

THE PRINCIPLE OF SIN AND HOLINESS.

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“But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”—ROM. vii. 23.

THE gracious heart is a seat of conflict, the greatest, and most important! a conflict between the flesh and the spirit. Nor does the highest degree of grace raise its subject above the necessity of engaging in this debate. A pregnant instance of this we find in the eminently holy apostle Paul, who, after all his advancement in the spiritual life, “sees a law in his members warring against the law of his mind.”

In this engagement, we may, first, observe the combatants, viz: “the law of the members, and the law of the mind;” i. e., grace, and indwelling sin,* which

* That the apostle does not speak in this passage of the operations of the soul before its conversion, as some suppose, and that, therefore, the opponents in this debate are sin and holiness, and not conscience and reason *only* contending with depraved appetites and passions, will plainly appear by consulting the context, where he speaks in the strongest

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mutually engage each other, and warmly contend for victory. These have displayed their banners under their respective sovereigns : Jesus, the Prince of peace, and Satan, the prince of darkness. The generals of the field are, "the beloved lust," which most easily besets us, on the side of sin ; and on the side of grace, *faith*, to which, among all the graces, the preeminence is given in the spiritual warfare. And while those opposite principles resist each other, as contending parties of different aims and interests, they respectively operate upon the heart, like laws of different tendencies.*

Secondly, we may take notice of what is sometimes the sad event with respect to the better side, which is overcome so far, that the believer is brought "into captivity to the law of sin." The law of sin is the same as the law of the members, mentioned in the former clause. To be brought into captivity to it, is to be brought under its power. Now, doleful as this event is, there is something in it, which pleads the spiritual soldier's loyalty to his Sovereign ; he does not capitulate, or come to terms of agreement with sin ; but is overcome, and taken as a reluctant and mourn-

terms of his hatred to sin, and delight in the law of God ; characters which can never be predicated of the unregenerate, whose hearts are unyielding enmity against God.

* We have here, as is usual in scripture, an assemblage of metaphors, viz: war, and law, to illustrate the same subject. For such is the sublimity of divine truths, and the imperfection of the things of nature, that no allusion drawn from them, can fully illustrate any one point ; therefore a number of these are frequently used, that one may help to supply the deficiency of the other.

ful captive. The engagement often appears dubious, now on one side, now another, seeming to overcome, as Israel and Amalek of old. When Moses let down his hands, Amalek prevailed: Israel prevailed when he held them up. So sin prevails, when Christ withholds the aids of his Spirit; when he grants them, grace prevails. Yet, in general, grace has the ascendancy, and shall finally obtain a glorious victory.

A mistake about this warfare proves fatal to many carnal professors, who fondly imagine that they are pious, mistaking the reproaches of a natural conscience for the spiritual conflict: a conflict, of which they never had any experience, and, infatuated with this delusion, they rest secure in a graceless state. On the other hand, their fears that all their debates with sin are only some stings of conscience, and, consequently, that they are yet children of wrath, frequently obstruct both the duty and comfort of the saints. Therefore, that I may afford conviction to the one, and relief to the other, I shall attempt in the following pages to explain:

I. The nature of grace, and show the reasons why it is called a law of the mind.

II. The nature of indwelling sin, and the reasons why it is called the law of the members.

III. The nature of the conflict between these opposite principles, and give some marks by which it may be distinguished from the uneasiness arising in the breasts of unbelievers.

I. I am to explain the nature of grace, and show the reasons why it is called a law of the mind.

Now, grace is a principle of spiritual life infused into the soul by the Holy Ghost. This divine principle receives various denominations in the word of God, as "being born again," "regeneration," "a new heart," "a new creature," "God's workmanship created anew:" all which phrases, with many others, plainly evince, that grace is a new, a spiritual, a holy nature; nay, it is called a "divine nature," (2 Pet. i. 4,) because it is the impress of God's moral glories upon the soul. I shall not enter into the dispute, whether this principle precisely consists in divine light let into the mind, or in a holy affection. I think it is most safe and proper to describe it as consisting of both. For grace is a restoration of what we lost by the fall, viz: of the divine image, consisting in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. Eph. iv. 24. Col. iii. 10. Righteousness is seated in the will, holiness in the affections. The affections are sundry vigorous operations of the will, attended with sensible commotions of the animal spirits. It follows, then, that holiness in the affections is the vigorous operation of righteousness in the will. But the will has a respect to objects as eligible, and the ground of its choice is the apprehended goodness of its objects, by which an affection for them is excited. Love to their objects is, for the same reason, necessarily supposed in the affections. This is evident in all the religious affections. Sorrow for sin is affliction of the mind for wrongs done to a beloved object. The soul's expectation of a future good, undoubtedly, supposeth her love to the object of her hope. Desire is the aspiration of love, and joy in its triumph. On the whole,

