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# S E R M O N LIII.

## ON THE LOVE OF MONEY.

B Y

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I TIMOTHY vi. 10.

*For the love of money is the root of all evil; which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

WE are here informed, that a supreme attachment to the riches of this world, is an insurmountable obstacle in the great work of gospel-salvation. Covetousness is idolatry, and idolatry excludes from the kingdom of heaven—To free us, therefore, from the bondage, and guard against the baneful effects of this sin, many precepts and exhortations are given in the word of God. Thus we are commanded, *Love not the world, neither the things which are in the world*, with the most unequivocal and explicit declaration, *if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in*

*him.*—We are assured that the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choak the word, and render it unfruitful.—We are taught that, in order to our becoming the true disciples of Christ, and possessing the benefits of his purchase, it is necessary that we should forsake *houses and lands, father and mother, brethren and sisters, husband and wife*, in point of supreme affection—and it is strictly enjoined upon us, to *seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*; and to lay up our *treasure in heaven, that our hearts may be there also*. As an argument of restraint from having our affections too much set on the perishable objects of time, we are reminded that, *as we brought nothing into this world, so we can carry nothing out*.—Upon this ground, we are exhorted to be contented with moderate enjoyments; and the danger of erring from this rule, to the extreme of a too eager desire of worldly goods, is pointed out in the text.—*But they that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition—For the love of money is the root of all evil: which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

As a discourse, founded on this passage, must strike at one of the great idols of the world, and at the partial idolatry even of those who are of the household of faith, it may offend; but it is not designed to offend, any farther than is absolutely

necessary to promote human happiness—and so far may God grant that his word may offend; that it may prove *quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and that it may be a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

It is a long time since the prophet uttered that complaint with the tears of overflowing compassion; *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?* The same complaint, we who at present minister in holy things, have often occasion to make. For though the messages of Jehovah shall not be lost, yet to many, it is to be feared, they have been, and still are, as the sounding brass and tinkling symbol; and to some of you, perhaps, they will be ultimately swift witnesses to aggravate your condemnation; for *that servant who knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.*

Among other causes which prevent the success of the gospel, and the establishment and effects of gospel-institutions, and which expose to many and great evils, we may place that of the LOVE OF MONEY—An undue attachment to the creatures of time, which the apostle stiles covetousness, and erring from the faith of our Christian profession—This is the root of all evil.



To consider all the evils to which the sin mentioned in the text exposeth us, would draw out this discourse to an undue length; I shall, therefore, only mention a few of them, and then conclude the subject with a practical improvement.

I. The love of money is the root of all evil to the body—It urges men on to immoderate labors, and unseasonable toils and watchings—These exercises, in their excess, become at length an established habit of life; for the covetous are not satisfied with any addition of wealth; but the more they have the more they want—They join house to house, and field to field, and, after many additions, they have not enough—*In the midst of their sufficiency they are in straits.*—And that they may get more, they are abundant in labors, and watchings, and distracting cares.—*There is no end of their labor, and they bereave their souls of good.* Hence often infirmities, weaknesses, and various diseases, sometimes succeed each other—Hence frequently the wrinkles and furrows of age are deeply impressed before the usual meridian of life—Hence aches and pains are ingrafted on the constitution at an early period, and increase with those increasing cares, and over-much labor, which at the first produced them. The body stoops under the burden which is unnecessarily assumed, and sooner becomes a prey to death; or, if it should be able to sustain the weight, which an excessive desire after worldly goods has created, yet in some un-

foreseen moment, it may fall a victim to the rage of lust and passion. The evil eye may excite the assassin to give the mortal stab, that he may possess the treasure—Besides, some *who will be rich*, by unjust means, fall into the snare of bonds and imprisonment, and having become extreme offenders, the chains of their guilt drag them at length to the gallows, as their awful and disgraceful end.

The caution of wise king Solomon was written that it might be read, and considered, and observed. *My son, saith he, if sinners entice thee consent thou not. If they say, come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: Let us swallow them up alive as the grave, and whole as those who go down into the pit: We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoils: Cast thy lot among us; let us all have one purse: My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path: For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood. And they lay wait for their own blood, they lurk privily for their own lives. Mark what follows: So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; which taketh away the life of the owners thereof.*

The ways of those, who are less offenders by the love of money, resemble, in kind, if not in degree, the destructive courses of their more guilty brethren. The principle which guides their actions is the same; and if it is not subdued, it must produce the ruin of the one as well as of the other.—

the degree of punishment will, indeed, be in exact proportion to the degree of guilt; but it is surely small consolation to reflect, that the punishment, we endure is not the greatest which God could inflict upon us. At the prospect of slaughtered legions, and fields stained with human blood, your horror—your compassion—your astonishment are awakened; you tremble—you sigh—you weep; you ask what was the cause of such dreadful—such distressing effects. Hear the apostle James. *From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not—ye kill and desire to have, and cannot obtain—ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not—ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.* Thus is the love of money the root of many evils to the body. .

