jehovah take measures to make his true position towards sinners known?

### **REMARKS.**

1. God is much more opposed to sinners than Satan is. Doubtless this must be so, for Satan has no special reason for being opposed to sinners. They are doing his work very much as he would have them. We have no evidence that Satan is displeased with their course. But God is displeased with them, and for the best of reasons.

Men sometimes say, If God is angry with the wicked, he is worse than Satan. They seem to think that Satan is a liberal, generous-hearted being. They are rather disposed to commend him as, on the whole, very charitable and noble-hearted. They may think that Satan is bad enough, but they cannot be reconciled to it that God should be so hard on sinners.

Now the facts are that God is too good to be otherwise than angry with sinners. The devil is so bad himself that he finds no difficulty in being well enough pleased with their vileness: it does not offend him. Hence, from his very nature, God must hate the sinner infinitely more than Satan does.

2. If God were not angry with sinners, he would not be worthy of confidence. What would you think of a civil governor who should manifest no indignation against

transgressors of the law? You would say, of course, that he had not the good of the community at heart, and you could have no confidence in him.

3. God's anger with sinners is not inconsistent with his happiness. Why should it be, if it is not inconsistent with his holiness? If there were anything wrong about it, then it would indeed destroy all his happiness; but if it be intrinsically right, then it not only cannot destroy his happiness, but he could not be happy without anger against the wicked. His happiness must be conditioned upon his acting and feeling in accordance with the reality of things. Hence, if God did not hate sin and did not manifest his hatred in all proper ways, he could not respect himself; he could not retire within the great deep of his own nature, and enjoy eternal bliss in the consciousness of infinite rectitude.

4. God's opposition to sinners is his glory. It is all-glorious to God to manifest his anger towards wicked men and devils. Is not this the fact with all good rulers? Do they not seize every opportunity to manifest their opposition to the wicked, and is not this their real glory? Do we not account it their glory to be zealous and efficient in detecting crime? Most certainly. They can have no other real glory. But suppose a ruler should sympathise with murderers, thieves, robbers. We should execrate his very name!

5. Saints love God for his opposition to sinners, not excepting even his opposition to their *own sins*. They could not have confidence in him if he did not oppose their own sins, and it is not in their hearts to ask him to favour even their own iniquities. No; where they come near him and see how he is opposed to their own sins, and to them on account of them, they honour him and adore him the more. They do not want any being in the universe to connive at their own sins, or to take any other stand toward themselves as sinners, than that of opposition.

6. This text is to be understood as it reads. Its language is to be taken in its obvious sense. Some have supposed that God is not really angry with sinners, but uses this language in accommodation to our understandings.

This is an unwarrantable latitude of interpretation. Suppose we should apply the same principle to what is said of God's love. When we read, "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son," suppose we say, this cannot mean real love, such as we feel for each other—no, nothing like this; the language is only used by way of accommodation, and really has no particular sense whatever. This sort of interpretation would destroy the Bible, or any other book ever written. The only sound view of this matter is that God speaks as sensible men do—to be understood by the reader and hearer, and of course uses language in its most obvious sense. If he says he is angry against the wicked, we must suppose that he really is.

It is indeed true that we are to qualify the language, as I have already shown, by what we absolutely know of his real character, and therefore hence infer that this language cannot imply malicious anger, or selfish anger, or any forms of anger inconsistent with infinite benevolence. But having made the necessary qualifications, there are no more to be made, and the cardinal idea of anger still remains—a *fixed eternal displeasure and opposition against all sinners because of their great guilt.*

7. God's anger against the sinner does not exclude love—real, compassionate love; not, however, the love of complacency, but the love of well-wishing and good-willing; not the love of him as a *sinner*, but the love for him as a sentient being, who might be infinitely happy in obedience to his God. This is undoubtedly the true view to be taken of God's attitude towards sinners. What parent does not know what this is? You have felt the kindlings of indignation against the wickedness of your child, but blended with this you have also felt all the compassionate tenderness of a parent's heart.