it appears, that an affection for divine objects is the very essence of righteousness and holiness; and that this affection, and knowledge, the other part of the divine image, are the very constituents of a gracious principle, or the new nature. On this account grace is called, "the law of God written upon the heart," (Jer. xxxi. 33,) a phrase of equal import with the law of the mind, and plainly implies a sanctifying knowledge of the objects exhibited in the law, and a hearty regard for them impressed upon the heart by the Spirit of God.

1. Then a leading ingredient of true grace consists in a view of the transcendent beauty of divine objects. The principal object viewed is the glory of God's moral perfections displayed in the salvation of lost sinners. This necessarily supposeth a view of Christ's willingness and ability to save; for it is in his face alone, that we can obtain "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God," (2 Cor. iv. 6,) a view of the extent, the spirituality, and purity of God's law, which is a transcript of his glory, and the means by which we are convinced of the need of Christ—a view of the fulness and amazing glory of the new covenant plan of life, in its nature, privileges, and precious promises—and, in short, it supposeth a just view of the various foundation-doctrines of the gospel, particularly of the necessity and beauty of holiness in its several branches. Of these things, true believers obtain views different in their nature and effects from the views of any graceless persons. The graceless, as rational creatures, may discern the meaning of words and propositions, the

connection of sentences, and the propriety of conclusions drawn from rational premises. But there is a spiritual and holy beauty in divine objects which, being morally blind and vitiated, they cannot discern nor relish; therefore, they have no just idea of the objects at all. Sin has spread a veil of darkness over their hearts, exceeding the midnight shades, and adding fresh gloom to hell itself. They understand gospel doctrines no otherwise than a logician understands a system of logic, viz: by the mere strength of natural powers. With devils, they may confess that Jesus is the Son of God; they may, with them, believe there is one God; nay, they may believe and tremble, without the least true discovery of, or the least affection for, his holy, transcendent beauties. Some may brand this doctrine with the odious name of enthusiasm; but I shall rest safely under the censure while divine testimony assures me, "that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. ii. 14. They are spiritually discerned, but he has not a spiritual eye to discern them.

Graceless sinners quite mistake the nature of divine objects. At one time, they conceive of God as all mercy; at another, as all justice; and again, will not conceive of him either as merciful or as just; but only think of him, as an idle, unconcerned spectator of the universe, "saying in their hearts, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil." Zeph. i. 12. Before I proceed farther, I beg your patience, while I suggest an argument or two in proof

of this point. 1st. It appears from their dependence upon themselves for salvation, of which they are all guilty, whatever may be their profession to the contrary, or to whatsoever degree of knowledge they may have attained. But what false ideas must this suppose of the rectitude of Jehovah, the perfection of his law, and the awful malignity of sin! and what unbelief, as well as ignorance of the whole gospel scheme of life through Jesus Christ! 2d. Seeing the nature of the human soul is such, that it immediately makes choice of that which appears most excellent, and best for it in its present circumstances, their giving their preference to sin and the world, is a plain evidence that they do not understand nor relish the superior glory of divine things. How splendid soever their profession of religion may be, they do not believe what they profess, but are infidels in heart. They may, indeed, yield their assent to this truth, that religion is the best choice, and may resolve to be religious hereafter, but for the present they see more beauty in creatures, and taste more sweetness in creature enjoyments, than in holiness; nor would they ever resolve to be religious in any future period, nor ever desire any other than a Mahometan paradise, did they not fear the wrath of God.

