**Treasures from John Angell James**

**JEWELS from JAMES**

(Choice devotional selections from  
the works of John Angell James)

Volume 1

Volume 2

Volume 3

Volume 4

Volume 5

Volume 6

Volume 7

Volume 8

"I write plain truths, in plain language, for plain people."

This module was formatted by wlue777

(Choice devotional selections from   
the works of John Angell James)

**He who trifles with it is a fool!**  
  
If the man who **trembles** at death is a coward; **he who   
trifles with it is a fool!** There is a thousand times more   
rationality in the trembler—than in the trifler!   
  
There is a phenomenon in the rational world well   
worthy of consideration, inquiry, and solution—the   
strange and fatal insensibility of men to the grand   
fact that they are mortal! Since it is infallibly certain   
that they must and will die—and since death is so   
solemn an event—how does it happen that so few   
ever seriously think of it, or really prepare for it?   
  
One would think that so grand and solemn a fact   
as death, especially viewed in connection with the   
events which are to immediately follow it—heaven,   
hell and eternity—along with the **uncertainty** how   
soon it may be realized—might operate with an   
unlimited and altogether overpowering influence   
upon men's minds and hearts!  
  
But men wish to forget death!   
  
They try to forget it—and alas, too often succeed   
in accomplishing **this fatal oblivion!** Yet we can   
scarcely wonder at this, when we consider what   
is their spiritual condition—and what death is!   
  
It is the **commonness** of death, which deprives it   
of its extreme dreadfulness. If death happened in   
our world only once in a century, it would be felt   
like the shock of an earthquake; and would hush   
the inhabitants of earth into a breathless silence,   
while the echoes of the knell of the departed soul   
were reverberating around the globe!  
  
Death is . . .  
the moment of destiny;  
the seal of eternity;  
the cessation of probation;  
the commencement of retribution and judgment!   
  
The antecedents of death are dreadful—so are   
the accompaniments—so are the consequences!   
  
To every **sense**—death is revolting!  
  
To every **social affection**—death is crucifying!  
  
To **reason**—death is perplexing!  
  
To everything but saving faith—death is overwhelming!

**Traveling to glory, honor, immortality and eternal life!**  
  
**Earth** is to its inhabitants, neither a paradise nor   
a desert. If it has not all the beautiful scenes and   
productions of a paradise—so neither has it all the   
dreariness and desolation of a desert. This world is   
called "a valley of tears," but it is not less true that   
it is sometimes a valley without the tears. It often  
wears a smiling aspect, and reflects the light of   
God's graciousness and bounty.

We know very well that **man's chief portion** lies in   
the blessings of salvation, and the hope of eternal   
glory. These are so vast as almost to reduce all else   
to nothing. Full pardon of sin, and the hope of an   
eternity of pure and perfect felicity, are such   
amazing expectations, as might seem to render   
us absolutely indifferent alike to . . .  
poverty and riches;   
pain and ease;   
obscurity and renown.  
  
How little would it signify to him who was going to take   
possession of a kingdom and a throne, whether he traveled   
through a desert or a garden; or whether he dined meagerly   
or sumptuously; or whether he had all best accommodations   
and conveniences along the way. His thoughts would be so   
engrossed with the permanent scenes of greatness, grandeur,   
power, and wealth before him—as to be almost insensible to   
the privations or comforts along the way. So it is, with a   
Christian **traveling to glory, honor, immortality and   
eternal life!**  
  
It is incumbent upon Christians to let their spirit and   
conduct be consistent with the hope of eternal glory,   
in that eminent spirituality and heavenliness of mind,   
which are manifested in a supreme, constant, and   
practical regard to divine and eternal things.   
  
  
 **A Christian's habits**  
  
Christian parents should resist the entrance  
of **worldly conformity** into their families.  
  
Expensive entertainments,  
mirthful parties,  
vain and frivolous amusements,  
showy modes of dress,  
should be most cautiously avoided!  
  
True religion will not dwell amid such scenes;  
her refined and spiritual taste is soon offended,  
and she retires.  
  
**A Christian's habits** should be simple and spiritual.  
  
If it is his aim to approach as nearly as possible to  
the manners of the world without actually being  
numbered with its votaries, his children will be   
restrained with difficulty, on the godly side of the   
line of demarcation, and be perpetually longing   
and trying to push onward towards worldliness.   
  
The miserable efforts, made by some professing   
Christians, to be thought people of taste and   
fashion, show how badly they bear the Christian   
yoke, and how nearly they are resolved to cast   
it away as an encumbrance. We would despise   
these things wherever we see them, if they did   
not demand claims upon our pity, still stronger   
than those upon our scorn.   
  
When a worldly temper has crept into the circle  
of a Christian family, piety retires before it, and   
the spirit of error soon enters to take possession   
of the desolate home.

**Christ's seemingly inexplicable conduct**  
  
Behold the Canaanite woman appealing to Incarnate Mercy   
for her demon-possessed daughter, beseeching for a cure from   
Him who alone could effect it, and whom she believed could, if   
He would. What a plea! "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me!   
My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession!" One   
would think that such an appeal of course will be instantly heard   
and granted. "But Jesus gave her **no reply**—not even a word!"   
What! the 'ear of pity' deaf to such a petition! "What!" one   
would have imagined she would say, "is this the mercy, the   
fame of which has reached even my afflicted home? Will He   
not hear me, look on me, answer me? Must I return, and tell   
all who come to inquire about my plight—that He would not   
bestow a word or even a look, upon me?"   
  
To increase her distress and discouragement, the disciples   
urged Jesus to send her away. "Tell her to leave," they said.   
"She is bothering us with all her begging." Is this all the mercy   
that could be found in the hearts of all the twelve apostles?   
Poor woman, we pity you. There is very little hope for you!  
  
Jesus at length breaks silence, and says, "I was sent only to   
help the people of Israel—God's lost sheep—not the Gentiles."   
His **harsh words** are more distressing than His **silence!**   
  
Still her faith holds on, and her prayer continues, for "she came   
and worshiped Him and pleaded again—Lord, help me!" To this   
He makes a reply that seems to add **insult** to neglect. "It isn't   
right to take food from the children—and throw it to the dogs!"   
  
Mysterious answer! O Savior, how apparently unlike Yourself!   
  
What must have been the poor widow's reflections—"My heart is   
now almost broken—am I not a Gentile woman? and must I be   
called a dog? Is it thus He will deny His own character, and   
break the bruised reed? Must I go home and look upon my poor   
child with the sting of this insult and its venom rankling in my   
tortured bosom?"   
  
Surely she will now give up her suit—stop her plea—and renounce   
her faith. Yes, she would have done so—had her faith been less   
strong. "Yes, Lord," she replied, "but even dogs are permitted to   
eat crumbs that fall beneath their master's table!" Marvelous reply,   
one of the finest responses which language ever formed, and the   
most ingenious reasonings ever drawn.   
  
Jesus could hold out no longer. He could protract the trial no   
farther. Like Joseph under the influence of his feelings, when his   
heart was moved by the discourse of his brothers; Jesus drops   
the innocent disguise which His bursting compassion could not   
sustain another moment, and with delighted surprise He exclaims,  
"Woman, your faith is great! Your request is granted!"   
  
What was the meaning of all this? What was the secret of **Christ's   
seemingly inexplicable conduct?** What? He saw He had a subject   
which would enable Him to exhibit to the world an extraordinary  
instance of **faith in prayer**, and He determined to draw it forth in   
all its power and beauty. His heart was moved towards her from   
the beginning. He knew what He would do—and though He beat   
her off with one hand, He held her fast by the other.   
  
Here then we have an instance of prayer continued under delays,   
apparent neglect, and repulse—and continued through the power   
of faith. The woman still believed that there was mercy in that   
heart, to which she for a long time appealed in vain, and that   
she should ultimately succeed—and she did. "And her daughter   
was instantly healed!"

**Turn away from the lovely enchantress!**  
  
"Stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you, for  
when you love the world, you show that you do not have  
the love of the Father in you. For the world offers only  
the lust for physical pleasure, the lust for everything we  
see, and pride in our possessions. These are not from  
the Father. They are from this evil world." 1Jn 2:15-16  
  
Such is the world that assails the Christian, and which   
he must overcome—or perish eternally! He is aware of   
his danger from the strength, subtlety, and ever-present   
activity of this enemy of his soul.   
  
The whole current of Scripture commands runs against the   
love of the world. In every possible form, it is forbidden.   
  
**Worldliness is the most thronged road to everlasting ruin!**  
  
Worldliness does not merely consist in an intense love   
of money, and an excessive eagerness to be rich—but in  
a supreme regard to that which is visible and temporal,   
whether these relate to the quiet scenes of domestic   
comfort, or to those elegancies, splendors, and accumulations   
of wealth, which lead a man to seek his highest bliss in these!  
  
**The world is a foe which attacks us in various places!** In the   
**shop—**by all the temptations incident to trade and wealth. In   
the halls of **politics** and public business—by all the enticements   
to pride and ambition. In the places of **amusement**—by all the   
soft blandishments of pleasure. In the haunts of **vice**—by all the   
gratifications of appetite. In the scenes of **nature**—by all the   
delights of taste and imagination. In the walks of **science** and   
**literature**—by all the delights of intellectual gratification. In the   
**social circle**—by all the enjoyments of friendship. In the **domestic   
retreat**—by all the sweets of marital bliss. **Oh, how many are   
the scenes where the world meets man and subdues him!**  
  
Sometimes the world approaches the believer with a smiling   
face, making promises and offering caresses, like the serpent   
to our first mother in the garden; or like Satan to our Lord   
when he said, "All these things will I give you—if you will fall   
down and worship me!" How difficult is it on such occasions   
to **turn away from the lovely enchantress**, to keep the eye   
steadily fixed on heavenly glories—and instead of greedily   
quaffing the cup of poisoned sweets, to dash it on the ground! **If immorality slays its thousands—the world slays its ten   
thousands!** 'Supreme love of the world' will as certainly lead   
its possessor to the bottomless pit, as the love of open vice!  
  
Worldliness, I repeat, and repeat with emphasis, is . . .  
the smoothest,  
the most polished,  
the most fashionable,  
the most respectable   
path to the bottomless pit!  
  
**Victory over the world** is subordination. . .  
of the creature to the Creator;   
of earth to heaven;  
of temporal blessings to spiritual ones;  
of time to eternity.   
  
Victory over the world is the formation of an unearthly,   
spiritual, divine, and heavenly mind-set and character!   
  
"It was the sight of Your dear cross,  
First weaned my soul from earthly things;  
And taught me to esteem as dross,  
The mirth of fools and pomp of kings!"   
  
How all the splendor of earthly things pales before   
that infinitely more resplendent object—**Jesus!**

**All this loveliness of character**  
  
"Without holiness no one will see the Lord." Heb 12:14  
  
An unholy person cannot inherit the kingdom of God.  
  
There is a vast difference between sanctification—and the   
**common morality** of life. There are many people who are . . .  
very amiable in their dispositions,  
very just in their transactions,  
very excellent in all their relationships,  
very lovely in their general character;  
but who at the same time, whatever esteem and   
affection they may have—are not in a state of   
sanctification. They . . .  
have never been convinced of sin,  
have never exercised faith in Christ,  
have never been born of the Spirit,  
have never been brought to love God.   
  
**All this loveliness of character** is but the beautiful   
wildflower in the wilderness of unrenewed humanity.   
  
There can be no true holiness apart from the principle   
of supreme love to God. Until this is implanted in the   
soul, we are under the dominion of supreme selfishness  
—and all these excellences may be traced up to self!   
God's law is not obeyed; God's glory is not sought,   
because God Himself is not loved.   
  
It is a melancholy spectacle, to see so much 'general   
excellence of character' as we sometimes witness, all   
fruitless to its possessor, as regards the eternal world,   
for lack of that Divine principle which transmutes all   
this **apparently beautiful morality**, into true godliness.  
  
Without holiness, whatever amiable and lovely qualities  
of a general kind we may possess, we are still . . .  
the children of wrath,  
the enemies of God,  
the subjects of unrenewed corruption,  
the heirs of perdition; and   
going on to everlasting destruction!   
  
"Without holiness no one will see the Lord." Heb 12:14

**He is both depraved and condemned!**  
  
God created man in His own image—which consisted of   
true holiness. No spot of **guilt** was upon his conscience  
—nor spot of **depravity** upon his heart.  
  
The light of truth irradiated his **understanding**.   
  
The glow of perfect love warmed his **heart**.   
  
The choices of his **will** were all on the side of purity.  
  
His **conscience** was the seat of perfect peace.   
  
The beauties of holiness adorned his **character**.   
  
His **whole soul** was in harmony with the untainted   
scenes of Paradise—in which bowers he walked in   
undisturbed friendship with God.   
  
No sorrow wrung his heart.   
  
No care wrinkled his brow.   
  
No anxiety broke his rest.   
  
He was happy—because he was holy.   
  
**When he sinned**, his whole moral condition was   
altered! He fell under the **condemnation** of the law   
he had violated, and became the subject of inward   
**corruption**. An entire change passed over his nature.  
He not only became **guilty**—but **depraved!**  
  
His **understanding** became darkened!  
  
His **affections** became selfish and earthly!  
  
His **will** became prone to choose what is wrong!  
  
His **conscience** became benumbed!   
  
If he would ever be recovered from this state of misery, he must be both **pardoned** and **sanctified**.   
  
The covenant of God's love and mercy in Christ Jesus  
—the glorious scheme of redeeming grace—meets the   
whole case of fallen man, by providing not only   
justification—but sanctification as well.   
  
Wonderful gospel provision!  **Pardon** for the **guilty!   
  
Sanctification** for the **unholy!**   
  
The condition of the sinner may be likened to that of   
a condemned criminal shut up in prison, and infected   
with a deadly plague! What he needs, is both the cure   
of his plague—and the reversal of his sentence. Neither   
alone, will meet his case. If he is only pardoned—he will   
die of the plague. If he is only cured of the plague—he   
will suffer the just sentence of the law.   
  
So it is with fallen man—**he is both depraved and   
condemned!** If he is only pardoned—his depravity will   
be his misery. If he could by any means be reformed  
—he is still under sentence of death.   
  
The glory and completeness of the gospel scheme  
is, that it provides a cure for the diseases of the   
soul—in sanctification; as well as a pardon from   
the condemnation of the law—in justification!

**A system of religious pauperism?**  
  
"Even while we were with you, we gave you this rule:   
'**Whoever does not work should not eat!**' Yet we hear   
that some of you are living idle lives, refusing to work   
and wasting time meddling in other people's business.   
In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we appeal to   
such people—no, we command them: Settle down and   
get to work! Earn your own living!" 2Th 3:10-12  
  
The poor should be conspicuous for their **industry**, and  
should not eat the bread of idleness. The poor have no   
right, therefore, to expect, that in consequence of their   
association with a Christian church, they are in any   
measure released from the obligation of the most   
unwearied industry. **They are not to be supported   
in idleness**, nor ought they to look for any financial   
allowance, while they are able to provide for themselves   
and their family.  
  
The religion of Jesus Christ was never intended to   
establish **a system of religious pauperism**. It is to   
be feared, that many have entered into Christian   
fellowship on purpose to obtain its funds! This is a   
dreadful case, wherever it occurs, and should make   
all the poor members of our churches tremble at   
the most distant approximation to such a crime!  
  
The only times in which Christians should feel that   
they have claims upon the funds of the church, are   
when sickness or old age has incapacitated them for   
labor; or when the produce of their industry is too   
scanty to procure the necessities of life.

**The guardian angels of our churches!**  
  
"If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries  
and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move  
mountains, but have not love, **I am nothing**." 1Co 13:2  
  
We must come back to the first principles of practical   
piety, and cultivate the passive virtues of the Christian   
character. We must remember that Christianity is being   
like Christ, and that unless we partake of that love which   
is patient and kind, which does not envy, nor boast, nor   
is proud, nor rude, nor self-seeking, nor easily angered,   
which keeps no record of wrongs—**we are nothing!**  
  
Strange indeed it is, that men, who by their own   
confession are lost, vile, ruined, helpless sinners,   
should lack HUMILITY; and that they who believe   
themselves to be saved from hell by unmerited   
mercy, should be destitute of LOVE!   
  
We must crucify that selfishness, which fixes upon its   
own gratification, and cherish that expansive benevolence   
which looks upon the good of others. We must contend   
to be lowest—not to be highest! We must seek to please,   
and not merely to be pleased.  
  
Let us remember that HUMILITY and LOVE are . . .  
the necessary fruits of our doctrines,  
the highest beauty of our character, and  
**the guardian angels of our churches!**

**The panacea for the world's evils**  
  
The secret of the world's moral renovation, and **the   
panacea for the world's evils**, lies compressed in   
that one expression of the apostle Paul, "Christ Jesus   
came into the world to save sinners!"

**This city has so aroused My anger and wrath!**   
  
"From the day it was built until now, **this city has so  
aroused My anger and wrath** that I must remove it  
from My sight!" Jer 32:31

Let us devoutly acknowledge both the source and   
the justice of **our calamities**. The origin of the evils   
that afflict us, is *often* to be found in the sins which   
disgrace us.  
  
Sin is the only thing in all the universe which God   
hates, and this He abhors wherever He discovers it.   
  
With our limited understanding, and feeble powers of   
moral perception, it is impossible for us to form an   
adequate idea of the evil of sin, or the light in which   
it is contemplated by a God whose **understanding**is infinite, and whose **purity** is immaculate. That law   
which men are daily trampling upon, equally without   
consideration, without reason, and without penitence,  
is most sacred in His eyes, as the emanation and the   
transcript of His own holiness. He is also omnipresent   
and omniscient. There is not a nook or corner of the   
land from which He is excluded. Of every scene of   
iniquity He is the constant, though invisible witness.  
The whole mass of national guilt, with every the   
minutest particular of it, is ever before His eye!   
  
His **justice**, which consists in giving to all their   
due, must incline Him to punish iniquity—and His  **power** enables Him to do it!  
  
He is the moral governor of the nations, and   
concerned to render His providence subservient   
to the display of His attributes. And if a people so   
highly favored as we are, notwithstanding our   
manifold sins, escape without chastisement—will   
not some be ready to question the equity, if not   
the very exercise of His administration?  
  
His threatenings against the wicked are to be found   
in almost every page of holy Scripture. Nor are **the   
threatenings of the Bible** to be viewed in the light   
of mere unreal terrors, as clouds and storms which   
the poet's pencil has introduced into the picture; the   
creatures of his own imagination, and only intended   
to excite the imagination of others.   
  
No! They are solemn realities, intended to operate   
by their denunciation as a check upon sin; or if not   
so regarded, to be endured in their execution as a   
punishment upon our sins! Scripture gives us many   
examples in which this has happened. It has preserved   
an account of the downfall of nearly all the chief empires,   
kingdoms, and cities of antiquity; and that, not as a   
mere chronicle of the event, but as a great moral   
lesson to the world. Scripture carefully informs us,   
that **sin was the cause of their ruin!  
  
Volcanoes** terrify with their eruptions, and submerge   
towns or cities beneath their streams of lava!  
  
**Earthquake's** convulsive throes bury a population   
beneath the ruins of their own abodes!  
  
**Hurricanes** carry desolation through a country!  
  
**Famine** whitens the valleys with the bones of the   
thousands who have perished beneath its reign!  
  
**Pestilence** stalks through a land, hurrying   
multitudes to the tomb, and filling all that   
remain with unutterable terrors!  
  
**Wars** have been agents in the unparalleled   
scenes of bloodshed and misery!  
  
Scripture proclaims that these are to be regarded  
as **a fearful exposition of the evil nature of   
sin**, written by the finger of God upon the tablet   
of the earth's history!  
  
Visit, in imagination, my countrymen, the spots   
where many of these cities once stood, and you   
shall see nothing but desolation stalking like a   
specter across the plain, lifting its eye to heaven,   
and exclaiming, amidst the silence that reigns   
around, "The kingdom and the nation that will   
not serve You, shall utterly perish!" As you stand  
amidst the moldering fragments of departed   
grandeur, does not every breeze, as it sighs   
through the ruins, seem to say, as a voice from   
the sepulcher, "See, therefore, and know that it   
is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against the Lord!"  
  
Let us devoutly acknowledge both the source and   
the justice of our calamities. The origin of the evils   
that afflict us, is often to be found in the sins which   
disgrace us.  
  
"From the day it was built until now, **this city has so  
aroused My anger and wrath** that I must remove it  
from My sight!" Jer 32:31

"The Lord your God pronounced this disaster against this  
place. The Lord has brought it about, and has done as He  
said. Because you sinned against the Lord and did not  
obey his voice, this thing has come upon you."   
(Jer 40:2-3)  
  
  
  
**I kill**  
  
("The Death of Eminent Ministers, a Public Loss"  
A funeral sermon by J. A. James, Nov. 6, 1825)  
  
'Chance' has nothing to do with death! Not the outcast   
infant of a day old, exposed by its unnatural mother to   
perish by the tiger or the vulture; nor even the sparrow   
that dies of hunger in its nest—passes out of life without   
the knowledge of God.   
  
"Don't be afraid!" said Christ, "I am the first and the last,   
the living one. I was dead, but now I am alive forever! I   
have the keys of the unseen world and of death!" What   
consolation is there in this sublime declaration! The key   
of death is never for a moment entrusted out of His hands  
—and never can be wrested from them! **Every time a   
human being dies**, it is by an act of His power, in turning   
the key which unlocks the gates of death! Our life is under   
the constant and strict observation of His omniscient eye!   
He determines the moment when to take the key from His   
belt, and throw the portals of immortality back on their   
mighty hinges!  
  
O, what comfort does this impart to us, in reference to   
our own lives—to know that exposed as we are to all the   
accidents and diseases of this 'world of changes', and   
enveloped as we are in darkness as to the consequences   
of the next step, and the events of the next hour—that we   
cannot die by a random stroke, or by a blind chance! **The   
key of death must be turned by Him who is infinitely   
wise, and powerful, and good!**   
  
"See, I am the only God! There are no others. **I kill**,  
and I make alive! I wound, and I heal, and no one  
can rescue you from My power!" Deu 32:39

**That one majestic, inconceivable,  
and expressive word**  
"And this is the promise that He Himself made to us:  
**eternal life**." (1Jn 2:25)  
  
In the infinite comprehensiveness of this one promise are  
included all that the omniscient mind of the **Father** in the  
exercise of His love has contrived in eternity; all that the  
incarnate **Son** has obtained by His sacrifice upon the cross;   
and all that the Divine **Spirit** has revealed upon the page of   
Scripture; and all which is contained in **that one majestic,   
inconceivable, and expressive word**—HEAVEN!   
  
I do not need flamboyant descriptions and eloquent   
representations of the celestial state, to raise my desires   
and hopes. It is enough to know that it is GLORY, first   
prepared, then promised, and ultimately bestowed by   
Jehovah—as the concentration of His infinite beneficence   
and the full manifestation of His boundless benevolence!  
  