The sinner sometimes says, It cannot be that God is angry with me, for he watches over me day by day; he feeds me from his table, and regales me with his bounties. Ah, sinner! you may be greatly mistaken in this matter. Don't deceive yourself! God is slow to anger indeed; that is, he is slow to *give expression* to his anger, and himself assigns the reason, because he is long suffering towards sinners, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." But take care that you do not misconceive his real feeling towards you. Beware, lest you misinterpret his great forbearance. He waits, I know; but the storm of vengeance is gathering. How soon he may come forth out of his place and unlock suddenly all the whirlwinds of his vengeance! Ah, sinner! this once done, they will sleep no more.

8. It is plain that sinners do not realise God's anger, though they know it. If they do both know and realise it, they manifest a degree of hardihood in iniquity which is dreadful. But the fact is, they keep the thought of God's anger from their minds. They are reckless about it, and treat it as they do death. Sinners know they must die, but they do not realise this fact. They do not love to sit down and commune with death—thinking how soon it may come, how certainly it will come; how the grave-worms will gnaw the flesh from their cheek-bones, and consume those eyes now bright and sparkling. These young ladies don't love to commune with such thoughts as these, and realise how soon these scenes will be realities.

So you don't love to think of God's anger against sin, of his reasons for his anger, and of his great provocations. You probably don't like to hear me preach about it, and yet I preach as mildly as I can. You can't bear to hear the subject brought forward and pressed upon your attention. Tell me, are you in the habit of sitting down and considering this subject attentively? If you were to do so, you could not contemn God and treat him as if you had no care for him.

9. Are you aware, sinner, that you have made God your enemy, and have you thought how terrible a thing this is? Do you consider how impotent you are to withstand God? If you were in any measure dependent on any one of your fellowmen, you would not like to make him your enemy. The student in this college is careful not to make the faculty, or any one of them, his enemy. The child has the same solicitude in regard to his parent. Now consider what you are doing towards God—that God who holds your breath in his hands, your very life, in his power. Let him only withdraw his hand, and you sink to hell by your own gravity. On a slippery steep you stand, and the billows of damnation roll below! O sinner! are you aware that when you lie down at night with your weapons of rebellion against God in your very hands, his blazing eye is on you? Are you well aware of this?

You may recollect the case of a Mr. H., once a student here. For a considerable time he had been rebellious against the truth of God as presented here to his mind, and this spirit of rebellion rose gradually to a higher and yet higher pitch. It seemed to have made about as much head as he could well bear, and in this state he retired to bed, and extinguished his light. All at once his room seemed full of dazzling splendour; he gazed around; there stood before him a glorious form—with eyes of unearthly and most searching power; gradually all else disappeared save one eye, which shone with indescribable brilliancy and seemed to search him through and through. The impression made on his mind was awful. Oh! said he, I could not have lived under it many minutes if I had not yielded and bowed in submission to the will of God.

Sinner, have you ever considered that God's searching eye is on *you*? Do you think of it whenever you lie down at night? If you should live so long and should lie down again on your bed, think of it then. Write it down on a little card, and hang it where it will most often catch your eye, "*Thou God seest me.*" Do this; and then realise that God's eye is penetrating your very heart. Oh that searching, awful eye! You close your eyes to sleep—still God's eye is on you. It closes not for the darkness of night. Do you say, "I shall sleep as usual—I am not the sinner who will be kept awake through fear of God's wrath. Why should I be afraid of God? What have I to fear? I know indeed that God says 'Give me thy heart,' but I have no thought of doing it. I have disobeyed him many years and see no flaming wrath yet. I expect he will feed me still and fill my cup with every form of blessing." O sinner! for these very reasons have you the more cause to dread his burning wrath. You have abused his mercy well-nigh to the last moment of endurance. Oh how soon will his wrath break forth against thee! and no arm in all the universe can stay its whelming floods of ruin. And if you don't believe it, its coming will be all the more sure, speedy, and awful!

## CHAPTER VI.

ANY ONE FORM OF SIN PERSISTED IN IS FATAL TO THE SOUL.

"Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all."

James ii. 10.

"He that is unjust in the least, is also unjust in much."—Luke xvi.10.