II. It is essentially injurious to the soul. It has a tendency to impoverish and enfeeble the mind, and to debase all its noble powers and faculties, which were formed for sublime employment; to give glory to God, and hold communion with the saints in light. Being of the earth, there is a natural propensity in man to become earthly, and if we indulge to this propensity, the images of earthly objects must be strongly impressed upon the mind, and by a long and familiar converse with them, the soul becomes so united to them as never to leave them. They employ its sleeping as well

as its waking thoughts; and these objects being of an inferior nature, they keep the mind low and poor, excluding from its view those objects of improving excellency, after which it was formed to aspire. This observation you may see verified in the various ranks of men, which compose society. In each you may see men ignorant of almost every thing, except the art of getting and keeping money; and their undue attention to this art, and great improvement in it, is the cause of their ignorance.

But the love of money is especially injurious to the soul, as it vitiates all its moral powers. It induces men to *call evil good, and good evil; to put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; to make gold their hope, and to say to the fine gold, thou art my confidence, and to deny the God that is above.* It raises a wall of separation between God and the sinner, which it is difficult, and next to impossible to overpass or demolish. *How hard is it for them who trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God? Jesus said, 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 heaven.* The difficulty to a covetous man of obtaining the special favor of God, and preparation for heavenly happiness, increases in proportion to the strength of his desire after the goods of time, as his treasure. His worldly carnal desire and covetous thoughts, by long continuance, become so confirmed, that there is, in



the end, but little probability that they will ever be changed. In this case we can only say, *with God all things are possible*. At the same time, the sinner has reason to dread that awful sentence, *Let him alone, he is joined to idols*.

With what a solemn and grateful attention, then, should we listen to that most benevolent and gracious precept; *Love not the world, neither the things which are in the world; for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him?* Why did Demas forsake Christ? Why did Demetrius and his craftsmen raise a tumult against Paul for preaching against idolatry? Why did Ananias and Saphira lie to the Holy Ghost? Why did the Pharisees deride Christ for speaking against covetousness? And why did the young man, whose moral conduct was amiable, refuse, when commanded, to sell all his worldly substance and distribute it to the poor, and follow the Saviour, who had promised him an incorruptible treasure in heaven?—The same answer equally applies to all. It was because the love of the Father was not in them—the love of money was rooted in their hearts. They loved this present world—they were covetous. Dreadful delusion, indeed! to hug the chains which must perpetuate our bondage—to prefer the gains of this world to the gains of godliness, at the awful hazard of an everlasting separation from the congregation of the saints in light—from the assembly of angels, and the presence of God! Such treasures

as these, when they possess the whole heart, are poverty and ruin of the most dreadful kind; for *what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?* In the loss of the soul there is a total shipwreck. Not so much as a plank is left to bring the deluded adventurer to a peaceful and hospitable shore. The billows of God's wrath overwhelm him, and he is *drowned in destruction and perdition*. See then, and remember, that *the love of money* is the root of all evil to the soul.

III. It is also very injurious to man as a member of civil and religious society. It induceth him to act only from selfish principles, and with a view to his own advantage, without regard to the prosperity of others. It restrains, and has a tendency to destroy a spirit of liberality, and every noble and generous pursuit. It blinds the eyes so that its devotees do not often see human misery, and those pinching wants, which, with the most plaintive voice, solicit for charity; or, it hardens the heart, and prevents the exercise of a beneficent sympathy and generous compassion. It prevents an attention to the public good, and those objects of improvement in which society is interested, and which need the aid of all its members. I may say, therefore, that the love of money is the root of all the evils of injustice. In some it proves a temptation to theft and robbery—in others, it begets extortion and oppression—it compels them, by its poisonous influence, to keep false balances, and

diverse weights and measures—a great and a small. In all these, and in many other respects, it is injurious to man as a member of society; because it unfits him to act up to the relation which he sustains—it robs him of a good character, and exposes him to censure, and such punishments, as men, in a civilized state, have power, and are bound to inflict.