Heaven is . . .  
the absence of all evil, natural and moral;  
the possession of all possible good;  
a glorified body united with a perfect soul,   
and all this in the immediate presence of God!  
  
There we shall **see** God!   
  
We shall not only see Him—but **love** Him!   
  
We shall not only loveHim—but **serve** Him!   
  
We shall not only serveHim—but **enjoy** Him!   
  
We shall not only enjoyHim—but hold such   
**communion** with Him as will assimilate   
us to the all-perfect source of our felicity!  
  
The objects of our contemplation,   
our situation,   
our companions,   
our personal constitution,   
our constant exercises of holy intellect, heart, and   
volition—will be so many distinct sources of bliss!  
  
Perfect **knowledge**,   
perfect **holiness**, and   
perfect **love** must of necessity   
open the fountain of perfect **joy**!  
  
No secondary concern will call off our unwearied   
attention from the service of God; no **sin** or **pain**  
will interrupt us in it; nor will **death** ever dismiss   
us from it. The business and the blessedness of   
that happy state are the same—our supreme   
delight will be our constant employment.   
Every **sense** will be an inlet,   
every **faculty** a capacity, and   
every **energy** a pulsation—of the purest bliss!   
  
Heaven will be "life" . . .  
life in **perfection**,  
the life of the **soul**,  
the life of **God**,  
the life of **eternity!**  
  
But to **describe** it, how vain and arrogant the   
attempt, when even to **conceive** of it is impossible!   
"In Your presence is fullness of joy! At Your right hand  
there are pleasures for evermore!" Neither language   
nor thought can go beyond this! Mind cannot conceive   
more. God Himself can tell us no more, than that   
heaven consists in His presence, and the enjoyment   
of His favor—forever and ever!  
  
"No **eye** has seen, no **ear** has heard, and no **mind**   
has imagined the things that God has prepared for  
those who love Him!" (1Co 2:9)  
  
  
  
**The base cares and the petty enjoyments   
of the present world**  
  
Sin is raging all around us!   
  
Satan is busy in the work of destruction!   
  
Men are dying!   
  
Souls are every moment departing into eternity!   
  
Hell is enlarging her mouth, and multitudes are   
continually descending to torments which knows   
no mitigation and no end!   
  
How astounding is it sometimes to ourselves, that,  
**the base cares and the petty enjoyments of   
the present world** should have so much power   
over us, as to retard us in our heavenward course,   
and make us negligent and indolent, heedless and   
forgetful.  
  
**Time** is short!  
  
**Life** is uncertain! **Death** is at hand!  
 **Immortality** is about to swallow up our   
existence in eternal life—or eternal death!  
  
**Heaven** expanding above us!  
  
**Hell** is yawning beneath us!  
  
**Eternity** is opening before us!  
  
  
  
  
**It is by faith**  
**It is by faith**, as an operative principle of universal obedience   
to the gospel of Christ, that the believer "purifies his heart" and   
adorns his character with "the beauties of holiness," through   
the power of the Divine Spirit.   
  
**It is by faith** that he overcomes the world . . .  
the dread of its frown,   
the desire of its smile,  
its evil maxims,   
its corrupt principles.   
  
**It is by faith** that he . . .  
quenches the fiery darts of the wicked one,  
is delivered from the wiles of the devil,  
and bruises the serpent's head.   
  
**It is by faith**, as a pilgrim and stranger upon earth, he   
nourishes the desire for, and indulges the expectation of,   
that country which God has promised to those who love Him.   
  
**It is by faith** that he rises superior to the love of life, vanquishes   
the fear of death, and while this monster puts his most horrid   
form of mischief on—he smiles at his terrors, and, swelling into   
rapture, exclaims, "O death, where is your sting!"  
  
  
  
**Essential to eminent usefulness**  
A revived church is the best hope of a lost world.  
  
A revived ministry the best hope of a dormant church.  
  
Under 'a great show of outward profession', there is a lamentable   
deficiency of vital godliness in our churches. Much of the prevailing   
benevolence and activity of the church, are a mere substitute for   
spiritual religion—rather than the expression of vital godliness.  
  
In our churches, it is easy to perceive . . .  
how much more welcome is the 'humorous'—than the serious;  
how much more anxious the audience is to be 'entertained'  
—than to be edified;  
how much greater homage is paid to the 'talent' of the preacher  
—than to his piety!   
  
In fact, our public meetings sometimes assume rather the   
character of 'religious amusements'—than pious worship!  
  
It ought never to be forgotten that a church meeting, if rightly   
understood, is a company of people brought together to carry   
out the design for which the Son of God expired upon the cross!  
Surely the frame of our minds, and the tone of the sermons,   
and the spirit and tendency of the whole worship service, ought   
to be in strict harmony with such a purpose. Yet many of our   
church meetings have rather lowered, than elevated the tone   
of our piety, and thus enfeebled our real strength for carrying   
on this great work.   
  
Eminent piety is **essential to eminent usefulness!**It is eminent piety alone, which will enable us to take a clear   
and impressive view of the object to be sought, and supply   
the energies necessary for obtaining it.   
  
It is eminent piety alone, which will purify our motives, and produce   
that spirit of profound humility, self-denial, dependence, and entire   
consecration—which are necessary to qualify us for the work.   
  
It is eminent piety alone, which will keep up the spirit of faith and   
prayer, to which the divine promises are made. We must become . . .  
more devout,  
more prayerful,  
more holy,  
more heavenly,  
more spiritual.  
  
  
  
**He secretly wishes there was no Supreme Being**  
  
The fool says in his heart, "There is no God!"  
(Psa 14:1)  
  
His sinful disposition is at deadly enmity with the   
perfection of the Divine character. The holiness of   
God is the object of his abhorrence—as long as this   
exists he cannot be at perfect peace. The rays of Divine   
purity, as often as they fall upon his disordered mind,   
must disturb and exasperate it. **He secretly wishes   
there was no Supreme Being**—or that He was not holy.   
If his powers were equal to his desires, he would . . .  
wrest the sword of justice from the hand of Deity,  
strip the character of Jehovah of the beauties of holiness,  
dash in pieces the tables of His law,  
overturn the throne of judgment,   
and establish the reign of anarchy,   
in order that he might sin in peace, and escape the   
punishment of his wickedness!  
  
The very existence of a holy God is, and ever must be, an   
annoyance to him, in whose mind there are combined . . .  
the love of sin,  
a dread of its consequences, and  
a wish to be unmolested in his course of iniquity.  
  
  
  
**Flesh-pleasing pulpit opiates!**  
  
They are a rebellious people, deceptive children, children who do  
not obey the Lord's instruction. They say to the seers, "Do not  
see," and to the prophets, "Do not prophesy the truth to us. **Tell   
us flattering things!** Prophesy illusions! Get out of the way!   
Leave the pathway. Rid us of the Holy One of Israel." Isa 30:9-11  
  
It is a striking fact, that He who was love incarnate; who was   
mercy's messenger to our lost world; who was named Jesus,   
because He was to be the Savior of His people; who was the   
manifestation of God's love to man—delivered, during the   
course of His personal ministry, more fearful descriptions of   
Divine justice and the punishment of the wicked, than are to be   
found in any other part of the Word of God! What can exceed   
the solemn scene of the parable of the rich man in torments?   
Hell and destruction are there set openly before us.  
  
No man can fulfill his ministry, therefore, without frequently   
alluding to **the justice of God in the punishment of sin.**  
He must seek to alarm the fears of the unconverted by a   
representation of the consequences that will follow a state   
of final impenitence.  
  
Such a subject frequently calls up all the enmity of the carnal   
mind. To be told, not only that they are sinners—which all will   
admit in general terms—but that their sins are such as to deserve   
the wrath of God, such as to expose them to the torments of hell,   
and such as will infallibly bring them to the bottomless pit—unless   
they truly repent; to be told again and again that they are hastening   
to perdition; to have the rod of Divine vengeance shaken over their   
heads; to have all the dreadful curses of the violated law analyzed,   
ascertained and announced; to have this done in their hearing, and   
done frequently; to be made to sit and hear their future eternal   
doom, and thus to be tormented before their time—is what they   
cannot, and will not endure! Unable to bear any longer his pointed   
addresses to the conscience, they will leave his ministry—for the   
**flesh-pleasing pulpit opiates** of some flatterer of men's souls,   
who is too cowardly to trouble the minds, or alarm the consciences   
of those who love smooth, flattering and delusive preaching.   
  
To be publicly denounced as deserving Divine wrath; to be told   
that they are sinners to such a degree as to merit the eternal   
punishment of a holy God; to be reminded that, instead of their   
fancied good heart, pure nature, and blameless life—they are,   
in the sight of God, depraved in every faculty and polluted in   
every part; to be represented as unfit for communion with God   
here, and for His presence hereafter—all this is so opposed to all   
their notions, so mortifying to their vain pride, so degrading to   
their dignity, that they cannot but dislike it. To such a debasement   
they would not willingly descend; and hence their demand for the   
teaching of deceit, and the smooth speech of falsehood. What   
they want is to be flattered into a good opinion of themselves.   
They hate the doctrine which disturbs their self-delight, and   
revile the man who attempts to tell them the solemn reality   
of how vile they are!  
  
  
  
  
**Do you remember little Elizabeth?**

"He who wins souls is wise." Pro 11:30  
  
My 'imagination' has sometimes presented me with this   
picture of a faithful teacher's entrance to the state of her   
everlasting rest. The agony of death finished, the triumph of   
faith completed—and the conquering spirit hastening to her   
crown! Upon the confines of the heavenly world, a divinely   
lovely form awaits her arrival. Enrapt in astonishment at the   
dazzling glory of this celestial inhabitant, she inquires, "Is  
this Gabriel, chief of all the heavenly multitudes—and am **I** honored with his aid to guide me to the throne of God?"   
  
With a smile of ineffable delight, such as gives fresh beauty   
to an angel's countenance, the mystic form replies, "**Do you   
remember little Elizabeth**, who was in yonder world—a   
pupil in your Sunday school class? Do you recollect the child   
who wept as you talked to her of sin—and directed her to the   
cross of the dying Redeemer? God smiled with approbation   
upon your effort, and by His own Spirit sealed the impression   
upon her heart in characters never to be effaced. Providence   
removed her from beneath your care, before the fruit of your   
labor was visible. The gospel seed, however, had taken root,   
and it was the privilege of another to water—what *you* had   
sown. Nourished by the influence of heaven, the 'plant of   
piety' flourished in her heart, and shed its fragrance upon   
her character. Piety, after guarding her from the snares of   
youth, cheered her amidst the accumulated trials of an   
afflicted life, supported her amidst the agonies of death,   
and elevated her to the mansions of immortality! And now   
behold before you—the **glorified spirit of that poor child**,   
who, under God, owes the eternal life on which she has   
entered—to your faithful labors in the Sunday School; and   
who is now sent by our Redeemer to introduce you to the   
world of glory, as your first and least reward for guiding **the   
once thoughtless, ignorant, wicked Elizabeth** to the   
world of grace! Hail, happy spirit! Hail, favored of the Lord!   
Hail, deliverer of my soul! Hail, to the world of eternal glory!"  
  
I can trace the scene no further! I cannot paint the raptures   
produced in the honored teacher's bosom by this unexpected   
encounter. I cannot depict the mutual gratitude and love of   
two such spirits meeting on the confines of heaven—much   
less can I follow them to their everlasting mansion, and   
disclose the bliss which they shall enjoy before the throne   
of God! All this, and a thousand times more, is attendant   
upon the salvation of one single soul! Teachers, what a   
motive to diligence!   
  
Amidst surrounding millions, the faithful teacher shall stand  
to receive the public plaudits of his Judge and Savior—"In as   
much as you have done it unto the least of these My brethren  
—you have done it unto Me! Well done, good and faithful   
servant, enter into the joy of your Lord!"  
  
  
  
**This most hateful disposition!**  
  
Temptations vary with our circumstances, but there   
is no scene from which they are entirely excluded.   
There is no situation, however obscured by solitude,   
or elevated by piety—from which all temptations can   
be effectually shut out. The fact is, that as **our chief   
danger** arises from our own evil heart. Until we can   
be separated from our vile selves, we shall look in   
vain for a spot sequestered from the attack of   
temptation.  
  
One temptation to which Sunday School teachers   
are exposed, is a spirit of PRIDE.   
To be a teacher of others;   
to be invested with authority;   
to be regarded as an oracle;   
to be listened to with deference;  
is a situation which has its temptations, and which   
some weak minds have found quite too powerful for   
the growth of humility.  
  
You mistake, if you suppose that merely being a teacher   
of children, is too small to induce pride. Pride is a vice   
that does not dwell exclusively in king's houses, wear   
only elegant clothing, and feed sumptuously every day   
upon lofty titles, fame or affluence. Pride . . .  
is generated in the depravity of our nature,  
accommodates itself to our circumstances,  
and adapts itself to our taste!  
  
Pride is found as often in the poor cottage, as in the elegant   
mansion. Consciousness of superiority—whatever be the   
object of comparison—is the basis of **this most hateful   
disposition** of pride; and this may be supplied even from   
the office of a Sunday School teacher!

Be watchful therefore, over your own heart—for **the loss  
of humility is a destruction in the Christian character**,   
which cannot be repaired by the most splendid talents,   
or the most active zeal.

**Every child is totally depraved**  
  
It is important for you, in all your exertions, to bear in mind   
the total and universal depravity of the human race. By **total   
depravity**, I do not mean that people are as bad as they can   
be; for in general they lie under strong restraints—and most   
do not sin with reckless abandonment. I do not mean that   
they are all equally wicked; for some are less sinful than others.   
I do not mean that they are destitute of everything useful, and   
lovely in society; for their social affections are often strong and   
praiseworthy. I do not mean that their actions are always   
wrong; the contrary is manifestly true.   
  
What I mean by total depravity, is an entire destitution in the   
human heart by nature—of all spiritual affection, and holy   
propensities. In this view, **every child is totally depraved**.   
  
To change this state of the mind, and produce a holy bias; to   
create a new disposition; to turn all the affections into a new   
channel, and cause them to flow towards God and heaven, is   
the work of the omnipotent and eternal Spirit!

**Gently rubbed off by the hand of love**   
  
"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness   
sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you   
when others revile you and persecute you and utter all   
kinds of evil against you falsely on My account. Rejoice and   
be glad, for your reward is great in heaven!" Mat 5:10-12  
  
Consider it your honor to be persecuted for righteousness sake.   
  
The richest laurel that can adorn your brow is the scorn of fools!   
  
The praise of the wicked is censure—and their satire is praise.   
  
Every feeble mind can scoff, but only the wise man can bear it well.   
  
The scorner is below a man; but the man who bears scorn   
patiently is like an angel.   
  
Instead of indulging in revenge, exercise forgiveness!   
  
You have reason rather to be grateful to the scoffer, than to   
be angry with him. His foul breath, though it seems to tarnish   
your reputation for awhile, yet being **gently rubbed off by   
the hand of love**, shall only prepare it for a brighter luster.   
  
And it shall be proved hereafter that the scorner was the   
occasion of adding one more gem to the crown of glory   
which shall adorn your brow with unfading honor!   
  
Pity him, for he is indeed more an object of your pity than   
of your contempt. Thus prove to the scoffer that the religion   
which he ridicules, subdues the turbulent and angry passions,   
teaches its possessor to forgive iniquities against himself, and   
implants the godlike disposition of returning good for evil.

**The sum total of worldly enjoyment in those two ciphers!**  
  
"I have seen everything that is done under the sun. Look at   
it! **All is vanity and vexation of spirit!**" Ecc 1:14  
  
The design of Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes seems to   
be this—after detailing the good things of life to the widest   
extent, setting them in the strongest light, and granting to   
them every possible advantage which their most passionate   
admirers contend for—to demonstrate, that as they are   
attended with so many inseparable evils, are so short-lived   
in their continuance, so unprofitable in the hour of death,   
and so utterly useless in the eternal world beyond the   
grave—that they are insufficient for the needs of the soul,   
and inadequate to the eternal happiness of man.   
  
No one was more capable of forming a correct opinion on   
this subject than Solomon; since no man ever commanded   
more resources of earthly delight than he did, or ever more   
eagerly availed himself of the opportunities which he   
possessed. And yet he grew disgusted and dissatisfied   
with sensual pleasures, and at length gives us **the sum   
total of worldly enjoyment in those two ciphers**  
**—vanity and vexation of spirit!**  
  
His testimony, therefore, is to be considered as that of   
a man who had **drunk the cup of earthly pleasures   
to its dregs**—and who found those dregs to be   
wormwood, gall, and poison!

**The worst enemy of mankind!**  
  
"Being **examples to the flock**." 1Pe 5:3  
  
"He will remind you of **my way of life** in Christ Jesus,  
**which agrees with what I teach** everywhere in  
every church." 1Co 4:17  
  
They expect to see our descriptions of piety copied into our   
own conduct; and happy the man who having set forth true   
godliness in his discourses, in all its beautiful proportions and   
all its glowing colors, shall constrain the audience to exclaim,   
"The painter has delineated his own likeness!" Happy the man   
who, when the people shall ask, "What is true religion?" shall   
be not only able to reply in reference to his pulpit, "Come and   
hear," but in reference to his life, "Come and see!"   
  
He alone is an honor to his pastoral office, who lives the   
gospel which he preaches, and adorns by his conduct the   
doctrines which he believes. **But the unholy minister is   
a disgrace to Christianity, and the worst enemy of   
mankind!** He is the most powerful abettor of infidelity,   
and does more to wither the eternal interests of mankind   
than the most malignant and pestiferous treatises that ever   
issued from the press. If he perished alone in his sins, our   
feelings might be those of unmingled pity. But when we   
view him ruining the souls of others by his example, we   
unite abhorrence with our compassion, just as we would   
at the conduct of the shepherd who first drove his flock over   
a precipice, and then dashed himself upon the rocks below!

**An insatiable thirst after larger attainments**  
  
The man who thinks he has enough godliness—gives a   
decisive proof that he has none at all. There is in true   
piety, **an insatiable thirst after larger attainments** . . .  
in knowledge,  
in faith,  
in hope,  
in love,   
in purity.   
  
Therefore let every real Christian adopt the language of   
Paul, and act up to the assertion, "Not that I have already   
reached the goal or am already fully mature, but I make   
every effort to take hold of it because I also have been   
taken hold of by Christ Jesus. Brothers, I do not consider   
myself to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do—  
forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what   
is ahead, I pursue as my goal the prize promised by  
God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus." Php 3:12-14

**He cannot forget**  
  
"Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life,  
but the wrath of God remains on him." John 3:36  
  
The Christian realizes that the whole human race is in   
a state of sin and ruin; suffering all the consequences   
of sin in this world—and exposed to the bitter pains of   
eternal death in the world to come. He is convinced   
that without a fitness for the pure and spiritual joys of   
heaven, not one individual of all the millions who are   
continually passing into eternity, can ascend to the   
realms of glory and felicity. They appear, in his eyes,   
to be actually perishing, and hence he is filled with   
the tenderest concern, and affected with the deepest   
sorrow. In his estimation . . .  
the most agonizing diseases,  
the most pinching poverty,  
the greatest deprivation,  
and the heaviest cares,  
are as nothing, compared with those miseries   
which sin has brought upon the deathless soul.   
 **He cannot forget**, that the soul, if not saved, will   
become immortal in its suffering and wretchedness.   
  
"Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life,  
but the wrath of God remains on him." Joh 3:36

**Delusive signs!**  
There are **delusive signs** of spiritual health and vigor.   
  
Increased ability and disposition to 'talk of religion' in   
the way of explaining and defending its doctrines, may  
be mistaken for an increased influence of it in the heart.  
Yet this may be nothing but the working of pride, or an   
effusion of vanity.   
  
To have a knowledge of the truths of Scripture, without   
an experience of their influence upon the heart, is only   
walking to the bottomless pit with the torch of truth   
in our right hand!   
  
Zeal for some peculiar notions or forms, may be thought  
to be pure concern for God's glory. Yet all the while it   
may only be the most rancorous party spirit.   
  
Liberality in giving may be merely self-righteousness   
or ostentation.  
  
Undeviating formality may be erroneously thought  
to be ardent devotion.  
  
Enthusiastic attachment to some novel opinion, may   
be erroneously supposed to be spirituality of mind.   
  
These are but a few specimens of the errors into which   
people fall, in judging spiritual health and vigor. And   
they tend to show the vast importance of our having   
a scriptural knowledge of the correct tests of personal   
godliness.

**As he snuffs the gale of popular applause!**  
  
"In all things approving ourselves as the **ministers  
of God**." 2Co 6:4.  
  
This verse implies that ministers are to labor for God—  
surely not for the preacher's fame. SELF is an idol which   
has been worshiped by far greater multitudes than any   
other deity of either ancient or modern heathenism.   
A minister is the last man in the world who should be   
seen at the altar of this vile abomination—SELF. And yet  
without great care he is likely to be the first one there,   
to linger there the longest, to bow the lowest, and to  
express his devotion by the costliest sacrifices!  
  
Many become ministers merely to acquire popular   
applause. 'Fame' is their motive and their aim. To   
commend themselves, is the secret but powerful   
spring of all they do. SELF is with them in the study   
directing their reading, selecting their texts, arranging   
their thoughts, forming their illustrations—and all with   
a view to 'shine in public'. Thus prepared, they ascend   
the pulpit with the same object which conducts **the   
actor** to the stage—to secure the applause of approving   
spectators. Every tone is modulated, every emphasis   
laid, every attitude regulated—to please the audience,   
rather than to profit their souls; to commend themselves,  
and not Jesus Christ. The service ended, this bosom idol   
returns with them to their own abode, and renders them   
restless and uneasy to know how they have succeeded.   
If they are admired, they receive their reward; if not,  
the first prize is lost!   
  
It is nothing in abatement of the sin, that all this   
while evangelical sentiments are uttered. Orthodoxy   
is the most direct road to popularity. Christ may be   
the text—when SELF is the sermon! And dreadful   
as it seems, it is to be feared that many have elevated   
the cross only to suspend upon the 'sacred tree' their   
own honors! and have employed all the glories of   
redemption—merely to emblazon their own name!  
  
The ministry is not intended to be a platform, where the   
petty manufacturer of 'tinsel eloquence' and 'rhetorical   
flowers' shall display to a gaping crowd his gaudy wares!  
  
When carried to this height, this is the direst, deepest   
tragedy that was ever performed by man, since it ends   
in the actual and eternal death of **the performer**, who   
forgets, **as he snuffs the gale of popular applause**,   
that it bears the vapors of damnation!   
  