In speaking from these words, I inquire,

### ***I. What is it to persist in sin?***

1. To persist in sin is, not to abandon it. If a person should only occasionally, under the force of temptation, fall into a sin, any form of sin, and should repent and abandon it for a time, and should only *occasionally* be overcome by a temptation to commit that form of sin, it would not be proper to say that he *persisted* in it. For, according to this supposition, he is not wilful, or obstinate, or habitual in the commission of this sin; but it is rather *accidental* in the sense that the temptation *sometimes* overtakes and overcomes him notwithstanding his habitual abandonment of it and resistance to it. But if the commission be *habitual*, a thing *allowed*, a thing indulged in habitually—such a sin is persisted in.

2. A sin is persisted in, although it may not be outwardly repeated, if it be not duly confessed. An individual may be guilty of a great sin, which he may not repeat in the act; nevertheless, while he neglects or refuses to confess it, it is still on his conscience unrepented of and in that sense, is still persisted in. If the sin has been committed to the injury of some person or persons, and be not duly confessed to the parties injured, it is still persisted in.

If any of you had slandered his neighbour to his great injury, it would not do for you to merely abstain *from repeating* that offence. The sin is not abandoned until it is confessed, and reparation made, so far as confession can make it. If not confessed, the injury is allowed to work; and therefore the sin is virtually repeated, and therefore persisted in.

Again, 3. A sin is persisted in when due reparation has not been made. If you have wronged a person, and it is in your power to make him restitution and satisfaction, then, so long as you persist in neglecting or refusing to do so, you do not forsake the sin, but persist in it. Suppose one who had stolen your property, resolved never to repeat the act, and never to commit the like again; and yet he refuses to make restitution and restore the stolen property as far as is in his power; of course he still persists in that sin, and the wrong is permitted to remain.

I once had a conversation with a young man to this effect. He had been in the habit of stealing. He was connected with a business in which it was possible for him to steal money in small sums, which he had repeatedly done. He afterwards professed to become a Christian, but he made no restitution. He found in the Bible this text, "Let him

that stole steal no more." He resolved not to steal any more, and there let the matter rest. Of course he had no evidence of acceptance with God, for he could not have been accepted. However, he flattered himself that he was a Christian for a long time, until he heard a sermon on confession and restitution, which woke him up. He then came to me for the conversation of which I have spoken.

He was told that, if it was in his power, he must make restitution and give back the stolen money, or he could not be forgiven. But observe his perversion of Scripture. To be sure it is the duty of those who have stolen property to steal no more; but this is not all. He is bound to restore that which he has stolen, as well as to steal no more. This is a plain doctrine of Scripture, as well as of reason and conscience.

## **II. Any one form of sin persisted in is fatal to the soul.**

I now come to the main doctrine of our texts—That is, it is impossible for a person to be saved who continues to commit any form of known sin.

1. It is fatal to the soul because any one form of sin persisted in is a violation of the spirit of the whole law. The text in James settles that: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all." The law requires supreme love to God, and equal love to our fellowmen.

Now sin is selfishness; and always assumes the preference of self-interest and self-gratification to obedience to God, or to our duty to our fellowmen.

Whosoever, therefore, habitually prefers himself to God, or is selfish in regard to his fellowmen, cannot be a Christian. If in any one thing he violates the law of love, he breaks the spirit of the whole law, and is living in sin.

2. Persistence in any form of sin cannot consist with supreme love to God or equal love to our fellowmen. If we love God more than ourselves, we cannot disoblige him for the sake of obliging ourselves. We cannot displease him, knowingly and habitually, for the sake of pleasing ourselves.

For we supremely love whom we supremely desire to please. If we supremely desire to please ourselves, we love ourselves supremely. If we love God supremely, we desire supremely to please him; and cannot, consistently with the existence of this love in the soul, consent to displease him.

Under the force of a powerful temptation that diverts and partially distracts the mind, one who loves God may be induced to commit an *occasional* sin, and *occasionally* to displease God.

But if he love God supremely, he will consent to displease him only under the pressure of a present and powerful temptation that diverts attention and partially distracts the mind. So that his sin cannot be *habitual*; and no form of sin can habitually have dominion over him if he is truly a Christian.

3. The text in James affirms the impossibility of real obedience in one thing, and of persistent disobedience in another, at the same time. It seems to me a great and common error to suppose that persons can really obey God in the spirit of obedience in *some* things, while at the same time there are certain other things in which they withhold obedience; in other words, that they can obey one commandment and disobey another at the same time—that they can perform one duty acceptably, and at the same time refuse to perform other duties.