Corrupt affections spread a veil over their hearts, and provoke Jehovah, in just resentment, to conceal his glory in a cloud of vengeance. Therefore, though they may sometimes be struck with awful apprehensions of his awful majesty, yet they do not discover the amiable glory and beauty of his perfections, till it pleases God to make them

shine upon their hearts in the face of Jesus Christ, by whose atonement the human offence was removed, and a way opened, in which he could, consistent with his glory, grant saving manifestations of himself to a lost and sinning world. But when the Holy Ghost rends the veil from their hearts, he discovers to them the transcendent beauties of Jehovah with such irresistible efficacy, and brightness of spiritual evidence, as transforms them into the same likeness; "for with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. iii. 16—18. By that very influence which reveals the glory of God to them, the Holy Spirit forms in their hearts a supreme regard for his glory, which brings me to observe,

2. That a principle of grace necessarily includes a supreme affection for God. This affection is the very essence of holiness. For to view objects in their own nature, and to acquiesce in, and esteem them in proportion to their worth, is, doubtless, most fit and becoming. Now as God knows no equal, he cannot but view and acquiesce in his own glory as supreme; consequently, he cannot but have an infinite complacency, in a supreme affection for his glory, and an infinite displacency in the least disaffection thereto, in the reasonable creatures. This is his holiness, or the rectitude of his nature, and is the foundation and pattern of all moral excellency. But grace being the impression of God's moral image upon the soul, by which it bears a conformity to his holiness, there is necessarily

contained in its very essence a transcendent love for his glory.

It is the nature of sin to draw our affections off from God, and fix them upon the creatures; and it is the nature of grace to place them again upon God; "for they who are after the flesh, mind the things of the flesh; but they who are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." Rom. viii. 5. The saints esteem God as an object worthy of all their affections, and earnestly desire the enjoyment of him as the greatest good. They see a transcendent beauty in all his glories, and love him for them all—for his justice and holiness, as well as for his goodness. And because they love God, they love his image, in whomsoever they behold it, and every mean in which he affords them true communion with himself. The saints they esteem as "the excellent of the earth," and choose them as companions in their way to heaven. Psa. xiv. 2. They delight in the law of God as the transcript of his glory; and in the gospel, as the brightest glass by which his beauties are reflected. In one word, they take delight in the most spiritual sermons, books, and conversation, and in all the ordinances and duties of religion, because these are the means through which he displays his glory, and affords them the sweetest sensations of his love.

By this time, you may easily perceive, that the grand constituents of the new man are faith and love in their simple nature, *i. e.*, existing as principles of grace in the soul. In believers' views of divine objects, is implied such clear objective certainty, as obtains the firmest assent of

their minds to their reality and importance. This is faith in the understanding, in which sense faith is called, "the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding," (Col. i. 2,) "and the full assurance of the understanding." Col. ii. 2. And in this sense the gospel is said to have come to the Thessalonians "in much assurance." * 1 Thess. i. 5. Love being the sum of the divine law written upon the heart of our first parents, was an original affection of nature. This heaven-born beauty, which was lost by sin, is the glorious image drawn by the Holy Spirit, when he writes the law upon our hearts. Love is therefore the sum of religion. It was the reigning affection in innocence. It is the reigning affection in grace. And it will reign triumphant in glory, when the other graces shall for ever cease. The other graces, which only become necessary by our apostasy, and not from our original make, are evidences of love, and flow from it as their source.† From what has been said, we see with what

* Faith, in this view of it, is a necessary prerequisite to faith as seated in the will, which is the soul's choice of the object as good, the truth of which is apprehended by the understanding. Or, in other words, the soul's view of the truth and excellency of an object, necessarily precedes her embracing that object as good. But it is her choice of the object, which is the justifying act of faith; for this is that act, by which we accept of, and are united to, Christ. Nor is saving faith distinguished from the faith of hypocrites, only by the soul's embracing Christ, but also by her assent to his suitableness to save; for, as I have already observed, graceless persons never obtain a just view of divine objects; therefore, they never make choice of them.

† Love, being a principle of grace, is a necessary ingredient of all the graces, (which are specifically distinguished from each other, by their

propriety divines have called faith and love radical graces, and gracious principles. For, in their simple nature, they are holy principles, from whence all the graces grow up, as so many fruitful branches of holiness; they are the foundation of all those spiritual exercises of heart and practice, which are the native acts and evidences of a spiritual life.* If we are "God's workmanship created anew, it is to good works." Eph. ii. 10. God "takes away the stony heart out of our flesh, and gives us an heart of flesh, that we may walk in his statutes to do them" (Ezek. xxxix. 26, 27); viz: in that spiritual and holy manner, which is congruous to his holiness and the spirituality of his nature.

acts and motives,) and only differs from the acts of love, considered as a distinct grace, as a fountain differs from the streams which issue from it.