"The Spirit took me to the north gate of the temple's  
inner courtyard, where there was **an idol that  
disgusted the Lord and made Him furious!**"   
(Eze 8:3)

**This heavenly magnet!**  
  
"But God proves His own love for us, in that while we  
were still sinners, Christ died for us!" Rom 5:8  
  
It magnifies the love of God, to consider the guilt,   
sinfulness and unworthiness of its objects.   
  
As **an exhibition of unparalleled love**, the cross melts   
and captivates the heart! Think of **the attraction of the   
cross**—when the love which it exhibits, is seen and felt   
by a mind under the influence of the Holy Spirit.   
  
What was it, my readers, which melted your hard and   
frozen hearts into penitence, and gratitude and love?   
What was it that drew you away from your sins? What   
was it that brought you as willing captives to the feet   
of Jesus? It was the love of God beseeching you upon   
the summit of Calvary, and with open arms bidding   
you welcome to the heart of Deity!   
  
Everything else united to repel you. The terrors of justice   
petrified you with horror, and despair was binding you   
more closely than ever to your sins—until divine mercy   
appeared and told you there was hope for the guilty—in  
**this heavenly magnet**—the cross of Christ!  
  
  
  
**Gathering around the very cradle of his infant!**  
  
The godly parent reflects on the destiny of that being which   
with rapture, he calls **his child**. He penetrates the disguise   
which the 'helplessness and unconsciousness of infancy'   
seem to have thrown around that child, and discovers the   
grandeur and the dignity of an immortal being! He sees in   
his countenance, that **face** which is to shine like the sun in   
the skies with the glory of God—OR to be clouded with the   
infamy and horror of the divine curse! He hears a **voice**which is to be forever hymning the praises of its Creator  
—OR to be forever venting blasphemies against its Judge!  
  
In short, he contemplates a being born for eternity; one   
who will be forever towering from height to height of glory   
in heaven—OR sinking from gulf to gulf of despair in hell!   
  
He reflects that his child is born with the latent seeds   
of sinful corruption in his nature, which await only the   
advancing 'spring of life' to vegetate, to strike root, to   
spring up under the fatal warmth of temptation, and   
bear the bitter fruits of rebellion against God.   
  
He sees, in imagination, the **world**, the **flesh** and the  **devil**, **gathering around the very cradle of his infant**,   
fixing their murderous eyes upon his immortal soul and   
going out to prepare for his ruin!  
  
He realizes that his child possesses an immortal soul,   
which is in danger of being forever undone! To desire   
anything for him less than the salvation of his child's   
immortal soul, is **cruelty of the blackest kind!  
  
  
  
The hand of faith**  
  
When **the hand of faith** opens to lay hold of   
Christ, it drops the sin it had grasped before.   
You must part with your sin—or Christ.

**The devil's sin**  
**Pride** is the parent sin. Pride is the original sin, both in  
heaven and on earth. Pride is **the devil's sin**, and that   
by which our first parents fell. We have all more of this   
hateful disposition than we either know or suspect.  
  
  
  
**An ice house, instead of a hot house!**  
  
It appears quite clear then, that great numbers of   
Christian professors are but very imperfectly acquainted   
with the requirements of "pure and undefiled religion,"   
and need to be led to re-study it in the pages of Holy   
Scripture. We have lost sight of the 'divine Original', and   
have confined our attention to the 'imperfect transcripts'   
which we find on every hand in our churches. We have   
by tacit consent reduced the standard, and fixed our eye   
and our aim upon an inferior object. We are a law to each   
other, instead of making the Word of God the law to us all.   
  
We tolerate a worldly-minded, diluted, and weakened   
piety in others—because we expect a similar toleration   
for ourselves. We make excuses for them—because we   
expect the like excuses for our own conduct in return.   
We have abused, shamefully abused, the fact that   
'there is no perfection upon earth,' and converted it   
into a license for any measure and any number of   
imperfections!  
  
Our highest notion of religion requires only abstinence   
from open immorality and the more polluting worldly   
amusements; an attendance upon an evangelical   
ministry; and an approval of orthodox doctrine. **This,   
this, is the religion of multitudes!** There may be . . .  
no habitual spirituality;  
no heavenly-mindedness;  
no life of faith;  
no communion with God;  
no struggling against sin, Satan, and the world;   
no concern to grow in grace;  
no supreme regard to eternity;  
no studied and advancing fitness for the eternal world;  
no tenderness of conscience;  
no laborious discipline of our disposition;  
no cultivation of love;  
no making piety our chief business and highest pleasure;  
no separation in spirit from the world.   
In short, no impress upon the whole mind, and heart,   
and conscience and life—of the character of the   
Christian, as delineated upon the page of Scripture.   
  
We all need to be taken out of 'the religious world',   
as it is called, and collected again around the Bible   
to study what it is to **be** a Christian! Let us endeavor   
to forget what the bulk of professors **are**, and begin   
afresh to learn what they **ought** to be.   
  
It is to be feared that **we are corrupting each other**,   
leading each other to be satisfied with a 'conventional   
piety'. Many have been actually the worse for attending   
church. They were more intensely concerned and earnest   
before they came into church fellowship. Their piety  
seemed to come into **an ice house, instead of a hot   
house!** They grew better outside the church—than in the   
church. At first they were surprised and shocked to see . . .  
the lukewarmness,  
the irregularities,   
the worldliness,  
the inconsistencies,   
of many older professors, and exclaimed, with grief   
and disappointment, "Is this the church of Christ!"   
But after a while, **the fatal influence** came over them,   
and their piety sank to the temperature around them!  
  
  
  
**Constant multiplication of corrupted copies**  
  
Our idea of the nature of earnest individual piety must be   
taken, not from the conventional customs of the age—but   
from the Word of God. Once give up the Bible as the only   
true standard of personal piety, and there is no rule left   
but custom, which is ever varying with the opinions and   
corruptions of the times.   
  
Yet how prevalent is the disposition to conform ourselves   
to the prevailing religion of the day and of the church to   
which we belong, and to satisfy ourselves with the average   
measure of piety around us! "I am as good as my fellow  
members!" is the shield with which many a professor   
wards off the allegation of his being below his duty.   
  
This has been the fatal practical error of the church   
through every age of its existence, by which . . .  
its **beauty** has been disfigured,  
its **power** weakened,   
its **usefulness** impeded!  
  
Professing Christians, instead of looking into the perfect standard  
of Scripture, and seeing themselves reflected from that faithful   
mirror, and adjusting their character and conduct by its infallible   
revelations—placed before themselves the standard of the Christian   
profession as it was found in the church of the day, and regulated   
their behavior by what they saw in the prevailing character of their   
fellow Christians.   
  
Thus a **constant multiplication of corrupted copies** has   
ever been going on! And religion, as seen in the conduct of its   
professors, compared with that which is described in the pages   
of its own inspired rule—have been quite different things!

Let us turn away from the religion we see in the church—to the   
religion we read in the Bible! Let us not go to the imperfect and   
blurred copy—but to the perfect and unspotted original! The   
Bible's representation of the nature of true piety is intended   
for us as our guide, and is obligatory upon us!   
  
The inspired, unalterable, and infallible standard of Scripture is . . .  
too spiritual,  
too devout,  
too unearthly,  
too humbling,  
too self-denying,   
for many.  
  
"Deny yourself, and take up your cross, and follow Me!"  
is still the stern, unbending demand of Christ.

**Satan's workshop!**([J. A. James](http://www.gracegems.org/20/James_books.htm), speaking of the power of the press in 1848)  
  
"I don't want Satan to outwit us. After all, we are not  
ignorant about **Satan's scheming**." 2Co 2:11  
  
The press has a great power for evil. Infidel and immoral   
writers are pouring forth a deluge of skepticism and vice,   
which are depositing a pernicious and pestiferous slime   
over the minds of the people.   
  
Let it be imagined, if imagined it can be, what must be   
the state of multitudes in this country, when millions of   
pestiferous publications are annually going out among   
the masses of our population. Let the minds of all   
Christian people dwell upon . . .  
the insult offered to God,  
the ruin brought upon souls,  
the injury done to morals, and  
the mischief perpetrated in the nation,   
by such a state of things!  
  
These ungodly publications originate from **Satan's   
workshop**, and reflect the scenes of that dreadful   
laboratory of mental poison! These authors, printers,   
publishers, booksellers, vendors, by myriads, are all   
busy and indefatigable—**to do what?**   
To destroy the Bible,   
to corrupt the mind,  
to pull down the cross,   
to dethrone God,   
to subvert true religion,   
to turn man into a speaking brute,   
to overturn all morality,   
to poison the springs of domestic happiness,   
to dissolve the ties of social order,   
to involve our country in ruin!   
  
Satan, and all his emissaries upon earth,   
are in earnest in ruining men's souls!  
  
We have an evil to contend with—  
so gigantic in its strength,  
so diffused in its influence all around us,   
so infectious and malignant in its effects!  
  
The enemy is coming in like a flood!   
  
Infidelity and immorality are invading us!   
  
The alarm bell must be rung!

**Every one of those little creatures  
will be either in heaven—or in hell**  
  
"Bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."   
(Eph 6:4)  
  
Fond **mother**, look at that babe hanging on your bosom,   
and those other children sporting around your knee. And   
you, the **father** of the family, watching them indulge in   
joyous emotions and playful expressions—pause, ponder,   
reflect—millions of ages from that moment of domestic   
ecstasy, **every one of those little creatures will be   
either in heaven—or in hell**; will be a seraph—or a   
fiend; will be enduring inconceivable torment—or enjoying   
ineffable felicity; will be be an associate with the devil   
and his demons in everlasting fire—or a companion with   
the innumerable company of angels in everlasting glory!   
  
Overwhelming thought!   
  
How tremendous is the responsibility of a parent! The   
immortal destiny of your children should be your one   
great, commanding, controlling, absorbing object!  
  
  
  
**But you are dead!**  
  
"I know your works; **you have a reputation for  
being alive,** **but you are dead!**" Rev 3:1  
  
One most impressive lessons which is taught here,   
is that churches may have a reputation for being   
in a flourishing condition—and yet be all the while   
in a state of progressive decay!  
  
How many churches are flattering themselves that they   
are in a flourishing condition! The **place** of worship may be   
commodious, elegant, and free from debt. The **minister** may   
be popular, and approved by his flock. The **congregation**   
may be large, respectable, and influential. The **finances** may   
be good, and even prosperous. In short, there may be every   
mark of **external** prosperity—until the church flatters itself  
into the idea of its being in a high state of spiritual health.   
  
But examine its **internal** state! Inquire into its condition as   
viewed by God! Inspect the private conduct of its members  
—and what a different aspect of things is seen then!  
  
How prevalent is **the spirit of the world** in their social   
fellowship! Games and parties, scarcely differing from  
the fashionable circles of the worldly and the mirthful, are   
kept up at much expense, and with every accompaniment   
of frivolity and levity! Let a godly person of devotional taste,   
spiritual affections, and tenderness of conscience, enter into   
the parties of such a congregation—and what a destitution   
of vital piety, and what prevailing worldliness would he find!  
  
Let us look beneath the illusive covering of external   
prosperity—and examine whether disease and decay   
are lurking underneath!   
  
There is often a strange contrast between the   
'heavenliness' which a church professes—and the   
'worldliness' of her conduct.  
  
"For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need  
nothing; not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable,  
poor, blind, and naked." (Rev 3:17)

**Observe the holy virtues**

"In all things see that you are an example of good  
works—holy in your teaching, serious in behavior."  
(Tit 2:7)  
  
Never was there . . .  
a more pure and sincere creature;   
a more dutiful daughter;  
a more harmless and inoffensive being,   
than she was! And yet how did she confess   
and bewail her sinfulness in the sight of God;   
how entirely did she renounce all dependence   
upon her own good doings, and how exclusively   
did she rely upon the righteousness of Christ!  
  
**Observe the holy virtues** which clustered   
in her character . . .  
how profound was her humility  
how gentle her demeanor,  
how striking her meekness,  
how uncomplaining her submission,  
how exemplary her patience,  
how exquisite her benevolence,  
how ardent her zeal,  
how tender her attachments,  
how intense her piety!  
  
And, to crown all, how unmixed was all   
this with any spiritual pride, or any sense   
of superiority, or any sanctimonious airs.   
How much is there for all of us to learn and   
to copy! Be stimulated, encouraged and   
guided by the example of Elizabeth Bales!

"You should be an example to the believers in  
speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity."  
(1Ti 4:12)

**The damnation of one soul**  
  
"For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole  
world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man  
give in exchange for his soul?" (Mat 16:26)  
  
One soul is of more value than the whole world!   
  
The **salvation** of one soul is a greater blessing than   
the temporal deliverance of an empire!   
  
**The damnation of one soul** is a greater calamity   
than the misery of a kingdom for a thousand ages!  
  
"He will also drink the wine of God's wrath, which is  
mixed full strength in the cup of His anger. He will  
be tormented with fire and sulfur in the sight of the  
holy angels and in the sight of the Lamb, and the  
smoke of their torment will go up forever and ever."  
Rev 14:10-11

**Piety and morality**  
  
True religion consists of two parts—**piety and morality**.   
  
By **piety**, I mean a right state of heart towards God, that   
is, the existence of supreme love, arising out of faith in our   
Lord Jesus Christ, manifested by delight in God's nature,   
reverence for His character, obedience to His commands,   
gratitude for His services, and all those acts of worship   
which He has enjoined in His word. True piety is the real,   
intelligent and cordial submission of the whole man, to   
the will of God as revealed in Scripture.  
  
By **morality**, I mean all those moral duties which we owe   
to our fellow-creatures and to ourselves.   
  
True religion is a right state of the soul, not only towards   
God, but also towards man. It must follow us everywhere,   
and influence us in all things, and at all times.   
  
True religion gives an elevation and dignity to the whole   
character, and exalts even the commonest duties of life   
into acts of piety.

**Who can wonder?**"You should be an **example** to the believers in speech,   
in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity." 1Ti 4:12  
Look into some families of professors; follow them   
through the history of only one week, and see . . .  
their worldly mindedness,  
their gaiety,  
their frivolity,  
their unsanctified tempers,  
their worldly reading,  
their amusements,  
their homage to talent,  
their low esteem of holiness,  
their negligence of family prayer,  
their neglect of godly instruction to their children  
—and **who can wonder** that young people, brought   
up amidst such scenes, do not become pious—but go   
off to the world or to sin?  
  
**Too often the children are like their parents**,   
and bring into the church no higher or better kind   
of religion than what they have learned at home!   
And thus a low tone of piety, a lukewarm Laodicean   
spirit, is extended and perpetuated.   
  
There must be a revival of piety in the parents!   
It is vain to expect that a worldly-minded **father**,   
whose spirituality, if he ever had any, has been   
utterly evaporated by the exclusiveness of concern  
about business and politics; or a frivolous, pleasure  
loving **mother**, who thinks far more about adorning   
the bodies of her children, than about saving their   
souls—should be at all concerned about the pious   
education of their children.   
  
Recollect what a solemn thing it is to be a parent!   
What a weighty responsibility attaches to those who   
have the immortal souls of their children committed   
to their care!  
  
"You fathers, don't provoke your children to wrath,  
but nurture them in the discipline and instruction  
of the Lord." (Eph 6:4)

**Take the following maxims for your guide:**(John Angell James, "An Address to the Children" 1855)  
  
1. True piety will be your best friend—for both worlds!   
  
2. The eye of God is always upon you, and   
He is present when no one else is near!   
  
3. Godliness is the best of all things, for it makes   
bitter things sweet—and sweet things sweeter!   
  
4. What a boy would be as a man, let him seek to be  
that while a boy. The boy is the father of the man!   
  
5. Sin is deceitful as well as wicked, leading you to   
commit great sins by first tempting you to little ones;   
and leading you into habits of sin by asking for only  
one sin at a time. "Only this once!" is Satan's way   
of beguiling you into a course of sin. What ought  
not to be done at all—should not be done once!   
  
6. Avoid the first wrong step!  
  
7. There are three things, which if lost, can never   
be recovered—time, opportunity, and the soul!  
  
8. A holy and useful life is more to be desired   
than a long or a prosperous one!   
  
9. To live wholly for ourselves is a poor, base,  
contemptible life!  
  
10. "When all has been heard, the conclusion of the   
matter is: fear God and keep His commands. For God   
will bring every act to judgment, including every hidden   
thing, whether good or evil." (Ecc 12:13-14)

**There is wondrous power in it!**  
  
Saving faith has a great influence on all one's   
feelings, actions, and character. Though there is   
no merit in faith—**there is wondrous power in it!**   
Faith is the inlet both of happiness and holiness   
to the soul. To believe that the eternal God . . .  
is reconciled to us,   
pardons all our sins,   
receives us to His special favor,   
gives us a title to eternal life,   
must from necessity be a source of ineffable   
delight, and the cause of an entire change in   
all our tastes, pursuits, and character!  
  
True faith in Christ is . . .  
the foundation of the believer's happiness,  
the means of his holiness,  
the spring of all his actions,  
the true basis of his character.

**Beautiful bubbles!**  
  
Many are saying, "Who can show us anything good?"   
Look on us with favor, Lord. You have put more joy  
in my heart than they have when their grain and   
new wine abound. (Psa 4:6-7)  
  
There is certainly some pleasure in the gratification of the  
appetites—in the enjoyment of health, friends, property,   
and fame. **Even sinful objects have their pleasures.**   
There could be no power in temptation, if sin yielded no   
enjoyment. But viewing man as a rational, moral, and   
immortal creature; as a sinner subject to the stings of a   
reproachful conscience, and under the displeasure of the   
God he has offended; as liable to all the vicissitudes of a   
tearful existence, and ever exposed to the fear and stroke   
of death—he needs something more for his happiness,  
than can be found in the objects of this world. He has . . .  
**needs** which they cannot supply;  
**cravings** which they cannot satisfy;  
**woes** which they cannot alleviate;   
**anxieties** which they cannot dispel.   
  
For each one that is even tolerably successful in gaining   
felicity from visible objects, there are many who utterly fail.   
Their schemes are frustrated; their hopes perish; **their air   
castles vanish as they journey on in life**. And each   
ends a course of worldly-mindedness, by adding another   
to the millions of examples which have proved this present  
world to be vanity.   
  
In some cases, abundance and unobstructed enjoyment   
produce revulsion. Tired of old pleasures, they look about   
for new ones, and plead the oft-repeated inquiry, "Who will   
show us anything good?" Novelty perhaps comes to the   
relief of their discontented, restless, and dissatisfied minds;   
but novelty itself soon grows old, and still something new   
is wanted. There remains an aching void within, a craving,   
hungry appetite for bliss—unsatisfied, unfed. They hunt for   
enjoyment . . .  
in endless parties of pleasure,  
in every place of amusement,  
in every scene of diversion;  
in the dance, and in the game;  
in the theater, and in the concert;  
amidst the scenes of nature, and  
in the changes of foreign travel.  
But happiness, like a shadow ever flitting before them,   
and **ever eluding their grasp**, tantalizes them with its   
form, without yielding them its substance; and excites   
their hopes—only to disappoint them!  
  
What are all the pleasures of time and sense, all the   
objects of this visible world—but as the **dropping of   
pebbles into a deep chasm**, which, instead of filling   
it up, only tell them how deep it is—by awakening the   
dismal echoes of emptiness and desolation.  
  
Look at the worldling. Does he succeed in his quest for  
happiness? Is he satisfied? Let him possess all he seeks,   
all he wishes, all that earth can furnish; let rank be added   
to wealth, and fame to both; let a constant round of   
fashionable amusements, festive scenes, and elegant   
parties, follow in endless succession, until his cup is full   
to overflowing. What does it all amount to? "All that my   
eyes desired, I did not deny them. I did not refuse myself   
any pleasure. When I considered all that I had accomplished   
and what I had labored to achieve, **I found everything to   
be futile and a pursuit of the wind!** There was nothing   
to be gained under the sun." (Ecclesiastes 2)  
  
Have not multitudes since Solomon's time, made the same   
melancholy confession? Is it not a general admission, that   
the pleasure of worldly objects arises more from hope and   
anticipation—rather than possession? They are like **beautiful   
bubbles**, which, as they float, reflect the colors of the rainbow  
—but dissolve and vanish when grasped! Tell me, votaries of   
earthly good, have you realized what you expected? Are not  
the scenes of festivity and amusement resorted to, by many   
with aching hearts? Does not the smiling countenance often   
conceal a troubled spirit; and is not the laugh resorted to in   
order to suppress the sigh?   
  
Even if it were granted, that the possession of wealth, the   
gratifications of taste, and the indulgence of appetite, could   
give happiness in seasons of health and prosperity—they   
must inevitably fail in the day of sickness and adversity. If   
they were satisfying for a season—**they are all fragile and   
uncertain!** All the enjoyments of this life are like gathered  
flowers, which are no sooner plucked, than they begin to lose   
their beauty and their fragrance while we look at them and   
smell them; and which, however mirthful and beautiful they   
appeared while they were growing—begin to wither as soon   
as they are in our hands!

(Choice devotional selections from   
the works of John Angell James)

**Like a ball and chain around his ankle!**  
  
"Let us throw off everything that hinders and **the  
sin which so easily besets you**." Heb 12:1  
  
**Besetting sins** are powerful hindrances to Christian   
progress. In the case of most people, there is **some   
one sin** to which, either from their situation, taste,  
constitution, or other circumstances—they are more   
powerfully tempted than to others.   
  
**Satan** knows very well what in every case this is, and   
skillfully adapts his temptations to it. **He is an expert   
angler**, and never chooses his bait, or throws his line,   
at random! Independently, however, of him, the very   
tendency of the heart is in that direction.   
  
**That one sin**, whatever it is, while indulged, will hold   
you back! You cannot make progress in holiness, until   
it is mortified. Even its partial indulgence, though it   
may be considerably weakened, will hinder you!  
  
Study then your situation, circumstances, and constitution.   
You cannot be ignorant which temptation and sin, you are   
most liable to succumb to. You must know in what way   
you have most frequently wounded your conscience, and   
occasioned to yourself shame and sorrow.   
  
Is it an unsanctified temper?   
  
Is it an impure imagination?   
  
Is it a proud heart?   
  
Is it a vain mind?   
  
Is it a taste for worldly company?   
  
Is it a proneness to envy and jealousy?   
  
Is it a love of money?   
  
Is it a tendency to exaggeration in speech?   
  
Is it a fondness for pleasure?   
  
Is it a disposition to censoriousness and backbiting?   
  
Study yourselves! Examine your own heart! You must   
find out this matter, and it requires no great pains in   
order to know it. It floats upon the surface of the heart,   
and does not lie hidden in its depths. There, there, is   
your danger! As long as **that one sin**, be it what it may,   
is indulged, you cannot advance in the Christian life!  
  
Other sins are like unnecessary clothing to the racer.   
  