Now the text in James is designed flatly to contradict this view of the subject. It asserts as plainly as possible, that disobedience in any one point is wholly inconsistent with true obedience, for the time being, in any other respect; that the neglect of one duty renders it impossible, for the time being, to perform any other duty with acceptance; in other words, no one can obey in one thing and disobey in another at the same time.

But 4. Real obedience to God involves and implies supreme regard for his authority.

Now if any one has a supreme regard for God's authority in any one thing, he will yield to his authority in everything.

But if he can consent to act against the authority of God in any one thing for the time being, he cannot be accepted in anything; for it must be that, while in one thing he rejects the authority of God, he does not properly accept it in any other. Hence, if obedience to God be real in *anything*, it extends for the time being, and *must* extend, to *everything known to be the will of God*.

Again, 5. One sin persisted in is fatal to the soul, because it is a real rejection of God's *whole* authority. If a man violates knowingly any one of God's commandments as such, he rejects the authority of God; and if in this he rejects the authority of God, he rejects *his whole* authority, for the time being, on every subject. So that if he *appears* to obey in other things while in one thing he sets aside and condemns God's authority, it is only the *appearance* of obedience, and not *real* obedience. He acts from a *wrong motive* in the case in which he appears to obey. He certainly does not act out of supreme respect to God's authority; and therefore he does not truly obey him. But surely one who rejects the whole authority of God cannot be saved.

I fear it is very common for persons to make a fatal mistake here; and really to suppose that they are accepted in their obedience in general, although in some things or thing they habitually neglect or refuse to do their duty.

They live, and *know* that they live, in the omission of some duty habitually, or in the violation of their own consciences on some point habitually; and yet they keep up so much of the form of religion, and do so many things that they call duties, that they seem to think that these will compensate for the sin in which they persist. Or rather, so many duties are performed, and so much of religion is kept up, as will show, they think, that upon the whole they are Christians; will afford them ground for hope, and give them reasons to think that they are accepted while they are indulging, *and know* that they are, in some known sin.

They say, To be sure, I know that I neglect that duty; I know that I violate my conscience in that thing; but I do so many other things that are my duty, that I have good reason to believe that I am a Christian.

Now this is a fatal delusion. Such persons are totally deceived in supposing that they really obey God in anything. "He that is unjust in the least, is really unjust also in much;" and "whosoever will keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all."

Again, 6. Any form of sin persisted in is fatal to the soul, because it is inconsistent with true repentance. Sin, however great, will be forgiven if repented of. But what *is* repentance? Repentance is not mere sorrow for sin, but it is the heart-renunciation of sin; it is the giving up of sin from the heart, and of all sin as sin; it is the rejection of it because it is that abominable thing which God hates; it is the turning of the heart from self-seeking to supreme love to God and equal love to our fellowmen; it is *heart-reformation*; it is heart-rejection of sin; it is *heart-turning* to God. Now, while any one sin is persisted in and not given up, there can be no true repentance; for, after all, this form of sin is preferred to the will of God—the indulgence of self in this particular is preferred to pleasing God. There can, therefore, be no true repentance unless all known sin be for the time utterly abandoned.

7. Persistence in any form of sin is fatal to the soul, because it is utterly inconsistent with *saving faith*. That faith is saving which actually *does* save from sin and no other faith is saving or *can* be—that faith is *justifying* which is *sanctifying*. True faith works by love; it purifies the heart; it overcomes the world.

These are expressly affirmed to be the characteristics of saving faith. Let no one suppose that his faith is justifying, when, in fact, it does not save him from the commission of sin; for he cannot be justified while he persists in the commission of any

known sin. If his faith does not purify his heart, if it does not overcome the world and overcome his sins, it can never save him.

Again, 8. Persistence in any one form of sin is fatal to the soul, because it withstands the power of the gospel. The gospel does not save whom it does not sanctify. If sin in any form withstands the saving power of the gospel; if sin does not yield under the influence of the gospel; if it be persisted in, in spite of all the power of the gospel on the soul; of course the gospel does not, *cannot*, save that soul. Such sin is fatal.