* God has implanted in nature, a principle of action suited to the various operations which arise from it. And can we suppose he will be less liberal in dispensing his special favours? Or that we can perform truly holy actions without a spiritual principle? As well may we expect streams without a fountain, or living actions from a dead carcase. "Being dead in trespasses and sins," we cannot exert the acts of a spiritual life, till animated from above with a living principle. While we continue in a state of nature, the ends, the motives, and the principles of our actions being merely selfish, they are morally evil, though the nature of them be good; therefore are they, in a spiritual sense, dead works. Yet we are not to suppose, that believers without the immediate concurrence of the Holy Spirit, can exert the acts of a spiritual life, by virtue of a principle of holiness disposing them thereto. For as it is by almighty power upholding the frame of nature, and keeping all its springs in tune, that we are enabled to perform natural actions; so it is only by the Holy Spirit's maintaining and exciting the principle of grace implanted in us, that we can perform spiritual actions. Therefore says Christ to his disciples, "Without me, ye can do nothing."

Our way is now prepared to show why grace is called "a law of the mind." Like a law, it has a prevailing influence over all the powers and operations, aims and pursuits of the mind. Laws are made for the government of their subjects, and for that purpose, afford light to direct, and motives to influence their conduct. But grace is a principle of light and love in the minds of believers; "light which shines brighter and brighter to the perfect day." Prov. iv. 18. The more they view divine objects, the more beauties they discover in them, and consequently, the more ardent is the flame of their love towards them. Love is a very powerful passion, which, by its sweetness, strongly impels the mind to desire, and endeavour to obtain, the enjoyment of its object; especially when its object is viewed as most amiable. Believers have, therefore, the most prevailing motives, both from within and without, to excite them to every pious exercise of heart and life. The incomparable beauty of divine objects, and the inexpressible sweetness of love to them, inflame their soul with strong desires to obtain the fullest enjoyment of them. Time would fail to mention the powerful motives to repentance and universal obedience, to every grace and every duty, arising from the personal, uncreated glories of Jehovah; from creating, preserving and redeeming goodness; from the fulness and excellent frame of the new covenant; from the endless glories and happiness of heaven; and from the necessity, reasonableness, sweetness and importance of religion in its various branches. But none are stronger or sweeter than those drawn from the cross of Christ.

The invincible charms of his love, the riches of his pardoning mercy, and the amazing stoops of his condescension therein displayed, sweetly open the springs of all the affections, and irresistibly captivate the whole soul.

Conscious of the comforts arising from spiritual views and affections, believers languish when they lose their frame, and with the solicitous spouse, importunately seek their Lord, until he is pleased to restore to them a sense of his love. And the more they drink of this fountain, the stronger they thirst. Their enjoyments only excite their desires. It is a natural and invincible property of the human mind, to desire not only a repetition, but higher degrees of those enjoyments, in which it finds a transcendent satisfaction. When the Lord condescended "to speak to Moses, face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend," the pleasure of this sweet interview excites him to put up this ardent prayer, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." Ex. xxx. 11, 18. So insatiable was his desire, that, had his request been granted in its full extent, it would have proved fatal to his mortal frame; therefore the Lord says to him, "Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live." Ex. xxxiii. 20. A love to the end, reconciles them to the means of obtaining the end. Because they delight in communion with God, they delight in all his ordinances and commands, the means of communion with him. They desire to "remain in the house of the Lord, to behold his beauty, and be satisfied with marrow and fatness." Ps. xxvii. 4. lxiii. 1, 5. "Delighting in the law of God after the inward man,"

they perform the duties required in it, not of constraint, but with a ready mind, for their obedience is the willing offering of love. Rom. vii. 22. John xiv. 15. The most difficult as well as the most easy duties are their choice. And as holy objects have command of their hearts, they perform duty with fervency, when the edge of their affections is not blunted with temptation and sin. In one word, grace overcomes temptation, resists sin, excites believers to war a good warfare, and run with patience the race that is set before them, until they obtain the glorious prize at the end of their race. Thus does it powerfully prevail in the heart like a law. And, Oh! happy, inexpressibly happy for believers, were this the only principle which has influence upon their actions. But alas! another principle, the direct reverse of this, often disturbs their peace, and brings them into captivity to the law of sin. But this leads us, in the

II. place, to explain the nature of indwelling sin, and show why it is called a law of the members. Though believers are sanctified in every part, they are perfectly sanctified in none; a sinful principle remains in them which, like a law, operates in their members, and wars against the law of their minds. This principle is original corruption, and it is represented by the members of the body.