Besetting sins are **like a ball and chain around his ankle!**

**Is this your religion?**

"If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all   
mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith  
that can move mountains, **but have not love,  
I am nothing!**" 1Co 13:2  
  
**LOVE** is a grace which many professing Christians   
think far too little about; but it is of infinite value   
in the eyes of God. Love is the most characteristic   
feature of Christ's image in a renewed man. Love is   
the most precious fruit of grace; and yet the fruit   
which too many of His professed followers seem to   
think themselves hardly under any obligation to   
cultivate.  
  
**Christian love** is that benevolent disposition   
or kindness, which consists in good-will to all   
creatures, and which leads us, as we have   
opportunity, to promote their happiness.  
  
The apostle has given us a description of the   
exercises of this noble and god-like principle.   
  
"Love is patient" and forbearing under injuries   
and annoyances—and does not revile, revenge,   
or retaliate.   
  
"Love is kind," not harsh or crude—but ever ready,   
willing, and pleased by looks, words, and actions,   
to promote the comfort of others.   
  
"Love does not envy." It does not pine and grieve   
at the sight of another's superior possessions, fame,   
happiness, or piety—and dislike him on that account.   
  
"Love does not boast. Love is not proud." It neither   
boasts its own gifts, achievements, and possessions,   
nor despises others, nor makes insulting comparisons  
—but is humble and gentle.   
  
"Love does not behave unseemly." It modestly keeps  
its place, and does nothing to offend by what is   
unfitting its rank, station, or circumstances.   
  
"Love seeks not her own." It does not selfishly want   
to have its own way, or promote its own interest—to   
the neglect of others.   
  
"Love is not easily provoked." It governs its temper,   
controls its passions, and is not soon or unreasonably   
irritable or petulant.   
  
"Love thinks no evil." It is not censorious, nor forward   
to impute a bad motive to a doubtful action—but is   
disposed to put the best construction on the actions   
and words of others.   
  
"Love rejoices not in iniquity—but rejoices in the truth."   
It does not delight in the sins—but in the excellences   
of an opponent.   
  
"Love bears (or covers) all things." It does not divulge,   
proclaim, aggravate faults—but hides them as far as it   
can, and it is right to do so.  
  
"Love believes all things," that are to the advantage   
of another.   
  
"Love hopes all things," where there is not sufficient   
evidence to authorize belief.   
  
"Love endures all things," bears hardships, sustains   
labor, makes sacrifices—in order to accomplish its   
purposes of good-will.   
  
Such is love in exercise and act. This is benevolence  
—this is a regard to the happiness of others. Whoever   
acts thus, must promote happiness. He must bless all   
around him. All things smile in his presence.   
  
Beautiful description! Heavenly temper! Godlike mind!

Now, dear friends, **look at love!** Gaze upon . . .  
its lovely form,   
its beautiful countenance,   
its graceful actings.

Observe its seraphic glow, its divine temper, until you   
are all enamored with its charms. But look at it not only   
as something to be admired—but to be possessed and   
practiced. Unless this is your temperament, you are not  
Christians. I do not say you cannot be Christians unless   
you have love in perfection. But you must have the   
principle of love, and must be living in its exercise. You   
are Christians no further than you live under its influence.

No matter what knowledge you may have of the doctrines   
of the gospel; what seeming faith you may possess; what   
zeal you may manifest; what liberality you may exercise;   
what regularity, and punctuality in attendance upon the   
means of grace, you may maintain—if love is lacking, all   
this is of no avail.

**Nothing can be a substitute for love.**

Christianity is love . . .   
not a slavish attendance on ceremonies;   
not receiving the sacraments;  
not zeal for orthodoxy;  
not a form of church government;  
not belonging to any particular church.

God's eternal thoughts and purposes in **election**,   
Christ's **redeeming** work upon the cross,   
the Spirit's omnipotent agency in **regeneration**,   
are not merely to bring us under a particular   
ecclesiastical regimen—but to deliver us from   
the dominion of selfishness, and place us under   
the reign of love—and thus make us like God!  
  
If an individual is destitute of love, he has no   
saving religion. He may be zealous for the forms   
of Christianity, but he is destitute of its living spirit.  
  
And now, my dear friends, let me entreat you to   
examine yourselves concerning this great essential   
of the Christian character. Are you experimentally   
acquainted with this disposition? **Is this your   
religion?** Is your temperament thus molded? Is   
that one word 'love' characteristic of your spirit?   
Has God's love to you, changed you into its own   
likeness? Do you know what it is to have pride,   
passion, envy, malice, selfishness—subdued,   
repressed, resisted—by a meek, gentle, lowly,   
forgiving, forbearing, generous, self-denying   
temper? Are the harshness, hardness, asperity   
of the fallen nature, displaced by the softness,   
sweetness, and kindness of true love?

**They shall not swoon, nor halt, nor turn back**  
  
How full of encouragement is the language of the   
prophet Isaiah, "But those who hope in the Lord will   
find new strength. They will **fly** high on wings like   
eagles. They will **run** and not grow weary. They will   
**walk** and not be faint." Isa 40:31  
  
This beautiful passage contains a promise of **continued   
supplies of grace and strength** to all who really desire to   
serve the Lord with integrity and simplicity. In the image   
of the **eagle**, the prophet alludes to the strength of wing  
and of vision possessed by this noble bird—whereby it   
ascends to a lofty height, untired and undazzled—soaring   
even above the fogs and mists of the lower regions of the   
air, mounting above the very clouds, undeterred by the   
lightning, and floating in the pure azure above!  
  
Thus shall all who hope in the Lord rise higher and higher,   
upon the mighty wings of strong devotion, and with the   
unblinking eye of faith—into the regions of heavenly  
mindedness; and shall approach nearer and nearer to   
God—the sun of our spiritual day.  
  
"They will **run**" in the heavenly race, for the crown of   
immortal glory, "and not grow weary." Their strength,  
instead of being exhausted, shall, contrary to what   
occurs in bodily effort—be increased by exertion. No   
length nor greatness of labor shall be too much for   
them. God shall pour into their souls, **fresh energy   
for every fresh effort**.   
  
"They will **walk** and not be faint." Their pilgrimage   
may be arduous; the road may be long and rugged;   
often up steep ascents, and down into deep and rocky   
crags, where every step is a labor—but they shall not   
lose heart or hope; **they shall not swoon, nor halt,   
nor turn back**—but go forwards, **sustained by a   
power greater than their own!**

**Dethroned—but not destroyed!**  
  
"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no  
good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to  
perform that which is good I find not." Rom 7:18  
  
A Christian is truly regenerated—but at the same   
time only partially sanctified.   
  
**Sin is dethroned—but not destroyed!**  
  
His predominant taste and disposition are holy—  
but godly principles may not yet have struck   
their roots very deep into his soul.   
  
His holy purposes are somewhat vacillating, and   
his inclinations to evil sometimes strong.  
  
We have the burden of our fleshly corruptions to   
carry, which without great labor and effort, will   
sadly retard us in our Christian lives.  
  
We are like a traveler who is on a smooth road, has   
fine weather, is intimately acquainted with the way,   
and has agreeable and helpful companions—but who   
at the same time is very lame, or has a load to carry.   
His lameness or his load will be a great delay to him.   
His attention must be directed to these things. He   
must cure the one or lighten the other, or he will   
make slow progress.

**A poor, weak, and trembling creature**  
  
"He will feed His flock like a shepherd. He will carry  
**the lambs** in His arms, holding them close to His  
heart." Isa 40:11  
  
Dwell upon the love and tenderness of our Lord Jesus!  
  
Notice who are **the objects of His care**—"the lambs,"   
which means not only those of tender age—but also   
those who have been newly converted; those who are   
young in Christian experience; and also those whose   
temperament is naturally timid, whose strength is   
feeble, and whose danger is great.   
  
Yes, you are **the objects of Christ's special attention,   
care, and solicitude!** You are those whom He takes up   
in the arms of His power—and lays on the bosom of His   
love! He knows . . .  
your weakness,  
your timidity,  
your dangers!   
  
He will exert for you . . .  
His tenderest **sympathy**,  
His greatest **vigilance**,   
His mightiest **power**.  
  
This expression however not only conveys the idea of   
great care of the weak—but the exercise of that care   
with a view to their preservation and growth. It means   
not only that He cordially receives them, will provide   
for their safety, be concerned for their comfort, and   
will accommodate His conduct to their needs—but He   
will also nourish them through their infant existence,   
and raise them up to maturity and strength.   
  
Let every **lamb** of the flock of Christ, therefore, go to  
Him by faith and prayer, and say, "Blessed Jesus,I   
come to you as **a poor, weak, and trembling creature**,   
doubtful of my own continuance, and alarmed at my   
numerous difficulties and enemies. **I am but a lamb**,   
and often fear I shall never be anything better. But   
was it not in regard to such weakness that You have   
been pleased to utter these gracious and tender words?   
I flee to you as the helpless lamb to its shepherd—when   
hungry, to feed it—or when pursued by wild beasts, that   
he may defend it. Lord, take me in the arms of Your power   
and lay me on the bosom of Your love—though I am so   
poor and helpless a creature. I will hope in your nurturing   
power and love, that I shall continue to grow, and that   
You will one day rejoice in me, as one of the flock which   
You have purchased with Your own blood!"

**This pleasure-loving, pleasure-seeking,   
and pleasure-inventing age**

**A taste for worldly amusements** will inevitably prove,   
wherever it is indulged—a powerful obstacle to growth   
in grace.   
  
Man is unquestionably made for enjoyment. He has a   
capacity for bliss—an instinctive appetite for gratification;   
and for this, God has made ample provision of a healthful   
and lawful kind. But "a taste for worldly pleasure" means   
that this God-given capacity is directed to wrong sources,   
or carried to an excess.   
  
Now there are some amusements which in their very  
nature are so utterly incompatible with true godliness,   
that a **liking** for them, and a **hankering** after them, and   
especially an **indulgence** in them—cannot exist with real,   
earnest, and serious piety.   
  
The dissolute parties of the glutton and the drunkard;   
the fervency for the gambling-table; the pleasures of   
the race-course; the performances of the theater—are  
all of this kind. **A taste for them is utterly uncongenial   
with a spirit of godliness!** So is a love for the gay and   
fashionable entertainments of the ball-room, and the   
wanton parties of the upper classes. These are all   
unfriendly to true religion, and are usually renounced   
by people intent upon the momentous concerns of   
eternity.  
  
We would not doom to perdition, all who are at any   
time found in this round of worldly pleasure—but we   
unhesitatingly say, that a taste for them is entirely   
opposed to the whole spirit of Christianity! They are   
all included in that "world" which is overcome by faith   
and the new birth.   
  
True religion is, though a **happy**, a very **serious**   
thing—and can no more live and flourish in the   
uncongenial atmosphere of those parties, than   
could a young tender plant survive, if brought   
into a frigid zone!  
  
But in **this pleasure-loving, pleasure-seeking, and   
pleasure-inventing age**, there is a great variety of   
amusements perpetually rising up, which it would be   
impossible to say are sinful, and therefore unlawful.   
Yet the 'supposition of their lawfulness' viewed in   
connection with their abundance, variety, and constant   
repetition, is the very thing that makes them dangerous   
to the spirit of true religion.  
  
**A taste for even lawful worldly amusements**, which   
leads its possessor to be **fond** of them, **seeking** them,   
and **longing** for them—shows a mind that is in a very   
doubtful state as to vital piety.   
  
A Christian is not to partake of the pleasures of the   
world, merely to prove that his religion does not debar   
him from enjoyment. But he is to let it be seen by his   
"peace which passes understanding," and his "joy   
unspeakable and full of glory," that his godliness   
gives far more enjoyment than it takes away—that,   
in fact, it gives him the truest happiness!  
  
The way to win a worldly person to true religion is not   
to go and partake of his amusements; but to prove to   
him, that we are happier with our pleasures—than he   
is with his; that we bask in full sunshine—while he has   
only a smoking candle; that we have found the "river   
of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the   
throne of God and the Lamb"—while he is drinking of   
the muddy streams which issue from the earth!  
  
"Many are asking, 'Who can show us any good?'  
Let the light of your face shine upon us, O Lord.   
**You have filled my heart with greater joy** than   
when their grain and new wine abound!" Psa 4:6-7  
  
After all, it is freely admitted—  
1. That true religion is not hostile to anything   
which is not hostile to it.  
2. That many things which are not strictly pious,   
though not opposed to piety—may be lawfully   
enjoyed by the Christian.  
3. That what he has to do in this matter is not to   
practice total abstinence—but "moderation".  
4. Yet the Christian should remember how elastica term "moderation" is, and to be vigilant lest his   
moderation should continually increase its latitude,   
until it has swelled into the imperial tyranny of an   
appetite which acknowledges no authority—and   
submits to no restraint!

**Growing worse?**  
  
One of the last lessons we effectually learn, is   
that true godliness is a constant conflict in a  
believer's heart—between sin and holiness.   
  
Some sincere believers mistake a clearer view, and   
deeper sense of their depravity, for an actual increase   
of sin. The Christian seems sometimes to himself, to   
be **growing worse**, when actually it is only that he   
sees more clearly what in fact he really is!  
  
In the early stages of our Christian life, we have   
usually but a slender acquaintance with the evil   
of our sinfulness, and the depravity of our heart.   
The mind is so much taken up with pardon and   
eternal life, that it is but imperfectly acquainted   
with those depths of deceit and wickedness,  
which lie hidden in itself.   
  
At first we seem to feel as if the **serpent** were killed.  
But we soon find that he was only asleep—for by the   
warmth of some fiery temptation, **he is revived and   
hisses at us again!**   
  
Nothing astonishes an inexperienced believer more   
than the discoveries he is continually making of the   
evils of his heart. Corruptions which he never dreamt to   
be in him, are brought out by some new circumstances.  
  
It is like turning up the **soil**, which brings out worms   
and insects, which did not appear upon the surface.   
  
Or to vary the illustration, his increasing knowledge   
of God's holy nature, of the perfect law, and the   
example of Christ—is like opening the shutters, and   
**letting light into a dark room**, the filth of which,   
the inhabitant did not see until the sunbeams   
disclosed it to him.  
  
  
  
**As your Biblical knowledge widens**

There are many who regard an increasing acquaintance   
with the text of the Bible, as an evidence of growth in   
grace.   
  
Ask yourselves the solemn question. In proportion as   
you store your **minds** with biblical texts and biblical   
ideas—are you all the while seeking to have your  **heart** filled with biblical feelings, and your **life** with   
biblical actions?   
  
As you grow in acquaintance with the character of **God**—  
do you reverence Him more? As your ideas brighten on the   
person of **Christ**—do you love Him more? As you become   
more acquainted with the perfection and spirituality of   
God's **Word**—do you delight in it more? As you see more   
clearly the evil of **sin**—do you hate it with a more intense   
hatred?   
  
**As your Biblical knowledge widens**, do you become . . .  
more profoundly humble,  
more tenderly conscientious,  
more gentle,  
more spiritual?   
  
Unless this is the case, you are in a fatal mistake by   
supposing that you are making progress in the divine   
life, merely because you are advancing in biblical   
knowledge.  
  
  
 **We live by faith**  
  
"**We live by faith**, not by sight." 2Co 5:7  
  
Faith is the root of all true piety. Christians need faith  
for sanctification, consolation, and perseverance. Every   
act of the spiritual life is an act of faith. Every step in   
the spiritual walk is a step of faith. The Christian's   
course is not one of merely 'doing', but of believing.  
  
His **prayers** are the breathings of faith;   
his **works** are the actings of faith;   
his **penitence** is the tear of faith;   
his **joy** is the smile of faith;   
his **hopes** are the anticipations of faith;  
his **fears** are the tremblings of faith;   
his **strength** is the confidence of faith;   
his **submission** is the acquiescence of faith.   
  
Faith is the **eye** which looks at Christ.

Faith is the **foot** which moves to Christ.

Faith is the **hand** which receives Christ.

Faith is the **mouth** which feeds upon Christ.  
  
It is not only by the activity of obedience, but by   
the 'silent and passive power of dependence', that   
the Christian is made strong and victorious.   
  
"**We live by faith**, not by sight." Here is the reason   
why so many professors are so worldly and so weak;   
why they make such little progress, and such small   
attainments. They are so much under the dominion   
of sense, and are so almost wholly given up to **a life   
of sight**, that they have neither time nor inclination   
to look at the things which are unseen and eternal.   
  
There is in them no habitual looking to Christ, no   
abiding in Him, no vivid consciousness that all their   
springs are in Him, and that it is from His fullness   
they are to receive necessary grace.   
  
We must prefer **the invisible realities of eternity**, to   
the visible things of time; and amid all that is . . .  
dazzling to sight,  
gratifying to appetite,  
and dear to passion,  
**by faith, spend a life of . . .**  
self-denial,  
mortification of sin, and  
separation from the world.  
  
Be this then your sincere and earnest prayer, my dear   
friends, "**Lord, increase our faith!**" Be willing to have   
the world displaced from your soul, to make room for the   
objects of faith! Be ever ready to come from **the dazzling   
glare of earthly scenes**, to dwell in the calm and holy light   
of faith. Study the Scriptures, and meditate much upon their   
contents. Frequent and devout converse with the objects of   
faith, is the best way to have it increased.   
  
Watch diligently against the influence of those **objects   
which have a fatal tendency** to eclipse faith's light, to   
obstruct its operation, and enfeeble its life—namely,  
sensual pleasure; eager pursuit of the world; and a too   
intimate converse with those who mind earthly things.

**To live and walk by faith**  
  
"The life I live in the body, **I live by faith in the Son of  
God**, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Gal 2:20  
  
**To live and walk by faith**, is to come daily to Jesus in  
the exercise of fresh dependence, fresh expectations,   
and fresh devotedness.  **To live and walk by faith**, is to see more of His glory and   
grace continually, and to rejoice greater in His unsearchable   
riches, and inexhaustible fullness.   
  
**To live and walk by faith**, is in all our conflicts, sins, fears,   
weaknesses, and woes—to resort afresh to Jesus, with a full   
persuasion that we are welcome, and thus ever to derive   
strength and courage from Him.

**A little more comfort, luxury, or elegance**  
  
"During supper, a woman came in with a beautiful  
jar of expensive perfume. She broke the seal and  
poured the perfume over His head." Mar 14:3  
  
"**She did what she could!**" Mar 14:8  
  
Have you, like your devoted sister of Bethany, done   
what you could? Take an inventory of the means   
which the Lord has put into your hands for honoring   
Him, and then look over the list of your contributions.   
  
What proportion does your annual giving to the   
cause of Christ bear, compared to the cost of . . .  
your furniture,  
your wardrobe,  
your entertainments,  
your ornaments and decorations,  
your luxuries?   
  
Jesus did not withhold from you His very precious   
blood! What are you willing to do for Him? What   
beautiful jar of expensive perfume **have** you   
broken, **will** you break for Him?   
  
It is sorrowful to see professing Christians wholly   
taken up in getting wealth for themselves—either   
hoarding it up—or spending it in the luxuries that   
constitute "the pride of life."  
  
Consider, I entreat you, the different **results** of the   
money you spend upon yourselves—and that which   
you spend upon Christ. The money you spend selfishly  
perishes in the using. The money you spend for the   
cause of Christ acquires an imperishable existence.   
  
What you spend in the comforts and elegancies of   
life—and what you hoard unnecessarily—dies with   
you, when you die. But the wealth which, under the   
influence of pure motives, we devote to Christ, will   
never die. It is immortal and incorruptible.  
  
Oh Christians! how is it that we can cheat ourselves   
of such heavenly felicity and eternal honor, merely to   
have **a little more comfort, luxury, or elegance** here?   
Why do we impoverish ourselves in the eternal world,   
to enrich ourselves in this present world?  
  
Oh God! Bestow upon us Your grace, that when   
we meet You in judgment, we may hear this   
commendatory testimony from Your gracious   
lips, **"They did what they could!"**

**Our recreations and entertainments**  
  
"So whether you eat or drink or **whatever you do**,  
do it all for the glory of God." 1Co 10:31  
  
Our piety should appear in **our recreations and   
entertainments**, separating us from the follies   
and amusements of the world; allowing neither   
what is polluting, nor what is frivolous.   
  
True piety should not only keep us from the   
theater, the ball-room, and the public concert;  
but should prevent us from turning our own   
homes into the 'resorts of fashion', and the   
scenes of light and dissipating entertainments.

**A sublime fiction**  
  
"Their destiny is destruction . . . **their mind is on  
earthly things.**" Php 3:19  
  
This is the description given by the apostle, of the   
predominant taste and pursuits of the men of the   
world.  
  
Sadly, this also describes a large proportion of those  
who have 'professed' to come out from the world, and   
to be a people separated unto God. How engrossed are   
they, not only in the business, but in the cares, the love,   
and the enjoyment of earthly vanities! Who would imagine,   
to see their **conduct**, to hear their **conversation**, to observe   
their **spirit**—so undevout, and so worldly—that these were   
the men, who have heaven in their eye and heart, as their   
eternal destiny? We would be inclined to think, that to   
them, **heaven is nothing more than . . .**  
a mere name,  
**a sublime fiction**,  
a sacred vision,   
which, with all its splendor, has scarcely power   
enough to engage their thoughts and fix their   
regards! **How little effect has heaven . . .**  
to elevate them above a predominant earthly-mindedness,  
to comfort them in trouble,  
to minister to their happiness,  
to mortify their corruptions.  
  
Can it be that **they** are seeking for, and going to glory,   
honor, and immortality—who think so little about it, and   
derive so small a portion of their enjoyment from the   
expectation of it?  
  
"Their destiny is destruction . . . **their mind is on  
earthly things.**" Php 3:19

**Holiness**  
  
"You ought to live holy and godly lives." 2Pe 3:11  
  
**Holiness** is a very comprehensive word, and expresses   
a state of mind and conduct that includes many things.   
  
Holiness is the work of the Spirit in our sanctification.   
  
Holiness is the fruit of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.   
  
Holiness is the operation of the new nature, which   
we receive in regeneration.   
  
Holiness may be viewed in various aspects, according   
to the different objects to which it relates.   
  
Toward **God**, holiness is . . .  
supreme love;  
delight in His moral character;  
submission to His will;  
obedience to His commands;  
zeal for His cause;  
seeking of His glory.   
  
Toward **Christ**, holiness is . . .  
a conformity to His example,  
imbibing His spirit.  
  
Toward **man**, holiness is . . .  
charity,  
integrity,  
truth,  
mercy.   
  
Toward **sin**, holiness is a hatred of all iniquity,  
a tender conscience easily wounded by little sins,   
and scrupulously avoiding them; together with a   
laborious, painful, self-denying, mortification of   
all the known corruptions of our heart.  
  
Toward **self**, holiness is . . .  
the control of our fleshly appetites;  
the eradication of our pride;  
the mortification of our selfishness.   
  
Toward **divine things in general**, holiness is . . .  
spirituality of mind,   
the habitual current of godly thought,  
godly affections flowing through the soul.  
  