But again, 9. Persistence in any one form of sin is fatal to the soul, because the grace of the gospel cannot pardon what it cannot eradicate.

As I have already said, a sin cannot be pardoned while it is persisted in. Some persons seem to suppose that, although they persist in many forms of sin, yet the grace of God will pardon sins that it has not power to eradicate and subdue. But this is a great mistake. The Bible everywhere expressly teaches this—that if the gospel fails to eradicate sin, it can never save the soul from the consequences of that sin.

But again, 10. If the gospel should pardon sin which it did not eradicate, this would not save the soul.

Suppose God should not punish sin; still, if the soul be left to the self-condemnation of sin, its salvation is naturally impossible. It were of no use to the sinner to be pardoned, if left under this self-condemnation. This is plain. Let no one, therefore, think that, if his sins are not subdued by the grace of the gospel, he can be saved.

But again, 11, and lastly. Sin is a *unit* in its *spirit and root*. It consists in preferring self to God.

Hence, if any form of preferring self to God be persisted in, no sin has been truly abandoned; God is not supremely loved; and the soul cannot, by any possibility, in such a case, be saved.

### REMARKS.

1. What a *delusion* the self-righteous are under.

Every man is aware that he has sinned at some time, and that he is a sinner. But there are many who think that, upon the whole, they perform so many good deeds, that they are safe. They are aware that they are habitually neglecting God and neglecting duty, that they neither love God supremely nor their neighbour as themselves; yet they are constantly prone to give themselves credit for a great deal of goodness. Now let them

understand that there is no particle of righteousness in them, nor of true goodness, while they live in neglect of any known duty to man—while they are constantly prone to give themselves credit for a great deal of goodness. But they seem to think that they have a balance of good deeds.

2. How many persons indulge in little sins, as they call them; but they are too *honest*, they think, to indulge in great crimes. Now both these texts contradict this view. "He that is unjust in that which is least, is unjust also in much." If a man yields to a slight temptation to commit what he calls a small sin, it cannot be a regard for God that keeps him from committing great sins. He may abstain from committing great sins through fear of disgrace or of punishment, but not because he loves God. If he does not love God well enough to keep from yielding to slight temptations to commit small sins, surely he does not love him well enough to keep from yielding to great temptations to commit great sins.

Again, 3. We see the delusion of those who are guilty of habitual dishonesties, tricks of trade for example, and yet profess to be Christians.

How many are there who are continually allowing themselves to practise little dishonesties, little deceptions, and to tell little lies in trade; and yet think themselves Christians! Now this delusion is awful; it is fatal. Let all such be on their guard, and understand it.

But again, 4. We see the delusion of those professors of religion who allow themselves habitually to neglect some known duty, and yet think themselves Christians. They shun some cross; there is something that they know they ought to do which they do not, and this is habitual with them. Perhaps all their Christian lives they have shunned some cross, or neglected the performance of some duty, and yet they think themselves Christians. Now let them know assuredly that they are *self-deceived*.

5. Many, I am sorry to say, preach a gospel that is a dishonour to Christ. They really maintain, at least they make this impression, though they may not teach it in words and form, that Christ really justifies men while they are living in the habitual indulgence of known sin.

Many preachers seem not to be aware of the impression which they really leave upon their people. Probably, if they were asked whether they hold and preach that any sin is forgiven which is not repented of; whether men are really justified while they persist in known sin, they would say, No. But, after all, in their preaching, they leave a very different impression. For example, how common it is to find ministers who are in this position: You ask them how many members they have in their church. Perhaps they will tell you, Five hundred. How many, do you think, are living up to the best light which they

have? How many of them are living from day to day with a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man, and are not indulging in any known sin either of omission or commission? who are living and aiming to discharge punctually and fully every duty of heart to God and to all their fellowmen? Push the inquiry, and ask, How many of your church can you honestly say, before God, you think are endeavouring to live without sin? who do not indulge themselves in any form of transgression or omission?

They will tell you, perhaps, that they do not know a member of their church, or at least they know but very few, of whom they can say this. Now ask them further, How many of your church do you suppose to be in a state of justification? and you will find that they have the impression that the great mass of their church are in a state of justification with God; in a state of acceptance with him; in a state in which they are prepared to die; and if they should die just in this state by any sudden stroke of Providence, and they should be called upon to preach their funeral sermon, they would assume that they had gone to heaven.