1. Because as the body is but one entire frame consisting of many members, so original sin is one mass of impurity, which defiles the whole man, and, therefore, consists of many branches. It is darkness in the understand-

ing, aversion to divine things in the will, filthiness in all the affections, baseness and irregularity in all the sensual appetites.

2. The principal reason why it is thus represented is, because it exerts itself chiefly in and by the members of the natural body. Sin altering the temperament of our bodies, has introduced into the animal frame such a strength and irregularity of sensual appetites, as powerfully attach our souls to sensible objects. By virtue of the law of union between our souls and bodies, they have a mutual influence upon each other: carnal appetites are corrected or excited by the views of the mind; the mind is subjected to carnal appetites. Sensitive propensities exciting fancy to sport with sensible flesh, pleasing objects, and these, in their turn, striking the fancy through the avenues of the senses, kindle an impure flame in the affections, and strongly attract them to forbidden objects, or fix them excessively on lawful ones. But so far as our affections for creatures exceed due bounds, so far they are taken off from God, and set in opposition to his glory.

From the carnal tendencies of the heart arise the most filthy scenes of drunkenness, uncleanness, gluttony, thefts, robberies, unlawful and excessive gambling, and frolicking of every kind. Besides these lusts that have their seat more immediately in the flesh, vices of the mind (such as pride, malice, envy, hatred, wrath) are called carnal lusts, and lusts of the flesh; not only because they are part of carnal men's characters, but also because they are excited and strengthened by the propensities of the flesh. All the

wild irregularities of fancy and passion are influenced by the irregularities which sin has introduced into the animal frame. Occasions to sin lie much in our flesh and blood. The enjoyments of sensible things, being agreeable to the flesh, are the object of carnal desires. The riches, the luxuries, the pomp, and the various gayeties of this life, are the gods of ungodly sinners, and temptations to the saints themselves. Fine clothes, fine houses, glittering equipages, and high sounding titles, strike the mind with their fancied beauty. Relishing dishes and flowing bowls please voluptuous palates. The adulterer's heart is caught by delusive charms. Large treasures and large estates are snares for the covetous. By Bathsheba's beauty, David's lust is inflamed, and Achan's covetous desire, by a wedge of gold. The glory of his kingdom swells the pride of Nebuchadnezzar's heart; and an unbounded thirst for unrivalled military honours, prompts Joab to jealousy and murder.

By this time it may easily appear, that indwelling sin is called a law of the members, because of the powerful influence it has upon the whole man. It clouds the understanding, bewitches the fancy, debauches the affections, sets the will in opposition to God, and turns all the members of the body into instruments of unrighteousness. The unregenerate are wholly under its power. They are carried away with "the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life." Being "after the flesh, they only mind the things of the flesh," *i. e.*, for these only they have a relish. Now every person's taste has a

governing influence upon his actions; nor will anything appear beautiful to the mind, for which it has no relish. But carnal men not only have no relish for the glory of God, but an unreconcilable enmity against it, as being contrary to their sensual inclinations; therefore they can see no beauty, nor taste any sweetness, in moral excellency. Their pursuits, aims, and desires, are altogether carnal. "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" are their leading queries; as if they were born only to pamper the flesh, and feed themselves up as oxen for the slaughter. Nor is there any species of wickedness into which they would not run with greater eagerness, than ever the horse rushed into the battle, were it not for the restraints laid upon them by Providence, conscience, education, and fear of divine wrath.

But grace obtaining the predominancy in the hearts of believers, they are happily delivered from the "dominion of sin." Rom. vi. 14. They have new thoughts, new hopes, new inclinations and designs; and the chief objects of their pursuits are spiritual. Yet are they afflicted with some of the carnal lusts which were born with them. Some of the former root of bitterness remaining in them, sprouts up, and, when divine influences are withdrawn, and they are off their guard, it will prevail. They are not all spirit. Faith's views are not yet perfect, nor their affections perfectly refined: though grace has subdued and regulated their appetites and passions, yet, while they live in a world of sense, sensible objects will sometimes entangle their affections and lead them into mournful cap-

tivity. This is one chief source of their falls and sorrows. Satan, apprehensive that the most likely way to prevail against our first parents, even when their minds were under no sinful bias, was by objects pleasing to their senses, presented to them the beauty and goodness of the forbidden fruit, by which means they were seduced to break the divine command. The same game he attempted to play with our Saviour, when he painted before him "all the kingdoms of the world with the glory of them," and promised him all these, "if he would fall down and worship him." Matt. iv. 8, 9. No wonder then, if, in this manner, he solicits, and sometimes beguiles the sons of grace into sinful compliances, in whom there is corruption to catch at his temptations, as powder to catch at the spark.