And, toward the **objects of the unseen world**,  
holiness is heavenly-mindedness, a turning away   
from things seen and temporal, to things unseen   
and eternal.   
  
Oh, what a word is holiness! How much does   
it comprehend! How little is it understood, and   
how much less is it practiced!

**Honor, wealth, and pleasure lose their charms**

"Before I was **afflicted** I went astray, but now I obey Your   
word. It was good for me to be **afflicted!**" Psa 119:67, Psa 119:71  
  
**Afflictions tend to wean us from the world—and to fix   
our affections on things above.**   
  
We are all too worldly!  
  
We gravitate too much to earth!   
  
**Our feet stick in the mire**, and we do not soar aloft on the   
wings of faith and hope into the regions above, as we ought.   
  
We are like moles—when we should be like eagles!  
  
Hence the **need**, and the **benefit** too, of afflictions.   
  
How differently things look, when seen from the chamber   
of **sickness**—or the **grave** of a loved one! **Honor, wealth,   
and pleasure lose their charms** then, and present no beauty,   
that we should desire them. We then seem to regard the   
world as an impostor which has deceived us, and turn from   
it with disgust!  
  
**The loss of a loved one**, does more to prove the truth of   
Solomon's description of the 'vanity of everything beneath   
the sun', than all the sermons we have ever heard, and all   
the volumes we have ever read!

**The divine Craftsman**

"God disciplines us for our good, that we may  
share in His holiness." Heb 12:10  
  
God does not afflict His children willingly. He takes   
no delight in seeing our tears—or hearing our groans.   
But He does take delight in . . .  
doing us good,  
making us holy,  
conforming us to His own image, and  
fitting us to dwell in His own presence.   
  
He treats us as the sculptor does the marble under   
his hand, which **from a rough unsightly mass**, he   
intends to carve into a splendid statue—a glorious   
work of art. Every application of the **chisel**, every   
blow of the **mallet**, is to strike off some bit of the   
stone, which must be removed to bring out the   
figure in perfection, which he designs to form.   
  
In our case, how much is necessary to be struck off   
from our corrupt nature, before we can be brought   
into that form and beauty which it is the intention of  **the divine Craftsman** that we should bear. How much . . .  
pride,  
vanity,  
carnality,  
worldly-mindedness,  
self-sufficiency,  
independence,  
creature-love,  
earthly dependence;   
must be removed by each blow of the mallet, and   
each cut of the chisel, before the beauties of . . .  
holiness,  
humility,  
meekness,   
heavenly-mindedness;   
and all the graceful proportions and features   
of His own image, can be exhibited in us.

**The design of the divine Artist**

"And we know that all things work together for good  
to those who love God, to those who are the called  
according to His purpose." Rom 8:28  
  
In this present world, you may never see how the death   
of your husband is for good. Many go all their lives without   
having the 'mystifying characters' of the sad event deciphered  
—and the secret workings of God's love laid open. They die   
in ignorance of His plans—though not of His purposes.   
  
The 'finished side' of the embroidery may never be turned to   
you here; and looking only at the tangled threads and dark   
colors of the 'back part'—**all now appears to be in confusion!**  
  
But when the 'front view' shall be seen; and **the design   
of the divine Artist**; and all the connections of the finely   
embroidered piece shall be pointed out; and the coloring   
shall be shown in the light of eternity—with what adoring   
wonder, delight, and gratitude will you exclaim, as the   
'whole picture' bursts upon your sight, "O the depth of   
the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How   
unsearchable are His methods! How unfathomable are   
His ways! All things have worked together for my good!"  
  
You shall trace together the providential events of your   
earthly history. You shall learn why you were united—and   
why separated. You shall see the wisdom and goodness   
of those events, which once appeared so dark, and drew   
so many tears from your eyes. You shall indulge in   
reminiscences, all of which will furnish . . .  
new occasions of wonder;  
new motives to praise; and  
new sources of delight!  
  
You shall point one another to the vista of everlasting   
ages opening before you, through which an endless   
succession of joys are advancing to meet you! And   
then, filled with a pure, unearthly love for each other,   
you shall fall down before the throne of the Lamb,   
and feel every other affection absorbed in supreme,   
adoring love to Him!   
  
Such a scene is before you! And since it is—then bear   
your sorrows, afflicted widow—for in what felicities   
are they to result—and how soon!   
  
"And we know that all things work together for good  
to those who love God, to those who are the called  
according to His purpose." Rom 8:28

**A lamb with a wolf's head!**

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ  
Jesus." Php 2:5  
  
Christians should excel in the manifestation of Christ's  
character. The mind which was in Jesus, should be in   
them. They should consider His character as a model   
of their own; and be **conspicuous** for their . . .  
poverty of spirit,  
meekness,  
gentleness,  
and love.   
  
It is matter of surprise and regret, that many people   
seem to think that Christianity has nothing to do with   
character! And that provided they are free from gross   
sins, and have lively feelings in devotional exercises,   
they may be as **petulant**, **irritable**, and **implacable** as   
they please! This is a dreadful error, and has done   
great mischief to the cause of God!  
  
**A sour, ill-natured Christian**, is like **a lamb with a   
wolf's head!** Or like a dovewith a vulture's beak!  
  
If there be any one word which above all others should  
describe a Christian's character, it is that which represents   
his divine Father; and as it is said, that 'God is love', so   
should it be also affirmed, that **a Christian is love**—love   
embodied, an incarnation of love! His words, his conduct,   
his very looks—should be so many expressions of love!  
  
"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving  
each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be  
imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children  
and **live a life of love**, just as Christ loved us and  
gave Himself up for us!" Ephesians 4:32-5:2 (Eph 4:32; Eph 5:1-2)  
  
  
  
**The beauties of social virtue**  
  
A Christian should be very eminent for a right discharge   
of all their social duties. Christianity, so far from loosening  
the bands of society, adds to them incredible strength and   
firmness, by motives drawn from the eternal world. One part   
of the design of Christianity is to purify and strengthen the   
social principle, and carry it to its greatest elevation and   
perfection.   
  
A good Christian—and yet a bad husband, father,   
brother, neighbor, or citizen—is an anomaly.  
  
Professing Christians should excel all others in **the   
beauties of social virtue**. True religion should give . . .   
additional tenderness to the **marital** relationship;  
greater love to the Christian **parent**;   
loving obedience to the Christian **child**;  
fresh kindness to the Christian **employer**;  
diligence to the Christian **employee**.   
  
The world should look to the church with this conviction,   
"Well, if social virtue were driven from every other portion   
of society, it would find a sanctuary, and be cherished with   
care, among Christians." Then will Christianity have   
attained its highest recognition upon earth, when it shall   
be admitted by universal consent, that to say a man is a   
Christian, is an indisputable testimony to his excellence   
in all the relationships he bears to society.

**"Beware of the dog!"**  
  
"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient,  
bearing with one another in love." Eph 4:2.  
  
There are some people whose feelings are like dry straw  
—kindled into a blaze in a moment, by the least spark   
which has been purposely or accidentally thrown upon it.   
A word, or a look—is in some cases quite enough to be   
considered a very serious injury! It is a common thing   
for such people to excuse themselves on the ground that   
'their **feelings** are so delicate'—that they are offended by   
the least touch! This is a humiliating confession, for it is   
acknowledging that, instead of being like the oak of the   
forest, which laughs at the tempest, and is unmoved by   
the tread of the wild boar—they resemble the sensitive   
plant, a little squeamish shrub, which trembles before the  
breeze, and shrivels and contracts beneath the pressure   
of a tiny insect!  
  
**Delicate feelings!!** In plain English, this means that they   
are petulant, irritable and peevish! I would like to have a   
sign hung around the neck of such people—and it would   
be this, **"Beware of the dog!"**  
  
We should never allow ourselves to be offended, until,   
at least, we are sure that offense was intended; and   
this is really not so often as we are apt to conclude.   
Had we but patience to wait, or humility to inquire, we   
would find that many hurtful things were done by mistake,   
which we are prone to attribute to design. How often do   
we violate that love which thinks no evil, and which   
imperatively demands of us to attribute a good motive   
to another's conduct—until a bad motive is proved!   
  
Let us then deliberately determine, that, by God's grace,   
**we will not be easily offended**. If such a resolution were   
generally made and kept, offenses would cease. Let us   
first ascertain whether offense was **intended**, before we   
allow the least emotion of anger to be indulged. And   
even then, when we have proved that the offense was   
committed on purpose, let us next ask ourselves whether   
it is **necessary** to notice it. What wise man will think it   
worth while, when an insect has stung him, to pursue it  
all day, in order to punish the aggressor?

**OUR church?!**  
  
"I will build **My church**." Mat 16:18  
  
The power of a church is simply a right to put their   
own interpretation upon the laws of Christ, and to   
obey His laws, in the way which they think will be   
most agreeable to Him.   
  
This is neither understood nor remembered with as   
much distinctness as it should be. Hence it is a very   
usual thing for churches to consider themselves as   
met to make laws, and set in order the affairs of   
the spiritual kingdom. A great deal is said about   
"**our** church," and "rules that **we** have established   
in **our** church." **OUR church?!** When did it become   
OURS? **The church is Christ's!** The rules WE have   
established?! The sole right of making laws, is with   
Him to whom the church belongs!   
  
The church is a kingdom, of which Christ is sole   
monarch! The New Testament is His spiritual code,   
and all the power we have, is to execute the laws   
which He has already established!  
  
In the whole business of church government, we   
are to acknowledge His authority, and consider   
ourselves as doing His will. Nothing is left . . .  
to our will,  
to our wisdom,  
to our caprice;  
but in all things we are to be guided by **the   
law of Jesus**, as laid down in His Word!  
  
In the choice of officers, in the admission of members, in   
the exercise of discipline—we are not to act upon views   
and principles of our own. We are to be guided by those   
we find in the New Testament. We have no power to   
legislate; but merely to interpret the His law—and obey.  
  
When we meet, Christ is in the midst of us, not only by   
His essential presence—but by His revealed will. Every   
authoritative voice is hushed—but that which speaks to   
us from the sacred Word of God.   
  
When a **new member** is proposed, we are not to ask,  
"Is he such a one as we think will add respectability   
to our church? is he of long standing in the ways of   
God? is he peculiar in his habits?" Our only question   
is, "Is he one who Christ has received as His child?"   
  
When a **new measure** is submitted for our adoption,   
we are not first to inquire into its policy; but whether   
it is in exact accordance with the general principles   
and spirit of the New Testament.   
  
**Every act of church government** must be an explicit   
acknowledgment of the authority of Jesus, as King of   
HIS church, and an act of obedience to HIS laws!  
  
It is impossible for this sentiment to be stated too   
frequently or too forcibly. It lays the axe to the root   
of **all the errors on church government**, which have   
crept into the world.

**There is the image of Christ!**  
"Let this mind be in you, which was also in  
Christ Jesus." Php 2:5  
  
Press right home to your conscience the question,  
"**What do I have of the mind of Christ?**" Does my   
heart answer, does my disposition correspond, to   
the holy, meek, humble, forgiving, benevolent,   
patient, self-denying mind of Christ? Do men who   
know the beauty and glory of the Original, as it is   
delineated on the page of the gospel, when they   
see me, say, "**There is the image of Christ!**"   
  
Or do they look skeptically on, and after standing   
in silence for some time, profess they can see little   
or no resemblance? Oh, be satisfied with nothing   
short of a copy of Christ's heart into yours!  
  
  
  
**A love for pleasure, diversion and recreation**  
  
One characteristic of our age is an ever-growing taste   
for **elegance, refinement, and luxurious gratification**.   
  
But just in proportion as we multiply the 'attractions of   
earth'—is the danger of our making it our all—and leaving   
heaven out of sight. This is now affecting the church, and   
the godly and self-denying spirit of our practical Christianity   
is in danger of being weakened, and of degenerating into a   
soft and sickly wastefulness.   
  
Elegance, extravagance, luxurious entertainments   
and expensive feasts, are beginning to corrupt the   
simplicity that is in Christ. And amid our . . .  
sumptuous homes,  
gorgeous furniture,  
costly dress, and  
mirthful decorations,   
professors of religion are setting their affections too   
much upon things upon earth, and turning away from   
the glory of the cross—to the vanities of the world!  
  
Akin to this, is a continually augmenting desire after   
**amusement**, for which droves are constantly yearning.  
**A love for pleasure, diversion and recreation**, is an   
ever-increasing appetite—and there are those who are   
ever ingenious and ever busy to supply its demands.  
Men are continually inventing new kinds of diversions  
and endless devices, to blot from the mind all   
considerations of eternity.  
  
The people, it is affirmed, must have recreation.   
Be it so—but let it be of a healthful kind—a taste   
for wholesome literature, quiet home enjoyments,  
and, above all, the sacred delights of true piety.  
  
Who will call them off from these 'painted nothings',   
and make them feel how vain are all these things?   
Who will set up a barricade against the billows of   
this ocean of worldly-mindedness, and guard the   
piety of the church from being entirely swept away   
by a flood of worldliness and ungodliness?

**Humility** is the crowning grace, the finishing   
stroke of beauty, and the brightest ray of glory,   
in the Christian character.  
  
  
  
**A godly ministry**  
  
We can do nothing without **a godly ministry**. Of all   
the curses which God ever pours from the vials of   
His wrath upon a nation which He intends to scourge,   
there is not one so fearful as giving them up to an   
unholy ministry.   
  
I trust our churches will ever consider **piety** as the   
first and most essential qualification in their pastors,   
for which talents, genius, learning, and eloquence,   
would and could be no substitutes. It will be a dark   
and evil day when personal godliness shall be   
considered as secondary to any other quality in   
those who serve at the altar of God.  
  
No ministry will be really effective, whatever may   
be its eloquence, which is not a ministry of . . .  
strong faith,   
true spirituality, and  
deep earnestness.

**Dead things never grow!**  
  
"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.  
He cuts off every branch in Me that bears **no fruit**,  
while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes  
so that it will be even more fruitful." Joh 15:1-2  
  
Why is it that so many professing Christians make   
no spiritual progress, and indeed make no efforts  
to grow in grace? Why? Because they care nothing   
about it! To take up a 'mere profession' is all they   
desire; but to proceed from one degree of piety to   
another; to grow in grace—is no part of their desire.  
  
What! No solicitude to have more . . .  
experimental knowledge of truth,  
faith in Christ,   
likeness to God,   
fitness for heaven!   
  
No desire to advance in such things! Is it possible   
to be a Christian and yet destitute of this desire   
to grow in grace? No, it is not! I tell you, it is not!   
 **If you have no concern to grow in grace  
—**there is no grace in you!   
  
You are a piece of **dead wood**  
—and not a living branch!   
  
You are a **spiritual corpse**  
—and not a living man!  
  
In this state there can be no growth  
—for **dead things never grow!**

**This heavenly light of truth**  
  
"All Scripture is inspired by God, and is **useful** for  
teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in  
righteousness, so that the man of God may be  
thoroughly equipped for every good work."  
2Ti 3:16-17  
  
The doctrines of Scripture are facts, which involve  
corresponding emotions and principles of action,   
and must, from their very nature, if believed, be  **operative upon the heart and the life.**  
  
If the doctrines of Scripture . . .  
exert no godly influence,  
carry with them no practical weight,  
exert no moral power,  
they are not truly believed.   
  
The doctrines of Scripture are at once . . .  
the source of consolation, and  
the means of sanctification.   
  
The doctrines of Scripture . . .  
come into the **mind** as knowledge,   
produce peace and love in the **heart**,   
and spread the beauties of holiness   
over the **character** and **conduct**.   
  
The doctrines of Scripture are light; and like the   
rays of the sun, they **sustain life** at the root of   
the vine, and **produce fruit** on its branches.  
  
**This heavenly light of truth** gives . . .  
spiritual vitality to the soul,  
and holy conduct to the life.

"For our gospel came to you not simply with  
words, but also with power, with the Holy  
Spirit and with deep conviction." 1Th 1:5  
  
"**Sanctify them by the truth**; Your Word is truth."  
Joh 17:17

**I follow like a little blind child**  
  
"And **we know** that God causes everything to work  
together for the good of those who love God and  
are called according to His purpose." Rom 8:28  
  
Strong faith has a firm persuasion of **God's over-ruling**   
**Providence**—so comprehensive as to include the destinies   
of empires and worlds; and so minute as to extend to   
individuals. Strong faith believes that God's Providence is . . .  
ever active,  
ever directing,  
ever controlling, and  
ever subordinating   
all things to His own purposes and plans.   
  
Strong faith is a conviction of this great truth—so deep, so   
satisfying, and so tranquilizing—as not at all to be shaken   
by the chaotic aspect of human affairs, or the prevalence   
of gigantic evils.   
  
A weak faith must give way before . . .   
the deep mysteries,  
the confounding events,  
the defeats of what is good, and  
the triumphs of what is evil,   
which are perpetually going on in our world's history.   
  
**The stream of Providence** is . . .   
so **twisting**,  
so **dark**,  
apparently so **murky**, and  
occasionally so **devastating**;  
that it requires strong faith believe that it is the   
work of God and not of chance; and that if it is the   
work of God—it must be just, and wise, and good.   
  
In the darkest dispensations of Providence affecting   
ourselves, strong faith realizes that it is all from God;   
and must therefore be wise, and just, and good. To be   
able really say, "It is well. I am sure it is right. I cannot   
tell **how** it is right. I do not understand **why** this deep   
afflictive Providence came. I can find no key to unlock   
the mystery. But I am as confident that it is right, as if   
God's whole purpose were transparent to my reason, and   
I could see the event in all its connections, bearings, and   
results. **I cannot see how or why**—but I believe that my  
deep affliction is for God's glory and my ultimate benefit. I   
know that God causes everything to work together for good."  
  
Faith assures us that the darker, the more confounding, the  
more disappointing events—are all right and just, and good.   
  
Strong faith walks on amid shadows and darkness, grasping   
the arm of God, believing that He is leading us, and will lead   
us right. Strong faith gives up all into His hands, saying,   
"I cannot even see a glimmering of light! I cannot see where   
to place my next step! But I can most implicitly trust in the   
wisdom, power, and truth of God! **I follow like a little blind   
child**, grasping the hand of his father!"  
  
Times of great troubles and difficulties, are seasons and   
opportunities for the exercise of faith. **God is always the   
Christian's best refuge—and often his only one!** He is   
sometimes reduced to extremity, and is compelled to say,   
"He alone is my rock and my salvation! My help comes only  
from the Lord! No one else will help me—no one else can!"   
  
Sense and reason both fail. No door of escape presents   
itself—nor any way of relief. There is nothing left for him   
to do, but to take up the promise and carry it in the hand   
of faith, knock by prayer at the door of mercy, and as he  
stands there to say, "Find rest, O my soul, in God alone!   
My hope comes from Him. He alone is my rock and my   
salvation! He is my fortress, I will not be shaken. Yes,   
Lord, You have bid me come, when I could go nowhere   
else. And here according to your command and promise I   
will remain—waiting, trembling, yet believing and hoping.  
I am sure You will come and help me. My heavenly Father   
knows the necessities of His poor helpless child, and He   
will come in His own time, and in His own way, and I will   
wait for him. My bread will be given me, and my water   
will be sure."  
  
  
  
**A cold chill fell upon their hearts!**  
  
It has frequently occurred, that young converts in the   
ardor of their first love, and while much unacquainted   
as yet, with what is called the 'religious world', have   
looked upon the church as a 'sacred enclosure', within   
which dwelt a kind of heavenly inhabitants, who could   
think or speak of little else than the glory which awaited   
them. In the church, these novices expected to find . . .  
the sweetest and holiest fellowship,  
an almost unearthly spirituality, and  
an uninterrupted strain of pious conversation.  
  
But alas! What a woeful disappointment did the reality   
produce! In the 'sacred enclosure' they found worldly  
minded professors—almost as intent upon seen and   
temporal things, as those they had left out in the world!   
  
In the 'vestibule of heaven', they beheld professors . . .  
covered with the 'earthly dust',  
disordered with worldly concerns,  
and given up to worldly amusements!  
  
In the church members, they saw little but worldly   
conduct, and heard little else but worldly conversation!  
  
**A cold chill fell upon their hearts**, which checked   
the ardor of their pious affections; and even they,   
lately so fervent, soon sunk and settled down into   
the lukewarmness of those among whom they had   
come to dwell.  
  
  
  
**Vacationing at resorts?**  
  
The line of distinction between the world and the   
church is fast disappearing.  
  
What shall be said of the conduct of some professing   
Christians **vacationing at resorts?** It has become   
almost one of the necessaries of life to Englishmen,   
to pay an annual visit to the coast, or to one of our   
inland places of resort. To say that this is wrong to   
those who can afford to pay for it, is certainly not   
my intention. But some professing Christians have   
ruined themselves, and plunged their families into   
poverty and distress, by habits of expense and   
idleness, acquired by this annual excursion to the   
sea. The taste of the age is for luxurious gratification,   
and it is certainly one of these luxuries to while away   
a week or two amidst the beauties of the coast, or   
the mirthful throng of a fashionable lounging place.   
  
I will suppose, however, that the professor can afford  
the gratification; still, are not his spendings for this   
enjoyment, out of all due proportion with his donations   
to the cause of Christ? When did he ever give, in one   
amount, to any Christian cause, what he gives, in one   
amount, for his treat to his family to a resort? No, put  
together all that he gives to the cause of the Lord for   
a whole year, and does it equal what he spends upon   
one vacation, lavishing hundreds—or thousands, in   
riding into the country, or sailing on the sea, and   
luxuriating in other ways on the shore.   
  
When a world is perishing, and immortal souls are   
sinking daily in crowds to perdition, a Christian   
should look, with grudging eye, on almost every   
dollar he spends in luxury!   
  
Are there no 'perils for piety' in a vacation resort?   
Temptations abound everywhere, entering like a   
poisoned atmosphere into every place—but surely   
no one will deny, that they are found in greater   
number and force in those places, which fashion   
has set apart for relaxation and amusement.   
  
The mixed society to be found in such haunts of   
pleasure; the amusements which are resorted to;  
and the general air of wastefulness which pervades   
the whole scene—are all uncongenial with the spirit   
of piety, which flourishes best in silence and solitude.  
  
Those who frequent vacation resorts, seem as though  
the object of their existence is to spend it in pleasure.  
Is this proper behavior for the self-denying, humble   
followers of a crucified Savior?  
  
It is indeed to be feared that some professing Christians,   
when they set out on their summer's vacation, leave their   
religion at home, in order that nothing may interrupt their   
pursuit and enjoyment of pleasure. Many have gone to   
places of fashionable resort to have their piety lastingly   
injured; and some to lose it altogether. They started a   
retrograde course in piety from that day when they   
went joyfully and thoughtlessly to the coast in search   
of recreation. Surely, surely, then, it cannot be thought   
unseasonable or unnecessary to raise a warning voice,   
and to make it loud and strong when it is becoming   
increasingly prevalent among professing Christians to   
seek in this species of gratification, a temporary release   
from the "dull cares of home, and the plodding pursuits   
of business."  
  