While they will tell you that they know of but very few of their church of whom they can conscientiously say, I do not believe he indulges himself in any known sin; yet, let one of that great majority, of whom he cannot say this, suddenly die, and this pastor be called to attend his funeral, would he not comfort the mourners by holding out the conviction that he was a Christian, and had gone to heaven? Now this shows that the pastor himself, whatever be his theoretical views of being justified while indulging in any known sin, is yet, after all, practically an antinomian; and practically holds, believes, and teaches that Christ justifies people while they are living in the neglect of known duty, while they are knowingly shunning some cross, while they persist in known sin. Ministers, indeed, often leave this impression upon their churches (and I fear *Calvinistic* ministers quite generally), that if they are converted, or ever *were*, they are justified, although they may be living habitually and always in the indulgence of more or less known sin, living in the habitual neglect of known duty, indulging various forms of selfishness. And yet they are regarded as justified Christians: and get the impression, even from the preaching of their ministers, that all is well with them; that they really believe the gospel and are saved by Christ.

Now this is really antinomianism. It is a faith without law; it is a Saviour that saves in *and not from sin*. It is presenting Christ as really setting aside the moral law and introducing another rule of life; as forgiving sin while it is persisted in, instead of saving *from* sin.

6. Many profess to be Christians, and are indulging the hope of eternal life, who know that they never have forsaken all forms of sin; that in some things they have always fallen short of complying with the demands of their own consciences. They have indulged in what they call *little* sins; they have allowed themselves in practices, and in forms of self-indulgence, that they cannot justify; they have never reformed all their bad

habits, and have never lived up to what they have regarded as their whole duty. They have never really *intended* to do this; have never resolutely set themselves in the strength of Christ, to give up every form of sin, both of omission and commission; but, on the contrary, they know that they have always indulged themselves in what they condemn. And yet they call themselves Christian! But this is as contrary to the teaching of the Bible as possible. The Bible teaches, not only that men are condemned by God if they indulge themselves in what they condemn; but, also, that God condemns them if they indulge in that the lawfulness of which they so much as *doubt*. If they indulge in any one thing the lawfulness of which is in their own estimation doubtful, God condemns them. This is the express teaching of the Bible. But how different is this from the common ideas that many professors of religion have!

7. Especially is this true of those who habitually indulge in the neglect of known duties, and who habitually shun the cross of Christ. Many persons neglect family prayer, and yet admit that they ought to perform it. How many females will even stay away from the female prayer-meeting to avoid performing the duty of taking a part in those meetings! How many indulge the hope that they are saved, while they know that they are neglecting, and always *have* neglected, some things, and even *many* things, that they admit to be their duty. They continue to live on in those omissions; but they think they are Christians because they do not engage in anything that is openly disgraceful, or, as they suppose, very bad.

Now there are many that entirely overlook the real nature of sin. The law of God is *positive*. It commands us to consecrate all our powers to his service and glory; to love him with all our heart and our neighbour as ourself. Now to neglect to do this is sin; it is positive transgression; it is an omission which always involves a *refusal* to do what God requires us to do. In other words, sin is the *refusal* to do what God requires us to do. It is the neglect to fulfil our obligations. If one neglects to pay you what he owes you, do you not call that sin, especially if the neglect involves necessarily the refusal to pay when he has the means of payment?

Sin really consists in withholding from God and man that love and service which we owe them—a withholding from God and man their due.

Now, where any one withholds from God and man what is their due, is this honest? is this Christian? And while this withholding is persisted in, can an individual be in a *justified* state? No, indeed!

The Bible teaches that sin is forgiven when it is repented of, but never while it is persisted in. The Bible teaches that the grace of God can save us from *sin*—from the *commission* of sin, or can pardon when we repent and put away sin; but it never teaches that sin can be forgiven while it is persisted in.

Let me ask you who are here present, Do you think you are Christians? Do you think, if you should die in your present state, that you are prepared to go to heaven? that you are already justified in Christ?