Society has a claim upon every member, for the improvement of all his gifts, talents and possessions, with an express reference to the good of the whole body; for no man should live to himself; and these cannot be withheld without manifest injustice; but injustice to the body, is injustice to each member of it; so that for a man to be unjust to society, is to be unjust to himself. He cannot, by that parsimony which the love of money begets, injure the body, without suffering with it, because he is a member of it. And if he is a member of Christ's visible Church, his suffering in this case is to be estimated by the value of those blessings, temporal and spiritual, which he might have obtained by a contrary spirit, as well as by the weight of that wrath to which his guilt subjects him. To them who honor the Lord with their substance, it is promised, that their *barns shall be filled with plenty*—And they who are *rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate*, are assured that they are, in this way, *laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may*

*lay hold on eternal life.* You will not mistake my meaning, when I say, that the Christian, by a parsimonious spirit, suffers much in the present life; I do not mean that he is always sensible of his loss, or distressed about it. Doubtless there are many Christians, from whom many blessings are withheld, only for their partial indulgence to the sin which we have been considering, who are, for the most part, composed, insensible to their losses, and, therefore, but seldom pained with self-accusations for their folly. Their fields, under the same tillage as formerly, produce but lean crops: They *have sown much, and bring in little—they eat, but have not enough—they drink, but are not filled with drink—they clothe themselves, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.* Such events as these may happen to a people, as well now as two thousand years ago, where there is similarity of principle and practice. And they may happen without their once considering the true cause from whence they proceed—the refusal to honor God with their substance. It is not the design of this discourse to provoke, unless it be to such good works as shall make you honorable in your profession of Christianity upon earth, and, at the same time, be a favorable sign that you are of the household of faith, and partakers of the image of the Saviour, who was most illustrious for a disinterested and steady attention to objects of public and general utility. —I have said, that the professing Christian, by an



indulgence to the sin in the text, may suffer much in this present life; but what should especially awaken our fears is, that punishment which awaits the impenitent in an after state. *No covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God; for because of this sin cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.* Therefore we, who are of the day, should not be partakers with them.

And now to conclude this subject—since it appears that the love of money is the root of all evil to body and soul, and is exceedingly injurious to man as a member of civil and religious society; it is to be hoped that you are all ready, my hearers, to pass sentence against it; for I cannot suppose that any of you can, in judgment, approve of that disposition of heart which is pregnant with so many and great evils as have been mentioned—You do not hesitate to condemn the man who maketh haste to be rich by injustice, fraud and oppression—You think it just, that he that removeth his neighbor's land-mark, should bear the curse of heaven; and that he who oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, should come to want—You despise the thief as the meanest character, and the daring plunderer, who, with violent hands seizeth upon his neighbor's goods; and judge that such persons merit perpetual confinement, or capital punishment. But do you condemn those cares which impair the health of the body, disturb the

peace of the mind, choak the word, and hinder the success of the gospel? Do you condemn a refusal to honor God with your substance when he calls for it, for the promotion and establishment of his kingdom, and interest in the world? Do you condemn the want of public spirit, liberality, and charitable dispositions towards the poor and needy; and whatever has a tendency to cramp the human mind in its improvements, and prevent the happiness of the social state, with respect to the present and future world? And does your practice correspond with those sentiments? If so, then you are free from that blame which is due to those who have an undue attachment to the goods of time; you welcome the messages of the gospel, and hear them without contempt of the speaker or his master, even when they are pointed against your idols—You hasten to hear them, at the expence of some weariness to the flesh, and of some time from your worldly businesses and pursuits; and the fruit of your hearing is, that you are *ready to every good word and work*—Consequently you do not err from the duties of your Christian profession, neither have pierced yourselves through with those many sorrows, which are the effects of the sin which we have been considering, and which in their consequences work death. But is this true? and is this a general thing? Here, even charity herself is silent—or if she speaks, she is obliged to put a negative upon the question. She says it is not true of the whole, but only of a few—And we fear of

but very few comparatively—and for the ground of this jealous fear, I beg leave to point you only to the small and partial sacrifices of time and worldly business, which are made on week-days, in the private and public worship of God! How little time is spent in reading the scriptures, and comparing the exercises of our hearts with this infallible rule, by which we are at last to be judged? What a small portion of your time is devoted to prayer? and with what reluctance do some come out to hear the word, when the farm or merchandize must be neglected for that hour; whilst others refuse to hear or serve, unless it be when the service costs them nought. Where then is your friendship to the master whom you profess to serve?—Does your zeal for the things of Christ's kingdom, kindled from the altar of God, consume that spirit of worldliness which marks the character of the man who is the friend of the world, and the enemy of God?—What do you more than others? Publicans trespass upon the rights of the sabbath, by conversation unsuitable to the day—and are you free from this sin? Publicans are zealous to obtain the corruptible inheritance—and are you not imitators of them in this respect? Publicans turn their back upon the church, and disdain to worship the Lord God of Hosts, and to be governed by his precepts; and are not many of you lukewarm Christians, neither hot nor cold; such as God has threatened to spew out of his

mouth? And is not one leading cause of all this a too great love for this present evil world?

Brethren, remember that kind and solemn admonition with which I shall conclude, *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him—* And if the love of the Father is not in him, he certainly has not the spirit of Christ; and if he has not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his; and if he is not his, he shall not inherit his glory.