Some of the saints find a much greater difficulty in mortifying the deeds of the body, than others, and are much more easily overcome by them. This flows, no doubt, from the much greater strength of their passions, and irregularity of their fluids. From the very contexture of their frame, some of them are more passionate, or proud, or peevish, or malicious, or wanton, than others of their fellow saints; while others, again, are sunk in despondency, and almost perpetually deluged with distressing sorrows. It was said of a great man of God, he had "grace enough for ten men, but had not half enough for himself, because his natural constitution was so violent and passionate." Peter was rash and hot-headed. Thomas seems to have been sour and unbelieving. But John, highly favoured in nature as well as grace, lived in love.

But though the saints are sometimes overcome by the temptations of Satan joining with the corruption of their hearts, yet grace shall usually prevail, and finally triumph in victory. Of this, our Lord assures them, when he promises, that "the water which he shall give them, shall be in them a well of water, springing up to everlasting life," (John iv. 14,) *i. e.*, the influences of the Holy Ghost, which first infused grace into their hearts, shall continue therein as a vital fountain, ever sending forth the salutary streams of holiness, till spiritual life shall be perfected in eternal life and glory. By the continued union of the Holy Spirit with their spirits, the principle of grace is preserved, strengthened, and excited to its various exercises, "till they come to the measure of the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus." Eph. iv. 13. Yet while they are in the body, "the flesh will lust against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these being contrary, the one to the other," (Gal. v. 17,) you may see in them, "as it were the company of two armies." Cant. vi. 13.

From what has been said, we learn, that the believer is indeed a mystery, the greatest in our lower world. He is both a sinner and a saint; he has in him both the old nature and the new—a love to God, and enmity against him. He is black, yet comely; carnal, yet spiritual; earthly, yet has set his affections upon things above. He is a mixture of the most opposite qualities, represented by the most opposite things in nature—the poison of the serpent and innocence of the dove; the sublimity of the eagle, and meanness of the crawling worm! Nay, he is a mix-

ture of heaven, earth and hell! In sin, he resembles devils; angels, in holiness; and in his animal nature, he is akin to the beasts that perish!

Again, if occasions to sin lie much in your flesh, it ought to be much of your care, with the apostle Paul, "to keep your bodies under, and bring them into subjection." 1 Cor. ix. 27. You must guard all the avenues of sense. I "made a covenant with mine eyes," said Job, "that I should not look upon a maid." Avoid as much as possible every means of provoking sensual lusts and appetites. If you place your happiness in the gratification of these, what are you better than the brutes? These are the only pleasures they know, or are capable of knowing. But you are capable of pleasures more refined—pleasures arising from intellectual views, and the enjoyment of eternal, invisible glories. If you do not fix your affections on those glories, you forfeit the rational character, and degrade yourselves to the level of mere animals. Endeavour to obtain clear views of the superior glories of spiritual objects, the beauty and sweetness of which will deaden your affections to the things of time and sense. With Solomon, learn this lesson, that every thing below the sun is vanity.

Especially let those of affluent circumstances learn it; for in treasuring up riches, you treasure up fuel to feed the flame of lust. This is a powerful argument to excite the poor to be contented with their condition, and bless God for what they enjoy. If he withholds this world's goods from you, he only withholds the snares that prove the destruction of multitudes.

Because the allurements of sense are enemies to religion, God, in infinite wisdom and goodness, has so ordered matters concerning his people, that those who are rich in faith, are generally poor in this world. Riches, in themselves, are the blessings of providence, and God will give to a number of his people such a portion of them, as he sees needful to enable them to support the external interests of his kingdom. Yet, if we may credit infinite veracity, they are great temptations to a degenerate world. "How hardly," says Christ, "shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Mark x. 23, 25. The splendour of a crown, the glitter of external pomp, and the soothing enchantments of an affluent fortune, are delusive baits to sensual hearts.