Well now, let me further ask, Are you so much as seriously and solemnly *intending* to perform to Christ, from day to day, your whole duty, and to omit nothing that you regard as your duty either to God or man? Are you not habitually shunning some cross? *omitting* something because it is a trial to perform that duty? Are you not avoiding the performance of *disagreeable* duties, and things that are trying to flesh and blood? Are you not neglecting the souls of those around you? Are you not failing to love your neighbour as yourself? Are you not neglecting something that you yourself confess to be your duty? and is not this *habitual* with you?

And now, do you suppose that you are really to be saved while guilty of these neglects habitually and persistently? I beg of you, be not deceived.

8. The impression of many seems to be, that grace *will* pardon what it cannot *prevent*; in other words, that if the grace of the gospel fails to save people from *the commission* of sin in this life, it will nevertheless pardon them and save them *in* sin, if it cannot save *from* sin.

Now, really, I understand the gospel as teaching that men are saved *from sin first*, and, as a consequence, from hell; and not that they are saved from hell while they are not saved from sin. Christ sanctifies when he saves. And this is the very first element or idea of salvation, saving *from* sin. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus," said the angel, "for he shall save his people *from their sins*." "Having raised up his Son Jesus," said the apostle, "he hath sent him to bless you in turning every one of you from his iniquities."

Let no one expect to be saved from hell, unless the grace of the gospel saves him first from sin.

Again, 9. There are many who think that they *truly obey* God in *most* things, while they know that they habitually *disobey* Him in *some things*. They seem to suppose that they render acceptable obedience to *most* of the commandments of God, while they are aware that *some* of the commandments they habitually disregard. Now the texts upon which I am speaking expressly deny this position, and plainly teach that if in any one thing obedience is refused, if any one commandment is disobeyed, no other commandment is acceptably obeyed, or can be for the time being.

Do let me ask you who are here present, Is not this impression in your minds that, upon the whole, you have evidence that you are Christians?

You perform so many duties and avoid so many outbreking sins; you think that there is so great a balance in your favour, that you obey so many more commands than you disobey, that you call yourselves Christians, although you are aware that some of the commandments you never seriously *intended* to comply with, and that in some things you have always allowed yourself to fall short of known duty. Now, if this impression is in your minds, remember that it is not authorised at all by the texts upon which I am speaking, nor by any part of the Bible. You are really disobeying the spirit of the whole law. You do not truly embrace the gospel; your faith does not purify your heart and overcome the world; it does not work by love, and therefore it is a *spurious* faith, and you are yet in your sins. Will you consider this? Will you take home this truth to your inmost soul?

10. There are many who are deceiving themselves by indulging the belief that they are forgiven, while they have not made that confession and restitution which is demanded by the gospel. In other words, they have not truly repented; they have not given up their sin. They do not outwardly *repeat* it; neither do they in heart forsake it.

They have not made restitution; and therefore they hold on to their sin, supposing all is right if they do not repeat it; that Christ will forgive them while they make no satisfaction, even while satisfaction is in their power. This is a great delusion, and is greatly dishonouring to Christ. As if Christ would disgrace himself by forgiving you while you persist in doing your neighbour wrong!

This he cannot do; this he will not, must not do. He loves your neighbour as really as he loves you. He is infinitely willing to forgive provided you repent and make the restitution in your power; but until then, he cannot, will not.

I must remark again, 11. That from the teachings of these texts it is evident that no one truly *obeys in any one thing*, while he allows himself to *disobey in any other* thing. To obey God truly in anything, we must settle the question of universal obedience; else all our pretended obedience is vain. If we do not yield the *whole* to God; if we do not go the whole length of seriously giving up all, and renouncing in heart *every form* of sin, and make up our minds to obey him in *everything*, we do not truly obey him in anything.

Again, 12. From this subject we can see why there are so many professors of religion that get no peace, and have no evidence of their acceptance. They are full of doubts and fears. They have no religious enjoyment, but are groping on in darkness and doubt; are perhaps praying for evidence and trying to get peace of mind, but fall utterly short of doing so.

Now, in such cases you will often find that some known sin is indulged; some known duty continually neglected; some known cross shunned; something avoided which they

know to be their duty, because it is trying to them to fulfil their obligation. It is amazing to see to what an extent this is true.