  
  
**A chameleon kind of religion**  
  
"So that you may be blameless and pure, children of  
God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted  
generation, among whom you shine like stars in  
the world." (Php 2:15)  
  
Saving religion is not merely an occasional act—but   
a permanent habit, resulting from an internal principle.   
  
Saving religion is a principle so fixed as to constitute   
a new moral nature; and so steadily operative, as to   
form an unchanging character.  
  
A real Christian is a Christian **always, everywhere,   
and in all companies**. He carries his piety with him   
wherever he goes, as an integral part of himself. It is   
not like his clothes which may be continually altered, or   
varied to suit his situation, occupation, and company.   
He needs his piety everywhere, he loves it everywhere,   
and is commanded to let it be seen everywhere.   
  
But among most professors of Christianity, there is  
too much of **a chameleon kind of religion**, which   
takes its hue from surrounding objects. This is seen   
most conspicuously in the conduct of those who have   
a flexible, yielding, easy-going kind of piety—which   
accommodates itself to changing circumstances, by   
little sacrifices of principle and consistency.  
  
  
  
**A golden image in the house!**  
It is quite evident that covetousness is indeed the sin   
of the church. In this wealthy age and country, there   
is imminent peril of professing Christians forgetting   
their high calling, and living only to get riches. We see   
them toiling and panting in pursuit of the golden object   
of ambition.  
  
It is not the possession of wealth that we should dread;   
but the inordinate desire, the dishonest means, the undue   
love, and the covetous hoarding of it! Wealth justly   
obtained, and piously spent, is a blessing—not a curse.  
  
I am quite aware, that it is difficult to have money and   
not love it. It is hard indeed to have **a golden image   
in the house**, and not worship it!   
  
Wealth often produces the pride of life—so opposite   
to the humility and poverty of spirit, which is essential   
to the nature of true religion.  
  
Wealth often generates a worldly-mindedness, which   
makes its possessor contented with seen and temporal   
things, and disposes him to mind only earthly things.  
  
Wealth often leads to a prevalent feeling of independence,   
so unlike that habitual trust and reliance on God, which   
the Scriptures require.  
  
Wealth often originates, and keeps up, both the care and   
perplexity of **getting**, and the anxiety of **disposing**; and   
thus exhausts the vigor as well as time, upon worldly   
objects—leaving the soul neglected, impoverished, and   
defrauded.  
  
Wealth is the green and flowery mount from which   
many have slid down into the bottomless pit!  
  
Yes, wealth has a tendency to do all this, in consequence   
of the depravity of our hearts, and thus to cast stumbling  
blocks in the path of salvation.  
  
"But godliness with contentment is a great gain. For   
we brought nothing into the world, and we can take  
nothing out. But if we have food and clothing, we will  
be content with these. But **those who want to be   
rich** fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and  
harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and  
destruction. For the **love of money** is a root of all  
kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered  
away from the faith and pierced themselves with many  
pains. Now you, man of God, run from these things;  
but pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love,  
endurance, and gentleness." (1Ti 6:6-11)  
  
  
  
**The silent influence in parental conduct**  
Parents have a great power of **influence** over the   
minds and hearts of their children. Their children   
are almost continually with them—they are seen by  
them in nearly all they do, in their habitual conduct,  
and character at home. They are . . .   
**heard** in what they say;  
**seen** in what they do;   
**studied** in all their behavior;  
by little ears, and eyes, and minds,   
which are scarcely ever closed!  
  
The child's heart is soft and pliable to a father's or a   
mother's influence. Their constant influence has been   
molding him from the dawn of reason. What, then,   
ought to be the parents' behavior at home? The whole   
cultivation, and direction, and management of a child's   
mind, from the very dawn of reason, should be carried   
on with special reference to the formation of Christian   
character. This should be the one thing, to which all   
other things should be subordination.   
  
**The silent influence in parental conduct** is far   
greater, either for good or for evil, than most parents   
are aware of. They teach by what they **say**, they   
influence by what they **do**; and also by what they   
do not say, and do not perform.   
  
The pious parents, who embody a meek, benevolent,   
ardent, and consistent godliness in their character,   
exert a tremendous influence over the minds of their   
children!  
  
But oh! the dreadful contrast in the case of those   
parents who are characterized by . . .  
ungodly dispositions,   
worldly associations,  
mirthful and extravagant living,  
trifling conversation, and  
lack of all seriousness and spirituality.   
  
Oh! what can be expected from such parents—but   
children who regard their religion with disgust?   
  
**Every man is best known at home.** Parents are   
ever doing something to prejudice their children in   
favor of true religion—or to prejudice them against it;   
doing something to draw them into the church—or to   
drive them into the world; lending a helping hand to   
lead then to heaven—or taking them by the hand   
and leading them to hell.  
  
Parents! Must you employ your influence in ruining the   
souls of your children—and sending them to perdition?   
Oh! tremble at the interview you must have with them   
at the day of judgment, and the dialog you must hold   
with them forever in the bottomless pit!!

**The evidence of genuine piety**

**The evidence of genuine piety** is to be found in . . .  
real humility,  
self-distrust,  
hungering and thirsting after righteousness,  
sorrow for sin, and  
a continual effort to regulate your thoughts,   
feelings, and conduct by the Word of God.  
  
Genuine piety will not thrive and increase without   
effort—but is of so tender and delicate a nature as   
to require great, constant, and persevering concern,  
watchfulness, and care.

**Encroaching, absorbing, and destructive!**  
  
"Their minds are fixed on earthly things." Php 3:19  
  
This is a concise, emphatic, and accurate description   
of a worldly man. His supreme, yes, exclusive desire,   
aim, and purpose, is to get as much, and enjoy as much,   
of the world as he can. He thinks of nothing else, and   
wishes for nothing else. His hopes and fears, joys and   
sorrows, desires and dread—are all of the earth, earthly.   
  
The worldly mind has an exclusive regard to, and   
wish for, earthly possessions and enjoyment. It makes   
the world the highest object of pursuit, and the chief   
source of enjoyment. This shows itself in various ways,   
a love of pleasure in one;   
avarice in another;   
ambition in a third;   
exclusive delight in home in another.   
  
If a professing Christian partakes of this spirit, he is   
worldly-minded. If he appears like one whose supreme   
aim is to be rich and happy on earth; if he appears to   
be continually intent on increasing his wealth and   
multiplying his comforts; if he looks like a man   
who is entirely occupied in enjoying himself here  
on earth—he is a worldly-minded man.   
  
You must resist the **encroaching, absorbing,   
and destructive** influence of the world in all   
its many fascinating forms!   
  
Consider that you have . . .  
a soul to be saved,  
a hell to avoid,  
a heaven to obtain!

**Eminent piety**  
  
Eminence in piety signifies our having all the parts   
of the Christian character in considerable strength,   
and in attractive proportions.   
  
**Eminent piety** is always accompanied by . . .  
a large measure of spiritual affections;  
a struggle for universal holiness;  
a desire and endeavor for purity of heart;  
a prevailing taste for divine and heavenly things;  
a walking with God;  
a living by faith;  
a setting our affections on things above;  
a being dead to the world;  
a mortification of sin in the heart;  
a proneness to devout meditation;  
a delight to hold communion with God;  
a fondness for the Scriptures;  
a large portion of love to the brethren;  
an inflexible integrity;  
a liberality for the cause of Christ;  
an ardent love of biblical ordinances;  
an enjoyment of the peace that passes understanding;  
a frequent experience of spiritual joy;  
an exquisite tenderness of conscience;  
a mind which trembles at sin;  
a constant penitential frame for our many imperfections;  
a holy watchfulness against sins . . .  
of the life,   
of the tongue,   
of the imagination   
and of the heart!  
  
Piety is not an abstract system of doctrine and   
ethics. It is a constant movement of the heart,   
to the splendor and attraction of the cross of   
Christ!   
  
Love to Christ is the spring of all Christian piety!  
  
This is eminent piety—to be always in sight of the   
cross, having fellowship with Christ; so that we   
shall truly comprehend the meaning and feel the   
force of the Apostle's words, "for me to live is   
Christ!"

**A showy and expensive style of living**  
"Tell those who are **rich in this world** not to be proud  
and not to trust in their money, which will soon be gone.  
. . . Tell them to use their money to do good. They should  
be rich in good works and should give generously to those  
in need, always being ready to share with others whatever  
God has given them." 1Ti 6:17-19  
  
It is the incumbent duty of **rich Christians**, to consecrate a  
large portion of their affluence, to upholding the cause of  
truth. Let them, in order to abound more and more in such   
efforts, as well as to exhibit a bright example of pure and   
undefiled religion, avoid all unnecessary worldly conformity,   
and all expensive modes of living.  
  
There is, in the present age, a disposition, even in professing  
Christians, to **a showy and expensive style of living**, which  
cannot be more effectually repressed, than by the **plain and  
simple habits** of those who are known to have an easy access  
to all the elegancies and splendors of life.  
  
Rich Christians ought to be far more anxious to **give**—than   
to **hoard** their fortunes. When we enter their mansions and   
see magnificence in every room, luxury on every table; when   
we see their extravagant dress and decor, we cannot help   
saying, "How much ought a disciple of Jesus, who lives in   
this manner, to give away to the cause of Christ, before   
he is justified in such an expenditure!"  
  
In short, the **VICES** to which rich Christians are more   
particularly exposed, and against which they should   
vigilantly guard, are . . .  
pride,  
haughtiness,  
love of money,  
idleness,  
self-indulgence,  
luxury,  
extravagance,  
worldly conformity.  
  
The **VIRTUES** to which they are called to exercise are . . .  
gratitude to God;  
humility and meekness to men;  
frugality and temperance towards themselves;  
liberality, together with tender sympathy to their   
poorer brethren; and a generous regard to the support   
of the cause of pure religion and general benevolence.  
  
  
  
**Not markedly different**  
When I look into the New Testament, and read  **what a Christian should be**, and then look into   
the church of God, and see wh**at Christians are**—  
I am painfully affected by observing the dissimilarity!   
  
That worldly spirit to which our age of growing   
selfishness and luxury gives rise, is exceedingly  
adverse to Christianity, whose elements are   
faith, hope, love.   
  
The church of Christ at present, is sadly mixed up   
with both the **spirit** of the world, and many of its  **customs**. The great bulk of professing Christians   
are **not markedly different** from the 'followers   
of pleasure' and the 'worshipers of Mammon'.  
  
  
  
**I am in agony in this fire!**  
  
The rich man called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on   
me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water   
and cool my tongue, because **I am in agony in this fire!'**   
But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime   
you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad   
things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony!'  
Luk 16:24-25  
  
It is a grievous fact that many an ungodly sinner walks in   
a flowery path to perdition—and goes merrily to his eternal   
ruin. It is, on the contrary, as certain that many a

**I am in agony in this fire!**  
  
The rich man called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on   
me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water   
and cool my tongue, because **I am in agony in this fire!'**   
But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime   
you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad   
things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony!'  
Luk 16:24-25  
  
It is a grievous fact that many an ungodly sinner walks in   
a flowery path to perdition—and goes merrily to his eternal   
ruin. It is, on the contrary, as certain that many a godly   
Christian travels by a rough and toilsome road to heaven  
—and ascends to glory amid many tears. Our Divine Lord   
has set forth this in the most solemn of his parables—the   
rich man and Lazarus. If we looked only at the outward   
and earthly condition of these two men, we would say   
one is the type of all that is felicitous; while the other   
is the type of all that is miserable.   
  
But who that looks upon their eternal abode, would not a   
thousand times rather be Lazarus with his poverty, sores,   
and beggary, feeding at the rich man's gate upon the crumbs   
which fell from his table—than the wealthy possessor of the   
mansion, with his purple and fine linen and daily luxurious   
living! Look **up** at the one who has dropped all his poverty,   
borne by angels to Abraham's bosom! And then look **down**upon the other, stripped of his splendid garments, deprived   
of his luxurious living, and from the midst of his torment   
begging for a drop of water to cool his parched tongue—and   
there see the end and outcome of 'sanctified poverty' and of   
'unsanctified wealth'.  
  
  
  
**What a heaven!**  
  
Heaven will consist of . . .  
the moral perfection of the soul,  
perfect knowledge,  
perfect holiness,  
perfect love,  
perfect likeness to Christ,  
perfection of the **body** in . . .  
incorruptibility,  
immortality,  
glory, and  
spirituality;  
the presence of God in the full manifestation of His glory,  
the beatific vision of Christ,  
the fellowship of angels and all the redeemed,  
the joint worship of the heavenly multitudes,  
the perfect **service of Christ**, without . . .  
interruption,  
imperfection, or  
cessation,  
**complete freedom from . . .**  
pain,  
toil,  
hunger,  
thirst,  
anxiety,  
fear,  
sorrow, and  
death!  
  
Such is the substance of heavenly felicity. Take  
any one of them by itself—and each is a heaven!  
Add them altogether—and **what a heaven!**   
  
How pure! How elevated! How felicitous!  
  
  
  
**Afflictions**  
  
Glance at the good which afflictions are calculated to effect,   
and do effect in all cases where they are sanctified. As the   
bee sucks honey from many a bitter herb—so faith extracts   
good from bitter sorrows!   
  
How sorrows crucify him to the **world**—and the world to   
him; sometimes gently drawing him away from the world  
—at others forcing him out as by a violent wrench!  
  
How trials mortify his **pride** and cure his **vanity!**How afflictions restore him from his **backslidings** and bring   
him again to God from whom he has departed. How they   
revive his lukewarm religion and quicken him in prayer. How   
they make him feel that religion is after all his great concern.   
  
Yes, there is more learned sometimes in one great affliction,   
than from a thousand sermons, or a library of books!  
  
  
**He has some secret source of happiness**  
  
It is highly incumbent upon Christians, to take care against   
**a worldly spirit**. They are in extreme peril of losing the   
power of godliness from their hearts, and joining the number   
of those, of whom it is said, in the expressive language of   
Paul, that "**they mind earthly things!**"   
  
Such earthlings look upon the possession of wealth as "the   
one thing needful." Wealth is their chief object of pursuit,   
the chief source of happiness. Nothing modifies or mitigates   
their desire for riches. They are of the earth, earthly!   
  
Now certainly a Christian is, or ought to be, of another spirit   
than this! He should be industrious, frugal, and persevering   
in his attention to the concerns of this world. But still there   
should be in his mind, an ultimate and supreme regard for  
the possession of everlasting life. He ought not to be slothful   
in business; but then he must be fervent in spirit, serving the   
Lord. He should be seen to unite the 'diligent worker' and   
'sincere Christian'—and to be busy for both worlds.   
  
The men of this world should be constrained to say of him,   
"This man is as attentive to business, and as diligent in it   
as we are; but we can perceive in all he does, an inflexible   
regard to morality, and an invariable reference to piety. We   
can discover no lack of diligence or prudence; but it is perfectly   
evident, that **his heart and highest hope are in heaven.** He is   
neither so elated in **prosperity**, nor so depressed in **adversity**,   
as we are. **He has some secret source of happiness**, of which   
we are not possessed! His eye is upon some driving force,  
which we do not recognize."   
  
What a testimony!   
  
Who can obtain a higher one?   
  
Who should seek less?

**The last pang, and groan, and tear!**  
  
The Christian also looks to **the end of afflictions!** The end   
*may* sometimes come in this world. In reference to this, the   
utmost that the believer can be sure of is—that **they will end   
in God's time.** They may last for his whole life. The **sickness**   
which afflicts his body may be unto death! The **loss** which he   
has sustained in his property may be irreparable, and **poverty**   
may go down with him to the grave! The **trial** which beclouds   
and distresses his spirits may be his lot for life! But on the other  
hand, they may not! God may be bringing him "through fire and   
through water to bring him out into a wealthy place." But the   
Christian leaves this in the hand of God, and endeavors to   
maintain a hope which shall save him from despondency—  
checked at the same time by a reverence that guards him  
from unwarranted presumption.  
  
But if the end of the trial should not come in this world—it **will**   
come in the next world—when they will not only forever cease,  
but leave an eternal blessing behind! "I reckon that the sufferings   
of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory   
which shall be revealed in us!" "Our light affliction, which is but   
for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal   
weight of glory!" Four things are set forth in these passages.  
  
1. Our afflictions will have a termination! This is sweet. They are   
to end—they are not to last forever! **The last pang, and groan,   
and tear** are at hand—and how near the Christian never knows!  
  
2. Our afflictions are not to end like those of the brute creation—in   
the grave merely—but in heaven! **The last pang, and groan, and   
tear** are to usher in that blessed state of which it is so beautifully   
said, "The Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them,  
and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters—and God shall   
wipe away all tears from their eyes!" Heaven shall terminate the   
afflictions of the righteous!  
  
3. Heaven is so glorious, that the first view of its scenes, and   
the first moment of its enjoyment, shall make amends for the  
longest life of the most protracted and intense sufferings!  
  
4. The sufferings of our earthly pilgrimage will   
enhance and increase the felicities of heaven!   
Their **submissive endurance**;   
the **graces** which they call into exercise;  
the **sanctification** which they promote;   
the **heavenly temper** which they cultivate,  
will be the means of ripening the spirit, and  
making it fit for its eternal inheritance!  
  
Every **tear** that is shed;   
every **groan** that is heaved;   
every **loss** that is sustained;   
every moment of **suffering** that is endured;   
every **disappointment** that is experienced, which is borne   
with patience, with resignation, with unwearied holiness—  
will not only be followed with millions of ages of ineffable   
felicity—but will prepare the soul for its enjoyment, and   
add something to its weight and its luster!

**If there are but two real Christians in the world**  
  
There appears to me to be, at the present moment,   
a most criminal neglect, on the part of Christian   
parents, of the pious education of their children.   
  
That Christian who would carry on a system of pious   
education with success, should enforce it with all the   
commanding **influence of a holy example**. Let your   
children **see** all the "beauties of holiness" reflected   
from your character, and the grand outline of godly   
virtue filled up with all the delicate touches and   
varied coloring of the Christian graces.   
  
Let your children have this conviction in their hearts,   
"**If there are but two real Christians in the world**,   
my father is one, and my mother is the other."   
  
It is dreadful—but not uncommon for children to   
employ themselves in contrasting the appearance   
which their parents make . . .  
at the Lord's table—and at their own table;  
in the house of God—and at home!

(Choice devotional selections from   
the works of John Angell James)

**Fiendlike, beastlike, manlike, Godlike**  
  
"Love your enemies,   
do good to those who hate you,  
bless those who curse you,  
pray for those who mistreat you."   
(Luk 6:27-28)  
  
To return evil for good, is **fiendlike**.   
  
To return evil for evil, is **beastlike**.   
  
To return good for good, is **manlike**.   
  
But to return good for evil, is **Godlike**.   
  
This is true practical Christianity.   
  
"Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer  
evil with good." (Rom 12:21)

**The religion of this poor Hottentot woman**  
  
It is the practice of some of the Christian Hottentots, in   
order to enjoy the privilege of secret prayer with greater   
privacy and freedom than they could do in their own   
confined and incommodious dwellings—to retire among   
the trees and bushes, that they may carry on their devotions   
without being intruded on by others, and also derive all that  
tranquilizing influence which would be produced by a spot,   
with which no other occupations, thoughts, and feelings are   
associated, than such as are holy. Each individual selects for  
his own use a particular bush, behind which, and concealed   
by it, he may commune with his heavenly Father in secret.   
By the others, this bush is considered as sacred to the one  
by whom it had been appropriated; and which, therefore,   
is never to be violated by the foot, or even by the gaze of   
another, during the season it is occupied by its proprietor.   
The constant tread of the worshipers, in their repeated   
visits to these hallowed spots, would, of necessity, wear   
a path in the grass which lay between their huts, and   
the sylvan scene of their communion with God.   
  
On one occasion, a Christian Hottentot woman said to   
another member of their little community, "Sister, I am   
afraid you are somewhat declining in piety." The words  
were accompanied with a look of affection, and were   
uttered with a tone that savored nothing of accusation,   
nor of reproachful severity—but was expressive of tender   
concern, and the meekness of wisdom. The individual thus   
addressed, asked her friend for the reason of her fears.   
"Because," replied this good and gentle spirit, **"the grass   
has grown over your path to your bush."** Nature   
carrying on its usual progress, had disclosed the secret.   
The backslider could not deny the fact. There, in the   
growing grass, was the indisputable evidence that   
the feet which had once trodden it down had ceased to   
frequent the spot. She did not attempt to excuse it, but   
fell under the sweet influence of this sisterly reproof, and   
confessed, with ingenuous shame and sorrow, that her   
heart had turned away from the Lord. The admonition   
had its desired effect—the sinner was converted from   
the error of her ways, and her watchful and faithful   
reprover had the satisfaction and reward of seeing the   
wanderer restored—not only to **the path to the bush**,   
but to the renewed favor of that God with whom she   
there again communed in secret.  
  
Note the value of private prayer, and the connection   
between its regular and spiritual performance, and a   
healthy state of the soul. When the bush was neglected,   
and the path to it forsaken—then did **the religion of this   
poor Hottentot woman** begin to spiritually decline. And   
how could it be otherwise? Who ever kept up a vigorous   
piety—when secret prayer was neglected? It is in the closet of private devotion, that . . .  
our **cares** are lightened,  
our **sorrows** mitigated,  
our **corruptions** mortified,  
our **graces** strengthened, and  
we shake off the dust of the **earth**!

**Men may see something of God in me!**  
"For I have given you an **example** that you also should  
do just as I have done for you." (Joh 13:15)  
  
It has long been my conviction, that there is a great   
deficiency in evangelical churches—of the practical   
enforcement of Christian duties in detail; especially of   
what may be emphatically called the Christian virtues  
—the passive graces of the Christian character, the   
exercise of brotherly kindness and love.  
  
It is not so acceptable to have all the special and difficult   
duties of the Christian's life, or man's conduct to his fellows,   
set clearly before the understanding and enforced upon the  
conscience. Men do not like to be followed through all the   
labyrinths of the heart's deceitfulness, beaten out of every   
refuge of lies, and made to feel the obligation to love where   
they are inclined to hate; and to forgive where they desire   
to revenge.   
  
And we ministers pander too much to this taste. The pulpit   
has not done its duty. We have preached to the intellect, to   
the imagination, and to the taste—but not enough to the   
heart and to the conscience. In our endeavor to **please**, we   
have not been sufficiently intent upon the greater object—to  **profit**. We have not preached justification too much—but   
sanctification too little. We have urged faith—but not love. We   
have descanted upon the evil of licentiousness, and falsehood,   
and dishonesty, and covetousness—but have said far, far   
too little about malice and bitterness. We have urged men to   
zeal and liberality—but not enough to humility, forbearance,   
and forgiveness. We have rightly led men to view the cross of   
Christ—but we have not sufficiently urged them to take up their   
own cross. We have properly entreated them to view Jesus as   
their Righteousness—but not sufficiently as their **Example**.   
  