Some time since, an aged gentleman visited me, who came from a distance as an inquirer. He had been a preacher, and indeed was then a minister of the gospel; but he had given up preaching because of the many doubts that he had of his acceptance with Christ. He was in great darkness and trouble of mind; had been seeking religion, as he said, a great part of his life; and had done everything, as he supposed, in his power, to obtain evidence of his acceptance.

When I came to converse with him, I found that there were sins on his conscience that had been there for many years; plain cases of known transgression, of known neglect of duty indulged all this while. Here he was, striving to get peace, striving to get evidence, and even abandoning preaching because he could not get evidence; while all the time these sins lay upon his conscience. Amazing! amazing!

Again, 13. I remark, That total abstinence from all known sin is the only practicable rule of life. To sin in one thing and obey in another at the same time is utterly impossible. We must give up, in heart and purpose, all sin, or we in reality give up *none*. It is utterly impossible for a man to be truly religious *at all*, unless in the purpose of his heart he is *wholly so and universally so*. He cannot be a Christian at home and a sinner abroad; or a sinner at home and a Christian abroad.

He cannot be a Christian on the Sabbath, and a selfish man in his business or during the week. A man must be one or the other; he must yield *everything* to God, or in fact he yields *nothing* to God.

He cannot serve God and mammon. Many are trying to do so, but it is impossible. They cannot love both God and the world; they cannot serve two masters; they cannot please God and the world. It is the greatest, and yet the most common, I fear, of all mistakes, that men can be truly but knowingly only *partially* religious; that in some things, they can truly yield to God, while in other things they refuse to obey him. How common is this mistake! If it is not, what shall we make of the state of the churches?

How are we to understand the great mass of professors? How are we to understand the great body of religious teachers, if they do not leave the impression, after all, on the churches, that they can be accepted of God while their habitual obedience is only very partial; while, in fact, they pick and choose among the commandments of God, professing to obey some, while they allow themselves in known disobedience of others. Now, if in this respect the church has not a false standard; if the mass of religious instruction is not making a false impression on the churches and on the world in this respect, I am mistaken. I am sorry to be obliged to entertain this opinion, and to express

it; but what else can I think? How else can the state of the churches be accounted for? How else is it that ministers hope that the great mass of their churches are in a safe state? How else is it that the great mass of professors of religion can have any hope of eternal life in them, if this is not the principle practically adopted by them, that they are justified while only rendering habitually but a very partial obedience to God; that they are really forgiven and justified while they only pick and choose among the commandments, obeying those which it costs them little to obey, and are not disagreeable and not unpopular; while they do not hesitate habitually to disobey where obedience would subject them to any inconvenience, require self-denial, or expose them to any persecution?

Again, 14. From what has been said, it will be seen that *partial reformation* is no evidence of *real conversion*. Many are deceiving themselves on this point. Now we should never allow ourselves to believe that a person is converted if we perceive that his reformation extends to certain things only, while in certain other things he is not reformed; especially when, in the case of those things in which he is not reformed, he admits that he ought to perform those duties, or to relinquish those practices. If we find him still persisting in what he himself admits to be wrong, we are bound to assume and take it for granted that his conversion is not real.

Again, 15. Inquirers can see what they must do.

They must abandon all sin; they must give up *all* for Christ: they must turn with their whole heart and soul to him; and must make up their minds to yield a full and hearty obedience as long as they live. They must settle this in their minds; and must cast themselves upon Christ for forgiveness for all the past, and grace to help in every time of need for the future. Only let it be settled in your mind fully that you will submit yourself to the whole will of God; and then you may expect, and are bound to expect, him to forgive all the past, however great your sins may have been.

You can see, Inquirer, why you have not already obtained peace. You have prayed for pardon; you have prayed for peace; you have endeavoured to get peace, while, in fact, you have not given up all; you have kept something back. It is a perfectly common thing to find that the inquirer has not given up all. And if you do not find peace, it is because you have not given up all.

Some idol is still retained; some sin persisted in—perhaps some neglect—perhaps some confession is not made that ought to have been made, or some act of restitution. You have not renounced the world, and do not, in fact, renounce it, and renounce everything, and flee to Christ.