O, Christians . . .   
study that wondrous character,  
contemplate that illustrious pattern,   
dwell upon that beautiful model,  
until the frosty incrustations of your cold, hard   
heart have all melted, like icicles before the sun!  
  
How wonderful and how ennobling is the conception, and   
what an ambition should it raise in the mind of the Christian,   
to consider and say, "**Men may see something of God in   
me!**" Yes, we can teach them what God is, as to His moral   
character, and let them see in 'our merciful disposition' a ray   
of the infinite sun of His own glory. These sweet relentings of   
our nature, these soft and genial currents of our soul, these   
effusions of love—these, we can remind them, are but the   
overflowings of His goodness, His own love, into our hearts,   
and the reflection of His infinite mercy to us.   
  
"The one who says he abides in Him should walk  
just as He walked." (1Jn 2:6)  
  
"Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example,  
so that you should follow in His steps." (1Pe 2:21)

**Casting all our sins into oblivion!**  
  
"Who is a God like You, removing iniquity and passing  
over rebellion for the remnant of His inheritance? He  
does not hold on to His anger forever, because He  
delights in faithful love. He will again have compassion  
on us; He will vanquish our iniquities. You will cast all  
our sins into the depths of the sea." (Mic 7:18-19)  
  
Wonderful language! This is one of the finest images to   
represent the completeness of God's pardoning mercy to   
be found in all the Bible. He casts our sins not into a brook   
nor a river where they might be found again; no, nor into   
the sea near the shore where the tide might wash them up   
again—but like a stone cast into the depths of the sea,   
where they can never be fished up again, but lie forever   
buried and forgotten at the bottom of the ocean! This is   
divine forgiveness—**casting all our sins into oblivion!**

**Infected and enfeebled**  
The church is **infected and enfeebled** with worldliness.  
  
"Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver  
us from this present evil world." Gal 1:4  
  
"And the world is passing away along with its desires, but  
whoever does the will of God abides forever. 1Jn 2:17

**Do you indeed ACT as you pray?**  
I need not prove to you that prayer, as a duty, is   
essential to Christian conduct; and, as a privilege,   
is equally indispensable to Christian enjoyment. All   
Christians give themselves to this devout exercise.   
Their petitions are copious, comprehensive, and   
seemingly earnest.   
  
What solemn professions they make to God!   
  
What ardent desires they express!   
  
What numerous blessings they seek!   
  
What strong resolutions they form!   
  
If we so **pray**—how ought we to **live**? What kind of   
people must we be—to live up to the standard of our   
prayers? And ought we not, in some measure at least,   
to reach this standard? Should there not be a harmony,   
a consistency, a proportion—between our practice and   
our prayers?  
 **Do you indeed ACT as you pray?** Do you understand   
the import, and feel the obligation of your own petitions?   
Do you rise from your knees where you have asked and   
knocked—to seek? Do you really want, wish for, and   
endeavor to obtain an answer to your prayers? Are you  
really intent upon doing, and being—what you ask for   
in prayer?  
  
Our prayers are to act upon ourselves; they have,   
or ought to have, great power in the formation of   
character and the regulation of conduct.

It is plain, therefore, that much of prayer is mere  
words. We either do not **understand**, or do not   
**consider**, or do not **mean**—what we say.  
  
Do we go from praying—to acting, and to live for   
salvation, for heaven, for eternity?   
  
How common is it for professors to pray for victory   
over the world; to be delivered from the lust of the   
flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; to be   
enabled to set their affections on things above, and   
not on things of the earth; and to be dead to seen   
and temporal things. And yet all the while they are   
as obviously eager to amass wealth, to multiply the   
attractions of earth, and to enjoy as much luxurious  
gratification as possible!  
  
'Spirituality of mind' is the subject of innumerable prayers   
from some who never take a step to promote it! But, on the   
contrary, who are doing all they can to make themselves   
carnally minded! How many repeat that petition, "Lead us   
not into temptation," who, instead of most carefully keeping   
at the utmost possible distance from all inducements to sin,   
place themselves in the very path of sin!   
  
How often do we pray to have the mind of Christ, and to   
imitate the example of Jesus. But where is the assiduous   
endeavor, the laboring effort, to copy this high model, in . . .  
its self-denying condescension,  
its profound humility,  
its beautiful meekness,  
its indifference to worldly comforts,  
its forgiving mercy,  
its devotedness to God?   
  
How often do we pray to be delivered from evil tempers   
and irascible feelings. And yet we indulge them on every   
slight provocation, and take no pains to subdue them!   
  
It is unnecessary to multiply the illustrations of the   
inconsistency between our prayers and our practice.

**So hideous and so dreadful is the offspring!**  
  
How dreadful is the nature of **sin**! Sin is the parent of **death**.   
Death the first-born of sin. What must be the parent—when   
**so hideous and so dreadful is the offspring!** Who can   
have watched the harbingers of death—the groans, the pains,   
the dying strife—without being struck with the fearful nature   
of man's revolt from God?   
  
Death in itself, and by itself—is horrid and revolting! To see   
all this inflicted upon a Christian, a child of God, an heir of   
glory; to see no way even to the kingdom of God, to the   
realms of immortality—but this dark valley of corruption,   
earth, and worms—this gives us a most impressive idea   
of the dreadful nature of sin! How such scenes should   
enlarge our views of the malignity of sin, and embitter   
our hearts against it! **O sin, sin—what have you done!**

**Like water to the flame of joy**  
  
"I have spoken these things to you, so that My joy may  
be in you, and your joy may be full." Joh 15:11  
  
One of the reasons why so little spiritual joy is experienced   
by the majority of Christian professors, is because of SIN.   
Sin weakens spiritual joy—and ought to do so! I do not now   
mean immorality—for that extinguishes joy! I mean . . .  
the lesser workings of our corruption,  
the sins of the heart,  
the sins of the tongue,  
the sins of the character,  
sins known only to God and conscience,  
sins of omission,  
sins of defect.   
I mean sins that do not unchristianize us, any more   
than they excommunicate us from the church. Such   
sins unopposed, unmortified—do, and must, prevent   
or diminish our joy. They may not put out the light of   
our piety altogether—but they surround it with an   
impure atmosphere, a thick fog—which prevents its   
light from shining upon the heart!  
  
The religion of many is altogether too feeble. They are   
too worldly, too lukewarm, live too far from God—to   
derive much joy and peace from their piety. Spiritual   
joy, is joy—in God, in Christ, in holiness, in heaven!   
And when, therefore, the professor lives so little in   
the closet, communes so little with his Bible, and   
lives so far from God—it can be no wonder that his   
religion does not make him happy!  
  
My dear friends, let me now entreat you to avoid these  
hindrances, and to seek after more of that heavenly,   
holy, happy frame of mind. Pray for it, for it is a fruit   
of the Spirit. Be much in converse with your Bibles, for   
it comes in the way of understanding, believing, and   
experiencing the truth. Find time for private, silent   
meditation, for the truth will not be seen, so as to affect   
the heart, by a hasty glance at Scripture. Seek to have   
your faith strengthened, for your joy must ever be in   
proportion to your faith.   
  
Watch against sin, for sin is **like water to the flame   
of joy**. Cultivate all the branches of holiness; for holiness   
is happiness. You must have eminent piety, if you would   
have spiritual joy. Spiritual joy is the oil to the wheels of   
obedience. It is this which braces up the soul for action,   
and carries it forward through difficult and self-denying   
duties.   
  
How can we best vanquish the world, that ever present,   
and every where present foe, which comes in so many  
forms—and with such golden pleas? How, but by a heart   
already well pleased with its own happiness in Christ.   
Spiritual joy is the world's vanquisher! The heart by holy   
joy rises above the world—sees it below, covered with   
smoke and dust, and finds itself in a brighter, purer,   
happier region, with the cloudless sun above, and all   
around filled with glory. What has the world to offer   
comparable to that which a rejoicing faith has found in   
Christ? What has 'worldly ambition' to offer, which can   
vie with this? He may spurn the favor of the crowned   
prince, and put his crown aside as a bauble—who is   
rejoicing in hope of an incorruptible crown of life and   
glory!   
  
"The joy of the Lord is your strength!" Neh 8:10

**Though we mourn—we must not murmur**

"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will  
leave this life. **The Lord gives, and the Lord takes  
away.** Praise the name of the Lord! (Job 1:21)  
  
"See, I am the only God! There are no others. **I kill**,  
and I make alive! **I wound**, and I heal, and no one  
can rescue you from My power!" Deu 32:39  
  
When a holy and beloved object of our affection is removed   
by death, we ought to sorrow. Humanity demands it; and   
Christianity, in the person of the weeping Jesus, allows it.   
The man without a tear, is a savage or a Stoic—but not a   
Christian. God intends when He *bestows* His gifts—that they   
should be received with smiles of gratitude; and when He   
*recalls* them—that they should be surrendered with "drops   
of sacred grief." Sorrow is an affection implanted by the   
Creator in the soul, for wise and beneficent purposes; and   
it ought not to be ruthlessly torn up by the roots—but   
directed in its exercise by reason and piety.   
  
The work of **grace**, though it is above **nature**—is not against   
it. The man who tells me not to weep at the grave—insults   
me, mocks me, and wishes to degrade me! Tears are the   
silent, pure, sincere testimony of my heart to the excellence   
of the gift He gave in mercy; and in mercy, no doubt, as well   
as judgment, He has recalled.  
  
But, then, **though we mourn—we must not murmur**.   
We may sorrow—but not with the violent and uncontrolled   
grief of the heathen, who have no hope.  
  
Our sorrow must flow, deep as we like, but noiseless and still  
—in the channels of **submission**. It must be a sorrow so **quiet**,   
as to hear all the words of consolation which our heavenly Father   
utters amidst the gentle strokes of His rod. It must be a sorrow   
so **reverential**, as to adore Him for the exercise of His prerogative   
in taking away what and whom He pleases. It must be a sorrow so   
**composed**, as to prepare us for doing His will as well as bearing it.   
It must be a sorrow so **meek** and **gentle**, as to justify Him in His   
dispensations. It must be a sorrow so **confiding**, as to be assured   
that there is as much love in taking the mercy away—as there was   
in bestowing it. It must be a sorrow so **grateful**, as to be thankful   
for the mercies left—as well as afflicted for the mercies lost. It must   
be a sorrow so **trustful**, as to look forward to the future with hope.   
It must be a sorrow so **patient**, as to bear all the aggravations that   
accompany or follow the bereavement with unruffled acquiescence.   
It must be a sorrow so **holy**, as to lift the prayer of faith for Divine   
grace, to sanctify the stroke. It must be a sorrow so **lasting**, as to   
preserve through all the coming years of life, the benefit of that   
event, which in one solemn moment changed the whole aspect   
of our earthly existence.

**These are the idols of the heart!**   
  
The first commandment of the decalogue says, "You shall   
have no other gods before Me." The meaning of this precept,   
which is the foundation of all religion, is not merely that we   
shall not acknowledge any other God besides Jehovah—but   
also that we shall **treat** Him as God! That is, we . . .  
must **love** Him with all our hearts,  
**serve** Him with all our lives, and  
**depend** upon Him for our supreme felicity.   
  
It is obvious that whatever we love most, and are most   
anxious to retain and please—whatever it is we depend   
most upon for happiness and help—whatever has most   
of our hearts—that is, in effect, is our God! It does not   
matter whether it is friends, possessions, desires—or   
our own selves!   
  
**These are the idols of the heart!**   
  
SELF is the great idol which is the rival of God, and which   
divides with Him the worship of the human race. It is   
surprising and affecting to think how much SELF enters   
into almost all we do. Besides the grosser form of self-  
righteousness, which leads many unconverted people   
actually to depend upon their own doings for acceptance   
with God; how much of . . .  
self-seeking,  
self-valuing,  
self-admiration,  
self-dependence,  
there is in many converted ones!   
How covertly do some seek their own praise in what   
they professedly do for God, and their fellow-creatures!   
How eager are they for the admiration and applause  
of their fellow-creatures! How much of self, yet how  
little suspected by themselves—is seen by One who  
knows them better than they know themselves, at  
the bottom of their most splendid services, donations,  
and most costly sacrifices!  
  
In how many ways does self steal away the heart from God!   
How subtle are its workings, how concealed its movements,   
yet how extensive is its influence. How SELF . . .  
perverts our motives,  
lowers our aims,  
corrupts our affections, and  
taints our best actions!  
  
How much incense is burned—and how many   
sacrifices are offered on the altar of this idol!   
  
"Little children, keep yourselves from idols!" 1Jn 5:21

**The prevailing sin of Christians**  
  
Increasing deadness to the world, and growing spirituality   
of mind, are sure results of 'sanctified affliction'.  **The love of the world is the great snare of the church   
in every age! Worldly-mindedness is now** **the prevailing   
sin of Christians**. We see them on all hands too eager to   
make themselves happy on earth, and seeking their enjoyments,   
if not in the sinful amusements of the world—yet in its 'innocent   
and home-bred comforts'. They look not at unseen and eternal   
things, but at seen and temporal things. Theirs is too much a   
life of 'sense', refined it is true from its gross sinfulness—but   
still a life of sense, rather than a life of faith.   
  
Hence there is "a needs be" for severe trials, if not to separate   
them and keep them separate from open and gross sins—yet   
to lift up their affections to things above, and to lead them to  
seek their happiness . . .  
from God, the fountain of life;  
from Christ, the Redeemer of their souls; and  
from heaven, the object of their expectations.   
  
When the world has been crucified to us, and we have been   
crucified to the world; when we have been taught its vanity   
and emptiness as a satisfying portion for the soul; when we   
have lost much of our anxiety to obtain its possessions, and   
of our dread of losing them; when we have turned from the   
folly of hewing out broken cisterns which can hold no water,   
and led more to the fountain of living waters; when we have   
lost our dependence on our comforts and possessions for   
happiness, and feel and rejoice in a glorious independence   
from 'created good' for bliss—when there is really and truly   
a conscious elevation of soul towards God and divine things  
—there is the evidence that we are sanctified by our trials.  
  
"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your   
word. It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might  
learn Your statutes. I know, O Lord, that Your judgments  
are righteous, and that in faithfulness You have afflicted  
me." (Psa 119:67, Psa 119:71, Psa 119:75)

**The most subtle, stubborn, and tenacious foe**  
  
"Don't you know that your body is a sanctuary of the   
Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God?   
**You are not your own**, for you were bought at a price;   
therefore glorify God in your body." 1Co 6:19-20  
  
Recollect that the renunciation of SELF, as well as of SIN,   
was one of the solemn transactions of that scene, and that   
time—when you bowed by faith at the foot of the cross,   
received mercy through Jesus Christ, and yielded yourselves   
to God. You then abjured, not only self-righteousness, but   
**self-seeking, self-pleasing,** and **self-living**. Self, as a   
supreme object, was renounced.   
  
Self, until then, had been your loftiest aim; self-love your   
highest affection—but then you transferred your aim and   
your affection to another object. The Christian has no right   
to ask what he will do with himself; or to what he will give   
himself; or how he will employ himself. He is no longer at   
liberty to inquire how he shall spend his energies, his time,   
his properly, his labor, and his influence; for he is not his   
own—he is bought with a price.   
  
He is not to live for **fame**—and please himself with the   
applause of his fellow creatures.  
  
Nor is he to live for **riches**—and please himself with   
increasing wealth.  
  
Nor is he to live for **health**—and please himself with   
the glowing energies of a sound body.  
  
Nor is he to live for **taste—**and please himself with   
the pursuit of literature, science, or the arts.  
  
Nor is he to live for **social enjoyment**—and please   
himself with an agreeable circle of friends.  
  
Nor is he to live for **ease**—and please himself with   
unmolested quiet.  
  
In short, he is not to consider himself as his own   
master—to please himself supremely in any way;   
nor his own property—to employ himself on his own   
account, and for his own benefit. He is not to imagine   
that personal gratification is to be his end and aim—for   
the accomplishment of which he may lay down his own   
schemes, select his own course, and pursue his own   
methods—as if he had an independent and sovereign  
right over himself. Self is . . .  
"the old man" to be crucified with Christ;  
the body of sin to be destroyed;  
the corrupt nature to be put away;  
the law in our members to be resisted;  
the lusts of the mind to be subdued.   
  
Self is the enemy of God—to be fought against; the   
rival interest with Christ in our soul—to be subdued;   
the means by which the devil would hold us in   
alienation from holiness—to be opposed.   
  
Self is **the most subtle, the most stubborn, the   
most tenacious foe** with which grace has to contend,   
in the soul of the believer. SELF lives, and works, and   
fights—when many other corruptions are mortified. Self  
is the last stronghold—the very citadel of Satan in the   
heart—which is reduced to the obedience of faith.   
  
Why do believers **murmur** at the painful dispensations of   
Providence, and find submission so hard an achievement?   
Because self is disturbed in its enjoyment!  
  
Why are they so easily **offended**, and experience such   
difficulty in showing forgiveness? Because self-esteem   
has been wounded!  
  
Why are they **covetous**? Because self is gratified by its  
increasing stores.   
  
What is **vanity**—but the indulgence of self-love?  
  
What is **ambition—**but the exultation of self?  
  
What is **pride**—but the worship of self?   
  
Why are they so reluctant to give their time and labor   
for the good of others, and the glory of God? Because   
they want it for ease, and the enjoyment of self!   
  
Why are they peevish, quarrelsome, and discontented   
with the little annoyances of life, which are everywhere   
and continually occurring? Because they want to settle   
down in unmolested ease, and undisturbed quiet, to   
enjoy themselves!  
  
But is this right? Is not this living as if we were our own?   
Is not this living for ourselves? Is not this forgetting that   
we are purchased property, belonging to another?   
  
My dear friends, do consider this subject. Weigh well the  
import of the condition of Christian discipleship, as laid   
down by our Lord: "If any man will come after Me, LET  
HIM DENY HIMSELF." Self-denial, not self-pleasing, is   
your business! And the evidence of our being disciples   
is in exact proportion to our disposition thus to take up   
our cross.   
  
If we are coveting ease, quiet, soft indulgence, luxurious   
gratification—and are dissatisfied, and discontented, and   
contentious, and peevish, because we cannot please   
ourselves, nor get others to please us, as the supreme   
end of life—how can we dream that we are the disciples   
of Him, of whom it is declared, "He pleased not Himself,"   
especially since it is said, "Let the same mind be in you   
which was in Christ Jesus?"   
  
For whom then are we to live, and whom are we to   
please, if not ourselves? Who is to come in the place   
of self? GOD! And for this obvious reason—we are   
God's! God's servants! God's property!

**All others are walking to perdition!**  
"Enoch walked with God." (Gen 5:24)  
  
Walking with God! Is this our religion? Does this   
aptly set forth our life? It makes no difference . . .  
to which church we belong,   
nor what creed we adopt,  
nor what ceremonies we profess,  
nor what zeal for religious things we have  
—if we are not walking with God!  
  
Reconciliation with Him through faith in our Lord Jesus   
Christ; a habitual acting as in His sight and with a view to   
His approbation, and a life of devotional communion with   
Him—is true religion—in whomever or wherever found.   
  
Walking with God! Is this religion ours?   
  
Do we intelligently, experimentally, know the meaning   
of that phrase—walking with God? Let us set it down   
before us, look at it, ponder it, and never cease to   
study it, until we know its meaning, and feel its force!  
  
None are walking to heaven, but those who are walking   
with God! **All others are walking to perdition!** We   
hear a great deal about other things that are connected   
with religion—its doctrines, its forms, its creeds—but   
walking with God is true religion. If we know nothing   
of this, we know nothing of true piety!  
  
It is walking with God—and not any external matter,   
that distinguishes the real from the nominal Christian!  
  
And it is 'close walking with God' which distinguishes the   
earnest Christian from the comparatively lukewarm one.   
The earnest Christian walks closely with God, presses,   
so to speak, to his very side; while the other, like Peter,   
during his season of cowardice, follows afar off.   
  
"Walk humbly with your God." (Mic 6:8)

**Over-indulgence of fond and foolish parents!**  
  
"I am going to carry out all my threats against **Eli and his  
family**. I have warned him continually that judgment is  
coming for his family, because his sons are blaspheming  
God and **he hasn't disciplined them**." 1Sa 3:12-13  
  
There is, in some households,   
no family government,  
no order,  
no subordination,  
no discipline.   
The children are kept under no restraint, but are   
allowed to do what they like. Their faults are   
intentionally unnoticed and unpunished, and their   
corruptions allowed to grow wild and headstrong;   
until, in fact, the whole family becomes utterly   
lawless, rebellious against parental authority—and   
grievous to all around them!  
  
How many have had to curse the **over-indulgence of   
fond and foolish parents!** How many, as they have   
ruminated amid the desolations of poverty, or the walls   
of a prison, have exclaimed, "**O, my cruelly fond parents**,   
had you exercised that authority with which God entrusted   
you, over your children, and had you checked my childish   
corruptions, and punished my boyish disobedience; had   
you subjected me to the beneficial restraint of wholesome   
discipline, I would not have brought you with a broken heart   
to your grave, nor myself with a ruined life to the jail!"  
  
**Overindulgence of children** is awfully common, and continually   
making shocking ravages in human character. It is a system of   
**great cruelty to the children**, to the parents themselves, and   
to society. This practice proceeds from various causes; in some   
instances, from a perverted and intentional sentimentalism;   
in others, from absolute indolence, and a regard to present   
ease, which leads the silly mother to adopt any means of   
coaxing, and yielding, and bribing—to keep the "young rebels"   
quiet for the time!  
  
It is not uncommon for parents to treat the first acts of   
**infantile rebellion**, rather as accidents to be smiled at,   
than as sins to be disciplined. "O," says the mother, "it   
is only play, he will know better soon. He does not mean   
any harm. I cannot discipline him."  
  
Lack of parental discipline, from whatever cause it   
proceeds, it is in the highest degree injurious to the   
character of the children!  
  
  
  
  
**For wives only!**  
  
"**Wives**, submit to your husbands as to the Lord."   
Eph 5:22  
  
In every society, there must be authority vested somewhere,   
and some ultimate authority, some last and highest tribunal   
established, from the decision of which there lies no appeal.   
In the family constitution this authority rests in the husband  
—he is the head, the law-giver, the ruler. In all matters   
concerning the 'little world in the house', he is to direct,   
not indeed without taking counsel with his wife. But in all   
differences of view, he is to decide—unless he chooses to   
waive his right; and to his decision the wife should yield,   
and **yield with grace and cheerfulness**.  
  
Usurpation of authority is always hateful, and it is one of   
the most offensive exhibitions of it, where the husband is   
degraded into a slave of the queen mother.  
  
I admit it is difficult for a sensible woman to submit to   
imbecility, but she should have considered this before she   
united herself to it. Having committed one error, let her not   
fall into a second, but give the strongest proof of her good   
sense which circumstances will allow her to offer, by making   
that concession to the God-given authority of her husband.   
She may reason, she may persuade, she may solicit—but if   
ignorance cannot be convinced, nor obstinacy turned, nor   
kindness conciliated, she has no resource left but to submit.  
  
"Wives, **submit** to your husbands as to the Lord."   
Eph 5:22  
  
  
  
**For husbands only!**  
  
"And you **husbands** must **love** your wives with the same  
love Christ showed the church. He gave up His life for  
her to make her holy." Eph 5:25-26  
  
**Christ's love is SINCERE.**   
He did not love in word only, but in deed, and in truth. In   
Him there was no deceitfulness; no epithets of endearment   
going forth out of untruthful lips; no actions varnished over   
with a mere covering of love. We must be like Him, and   
endeavor to maintain a principle of true love in the heart,   
as well as a manifestation of it in the conduct.   
  
It is a miserable thing to have to act the part of love, without   
feeling it. Hypocrisy is base in everything; but next to religion,   
is most base in affection. Besides, how difficult is it to act the   
part well, to keep on the mask, and to pretend the character   
so as to escape detection! Oh, the misery of that woman's   
heart, who at length finds out to her cost, that what she had   
been accustomed to receive and value as the attentions of a   
lover—are but the tricks of a cunning deceiver!  
 **The love of the Redeemer is ARDENT.**  
Let us, if we would form a correct idea of what should be the   
state of our hearts towards the woman of our choice, think of   
that affection which glowed in the bosom of a Savior, when He   
lived and died for His people. We can possess, it is true, neither   
the same kind, nor the same degree of love—but surely when we   
are referred to such an instance, if not altogether as a model,   
yet as a motive, it does teach us, that no weak affection is due,   
or should be offered to the wife of our bosom. We are told by the   
Savior Himself, that if He laid down his life for us, it is our duty to   
lay down ours for the brethren; how much more for the "friend that   
sticks closer than a brother." And if it be our duty to lay down our   
life, how much more to employ it while it lasts, in all the offices   
of an affection—strong, steady, and inventive!  
  
She who for our sake has forsaken the comfortable home, and   
the watchful care, and the warm embrace of her parents—has   
a right to expect in our love, that which shall make her "forget   
her father's house," and cause her to feel that with respect to   
happiness, she is no loser by the exchange. Happy the woman,   
and such should every husband strive to make his wife, who can   
look back without a sigh upon the moment, when she left forever,   
the guardians, the companions, and the scenes of her childhood.  
 **The love of Christ to His church is SUPREME.**   
He gives to the world His benevolence—but to the church His   
love! "The Lord your God in the midst of you," said the prophet,   
"is mighty; He will save you, He will rejoice over you with joy;   
He will rest in His love—He will rejoice over you with singing."   
  
So must the husband love his wife, above all else—he must   
"rest in his love." He should love her not only above all outside   
his house—but above all within it. She must take precedence   
both in his heart and conduct, not only of all strangers, but of   
all relatives, and also of all his children. He ought to love his   
children for her sake, rather than her for their sake.   
  
Is this always the case? On the contrary have we not often   
seen men, who appear to be far more interested in their   
children than in their wives; and who have paid far less   
attention to the latter than to grown-up daughters? How   
especially unseemly is it, for a man to be seen fonder of   
the society of any other woman, than that of his wife, even   
where nothing more may be intended than the pleasure of   
her company. Nor ought he to forsake her, in his leisure   
hours, for any companions of his own sex, however pleasant   
might be their demeanor or their conversation.  
 **The love of Christ is UNIFORM.**   
Like Himself, it is the same yesterday, today, and forever.   
Marital affection should have the same character; it should  
be at all times, and in all places alike; the same at home  
as abroad; in other peoples houses as in our own. Has not   
many a wife to sigh and exclaim—"Oh! that I were treated   
in my own house, with the same tenderness and attention   
as I receive in company!" With what almost loathing and   
disgust must such a woman turn from endearments, which   
under such circumstances she can consider as nothing but   
hypocrisy! Home is the chief place for fond and minute   
attention; and she who has not to complain of a lack of   
it there, will seldom feel the need or the inclination to   
complain of a lack of it abroad—except it be those silly   
women, who would degrade their husbands, by exacting not   
merely what is really kind, but what is actually ridiculous.  
 **The love Jesus is PRACTICAL and LABORIOUS.**   
He provided everything for the welfare and comfort of   
the church, and at a cost and by exertions of which we   
can form no idea.  
  
The business of providing for the family belongs chiefly   
to the husband. It is yours my brethren to rise up early,   
to sit up late, to eat the bread of carefulness, and to   
drink if necessary, the waters of affliction, that you may   
earn by the sweat of your brow, a comfortable support for   
the family circle. This is probably what the apostle meant,   
when he enjoined us to give honor to the wife as to the   
weaker vessel—the honor of providing for her, which she   
in consequence of the weakness of her frame, and the   
frequent infirmities which the maternal relation brings   
upon her, is not so well able to procure for herself.   
  
In most barbarous countries, and in some half-civilized   
ones, the burden of manual labor falls upon the woman,   
while her tyrant husband lives in indolence, feeding upon   
the industry of the hapless being whom he calls a wife—  
but treats as a slave! And are there no such idle tyrants   
in our age and country, who so as they can live in indolence,  
and gratify their appetites, care not how they oppress their   
wives—wretches who do little or nothing for the support of   
the family? How utterly lost to every noble and generous   
sentiment must that man be, whose heart cannot be moved   
by the entreaties or tears of his own wife, and who can hear   
in vain her pleadings for his child at her bosom, and his child  
by her side, and who by such appeals cannot be induced to   
give up his daily visits to the tavern, or his habits of   
sauntering idleness, to attend to his neglected business,   
and hold off the approaching tide of poverty and ruin.   
  
Such a creature is worse than a brute—he is a monster! And   
it seems a pity that there is no law and no prison-ship to   
take him away to a land where, if he will not work, so neither   
could he eat!  
  
A practical affection to a wife extends to everything! It should   
manifest itself in the most delicate attention to her comfort,   
and her feelings; in consulting her tastes; in concealing her   
failings; in never doing anything to degrade her, but everything   
to exalt her before her children and others; in acknowledging her   
excellencies, and commending her efforts to please him; in meeting,   
and even in anticipating all her reasonable requests; in short, in   
doing all that ingenuity can invent for her substantial happiness   
and general comfort.  
  
**Christ's love to His church is DURABLE and UNCHANGEABLE.**"Having loved His own, He loved them to the end"—without   
abatement or alteration. So ought men to love their wives, not   
only at the beginning; but to the end of their union; when the   
charms of beauty have fled before the withering influence of   
disease; when the vigorous and sprightly frame has lost its   
elasticity, and the step has become slow and faltering—when   
the wrinkles of old age have followed the bloom of youth, and   
the whole person seems rather the monument, than the   
resemblance of what it once was. Has she not gained in mind,  
what she has lost in exterior fascinations? Have not her mental   
graces flourished amid the ruins of personal charms? If the 'rose'   
and the 'lily' have faded on the cheek—have not the 'fruits of   
righteousness' grown in the soul? If those blossoms have   
departed, on which the eye of youthful passion gazed with so   
much ardor, has it not been to give way to the ripe fruit of   
Christian excellence? The woman is not what she once was—  
but the wife, the mother, the Christian—are better than they   
were!  
  
For an example of marital love in all its power and excellence,   
point me not to the bride and bridegroom displaying during the   
first month of their union, all the watchfulness and tenderness   
of affection—but let me look upon the husband and wife of fifty,   
whose love has been tried by the lapse and the changes of a   
quarter of a century, and who through this period and by these   
vicissitudes, have grown in attachment and esteem; and whose   
affection, if not glowing with all the fervid heat of a midsummer's   
day, is still like the sunshine of an October noon—warm and   
beautiful, as reflected amid autumnal tints!  
  
"So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies—he who   
loves his wife loves himself." A man's children are **parts** of himself;   
his wife **is** himself—"for the two shall be one flesh." This is his duty   
and the measure of it too; which is so plain, that, if he understands   
how he treats himself, there needs nothing be added concerning his   
demeanor towards her. For what tender care does he take of his body,   
and uses it with a delicate tenderness, and cares for it in all   
contingencies, and watches to keep it from all evils, and studies to   
make for it fair provisions. So let a man love his wife as his own body.  
  
Husbands! It is in your power to do more for your wife's happiness,  
or misery, than any other being in the universe! **An unkind husband**   
is a tormentor of the first class. His victim can never elude his grasp,   
nor go beyond the reach of his cruelty, until she is kindly released by   
the 'king of terrors', who, in this instance, becomes to her an angel of   
light, and conducts her to the grave as to a shelter from her oppressor!  
  
For such a woman there is no rest on earth—the destroyer of her   
peace has her always in his power, for she is always in his presence,   
or in the fear of it. The circumstances of every place, and every day,   
furnish him with the occasions of cruel neglect or unkindness, and it   
might be fairly questioned, whether there is to be found on earth a   
case of greater misery, than a woman whose heart daily withers   
under the cold **looks**, the chilling **words**, and repulsive **actions** of   
a husband who loves her not. Such a man is a murderer, though in   
this world he escapes the murderer's doom; and by a refinement   
of cruelty, he employs years in conducting his victim to her end,   
by the slow process of a lingering death.

**A ball, a concert, a festivity, a party!**  
  
Some of you are bent upon **present worldly enjoyment**.   
The apostle has described your taste and your pursuits   
where he says, "**Lovers of pleasure more than lovers   
of God.**" Ponder that description. Does it not startle and   
horrify you? Lovers of parties, of the dance and the song,   
of the gay scene and frivolous chat—more than God!   
  
Just look at this thought in all its naked deformity. **A ball,   
a concert, a festivity, a party**—loved more than God! Not   
to love God at all for higher objects than these—for science,   
literature, fame, rank, wealth—is a dreadful state of mind!  
**But to neglect and despise God for scenes of frivolity,   
mirth, and pleasure—is it not shocking?**   
  
Did you ever yet seriously reflect thus—"What a dreadful   
heart I must have—which can love pleasure, but cannot   
love God!"  
  
Consider what this **desire for pleasure** will do for you . . .  
in the hour of sickness,  
in the scenes of poverty,  
in the season of calamity,   
in the agonies of death,  
in the bottomless pit?  
  
  
  
**Woman's mission**  
  
The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be   
alone. I will make **a helper suitable for him**." Gen 2:18  
  
**Woman's mission** is to be the suitable help-mate   
of that man, to whom she has given herself as the   
companion of his pilgrimage upon earth.  
  
She is, in wedded life, to be his constant companion,   
in whose companionship he is to find one, who meets   
him hand to hand, eye to eye, lip to lip, and heart to   
heart—to whom he can unburden the secrets of a heart  
pressed down with care, or wrung with anguish;  
whose **presence** shall be to him above all other friendship;  
whose **voice** shall be his sweetest music;  
whose **smiles** his brightest sunshine;  
from whom he shall go forth with regret; and to whose  
company he shall return with willing feet, when the toils  
of the day are over; who shall walk near his loving heart,  
and feel the throbbing of affection as her arm leans on  
his, and presses on his side.  
  
In his hours of private companionship, he shall tell her   
all the secrets of his heart; find in her all the capabilities,  
and all the promptings, of the most tender and endeared   
fellowship; and in her gentle smiles, and unrestrained   
speech, enjoy all to be expected in one who was given   
by God to be his companion and friend.  
  
That companionship which woman was designed to afford   
to man, must of course be included the sympathetic offices   
of the **comforter**. It is hers, in their hours of retirement, to   
console and cheer him; when he is injured or insulted, to   
heal the wounds of his troubled spirit; when burdened by   
care, to lighten his load by sharing it; when groaning with   
anguish, to calm by her peace-speaking words the tumult   
of his heart; and act, in all his sorrows, the part of a   
ministering angel.  
  
The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be   
alone. I will make **a helper suitable for him**." Gen 2:18  
  
  
 **Dreadful and murderous cruelty!**  
  
What genuine believer can for a moment question   
whether his **children's eternal salvation** ought to   
be the supreme solicitude of his heart?   
  
If we look to the great bulk of mankind it is perfectly   
evident that true religion hardly enters into their view.   
They are very willing that their children should go to   
church; but as to any concern for the religious character,   
and the formation of pious habits—they are as destitute   
of everything of this kind, as if religion were a mere fable,   
or were nothing more than a mere form. Their chief object   
is either elegant and fashionable accomplishments, or   
learning and science—and provided their children excel in   
these, they never make any enquiry or feel any concern   
whether they fear God. They would be not only surprised,   
but would either laugh you to scorn, or scowl upon you   
with indignation, for proposing such fanatical questions   
in reference to their children! Yes, this is the way of the   
greater part of parents, even in this religious country.   
To train them up to shine and make a figure in society,   
is all they seek.   
 **Amazing folly!   
  
Dreadful and murderous cruelty!   
  
Degrading and groveling ambition!**   
  
To lose sight of the soul, and neglect salvation, and forget   
immortality! To train them in every kind of knowledge but the   
knowledge of religion! To instruct them in an acquaintance with   
every kind of subject, but to leave them in ignorance of God   
their Creator, their Preserver and Benefactor! To fit them to   
act their part well on earth, and to leave them unprepared for   
heaven! To qualify them to go with advantage through the   
scenes of time, and then to leave them unfit for the glorious   
and enduring scenes of eternity!  
  
O strange fondness of irreligious parents!   
  
O miserable destiny of their hapless offspring!  
  
In direct opposition to this, the chief end of every Christian  
parent must be the spiritual interests, the religious character,   
the eternal salvation of his children. His highest ambition, his   
most earnest prayer, his most vigorous pursuit, his eye, his   
heart, and his hope should be engaged for their eternal welfare!  
  
This should be the nature and exercise of his concern—"I am   
desirous, if it pleases God, that my children should be blessed   
with the enjoyment of reason, of health, of such a moderate   
portion of worldly wealth, and worldly respectability as is   
compatible with their station in life; and with a view to this   
I will give them all the advantages of a suitable education.   
But above and beyond this, I far more intensely desire, and   
far more earnestly pray, and far more anxiously seek, that   
they may have the fear of God in their hearts, may be made   
partakers of true religion, and be everlastingly saved. And   
provided God grants me the latter, by bestowing upon them   
His grace, I shall feel that my chief object is accomplished,   
and be quite reconciled to any circumstances which may   
otherwise befall them. For rather would I see them in the   
humble valley of poverty, if at the same time they were true   
Christians—than on the very pinnacle of worldly grandeur,   
but destitute of true piety."   
  
Such should be the views and feelings and desires of all true  
Christian parents. Religion should be at the very center of all   
their schemes and pursuits for their offspring. This should be   
the guiding principle, the directing object, the great landmark   
by which all their course should be steered.

**The rib**  
  
"Then the Lord God made a woman from **the rib** He   
had taken from the man, and brought her to Adam."  
Gen 2:22  
  
Woman was the finishing grace of the creation.   
  
Woman was the completeness of man's bliss in Paradise.

Woman is the mother of the human race.

Woman was the cause of sin and death to our world.   
  
The world was redeemed by the seed of the woman.   
  
Woman is our companion, counselor, and comforter in the  
pilgrimage of life—or our tempter, scourge, and destroyer.   
  
Our sweetest cup of earthly happiness—or our bitterest   
draught of sorrow, is mixed and administered by her hand.  
  
She not only renders smooth or rough our path to the  
grave—but helps or hinders our progress to immortality.   
  
In heaven we shall bless God for her aid in assisting   
us to reach that blissful state—or amid the torments   
of unutterable woe in another region, we shall deplore   
the fatality of her influence!  
  
**I look beyond the painted and gaudy scene of earth's   
fading vanities**, to the everlasting ages through which   
you must exist in torment or bliss; and, God helping me,   
it shall not be my fault if you do not live in comfort,   
die in peace, and inherit salvation!

**The first book they read**  
  
"Train up a child in the way he should go."   
Pro 22:6  
  
Education in modern parlance, means nothing  
more than instruction, or the communication of  
knowledge to the mind; and a good education  
means, the opportunity of acquiring all kinds  
of learning, science, and what are called  
achievements.  
  
But properly speaking, education in the true   
and higher import of the term, means . . .  
the implanting of right dispositions,  
the cultivation of the heart,  
the guidance of the temper,  
the formation of the character.  
  
The most important part of education is that  
which relates to the communication of **godly  
principles**, and the formation of **moral habits**.  
  
You educate your children by . . .   
your example,  
your conversations,  
your likings and dislikings,  
your home life,   
your daily behavior,   
these, these will educate them!  
  
You began educating your children the moment they   
were capable of forming an idea. This unconscious   
education is of more constant and powerful effect,   
and of far more consequence than that which is   
direct and apparent. This education goes on at   
every instant of time. It goes on like time—you   
can neither stop it nor turn its course.  
  
Your children may read many books, but **the first   
book they read**, and that which they continue to   
read, and by far the most influential—is that of   
their parents' example and daily deportment.

**Pointing or leading?**  
  
Children have their eyes always upon their parents,   
and are quick to discern any violations of consistency.   
If they see us as worldly-minded, as grasping and   
anxious after riches, as solicitous to be surrounded   
by splendid furniture, luxurious gratifications, and   
fashionable habits, as the people of the world—if   
they see us deceitful, implacable, or malicious—what   
can they conclude but that our religion is mere sham?   
  
In such a case, of how little service is our attempt   
to impress upon their minds, those claims which we   
ourselves 'practically' deny? It were far better for some   
parents to say nothing to their children about religion,   
for until they alter their own conduct, their admonitions   
can produce no other effect than to excite disgust!  
  
It is enough to make every parent tremble—to think   
what a parent should be! **Without a godly example**,   
everything else that we do is most lamentably deficient!  
As has been often said, it is only **pointing** them the   
way to heaven—but **leading** them in the way to hell!

**They slay their own children!**   
  
A mother should never forget that those little engaging   
creatures which play about the room so gaily and so   
innocently, with all the unconsciousness of childhood, are   
young immortals—beings destined to eternity—creatures   
placed on earth on probation for heaven—and that **much   
will depend upon her**, whether the everlasting ages shall   
be spent by them in torment—or in bliss!   
  
This is an overwhelming thought!  
  
All should realize the sublime idea that . . .  
their houses are the **schools for eternity**;  
their children the scholars;  
themselves the teachers; and  
evangelical religion the lesson.   
  
Those parents who neglect the religious education   
of their children, whatever else they may impart,   
are **more guilty than Herod!**   
  
He slew the children of others,  
**they slay their own children!**   
  
He slew only the body,  
they slay the soul!   
  
He slew them by hired assassins,  
they slay their children themselves!   
  
We shudder at the cruelties of those who sacrificed   
their babes to Moloch. But how much more dreadful   
an immolation do they practice, who **offer up their   
sons and daughters to Satan**, by neglecting the   
education of their souls, and leaving them to grow   
up in ignorance of God and their eternal destiny!   
  
Mothers! Your religion, if it is genuine, will teach you   
at once the greatness of the work, and your own   
insufficiency to perform it aright in your own strength.   
Your business is to train immortal beings for God,   
heaven, and eternity!

**The domestic slave**  
  
There are various kinds of slavery in the world, and   
many classes of victims of this cruel bondage. There is   
among others, **the domestic slave**, whose tyrant is her   
husband—and the scene of her bondage, her home!  
  
His **stinginess** allows her scanty supplies for bare   
necessities. His **selfishness** is so engrossing and exacting,   
that his demands for his own personal ease and indulgence   
are incessant, and leave her no time for the consideration   
of her own comfort. His **disposition** is so bad, that all her  
diligence to please are unavailing to give him satisfaction,   
or to avert the sallies of his irritability, discontent, and   
complaints.   
  
When such a man protests against Negro-slavery, let him  
begin the work of emancipation at home, by raising the   
oppressed woman he holds in bondage there, from the   
condition of a drudge—into the station of a wife!  
  
But there are also many sad cases in which **the** **slavery is   
self-imposed!** The bondage comes from the wife herself!   
The husband would gladly release her—but she will not   
let him!  
  
Some are slaves to **neatness**—and make their fidgety   
anxiety about this matter a misery to themselves and   
all around them!  
  
Others are slaves to **fashion**—and are always anxious   
and troubled about elegance and refinement!  
  
Others are slaves to **domestic display, parties and   
amusements**—and are always full of anxiety about  
making a splendid appearance!  
  
Others are slaves to **frugality**—and are ever vexing   
themselves to economize!  
  
In these ways women will torment themselves and fill   
their minds with unnecessary cares and self-imposed   
troubles! To all such we say, "Martha, Martha, you are   
anxious and troubled about so many things!"

**A hideous skeleton!  
A collection of bones!  
A heap of dust!**  
  
"Don't be concerned about the **outward beauty**  
that depends on fancy hairstyles, expensive  
jewelry, or beautiful clothes. You should be  
known for **the beauty that comes from within**,  
the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit,  
which is so precious to God." 1Pe 3:3-4  
  
How exquisitely is this put! How impressive the ideas   
which are conveyed! It is **the decoration of the soul**   
rather than of the body, about which Christian women   
should be chiefly solicitous and concerned.   
  
The soul is indestructible and immortal—so should its   
ornaments be. What can jewels of silver or jewels of   
gold do for the soul?   
  
Can the diamond sparkle upon the **intellect**?   
Or the ruby blaze upon the **heart**?   
Or the pearl be set in the **conscience**?   
Or the gorgeous robe clothe the **character**?   
Or the flower wave over the **holy nature**?   
  
No! The appropriate ornaments of the soul are truth,   
holiness, knowledge, faith, hope, love, joy, humility;   
and all the other gifts and graces of the Spirit—wisdom,   
prudence, fortitude and gentleness. These are the jewels   
with which the inner heart should be adorned. The outer   
body is corruptible. Dust it is, and unto dust it shall return.   
  
That beautiful woman glittering in all the profusion of   
diamonds—the admiration and envy of the party or the   
ball room—must before long be a mass of putrefaction   
too ghastly to be looked upon—and then **a hideous   
skeleton, a collection of bones, a heap of dust!**   
  
And where will be the immortal spirit? Will it wear   
the cast-off jewels of the body? O no! These remain,   
rescued from the grasp of the 'king of terrors', but   
only to ornament other bodies!  
  
But turn now to that other female, the woman who,   
regardless of the decoration of the body, was all   
intent upon **the beauty of the soul**. Look at her,   
who was clothed with the robe of righteousness   
and the garment of salvation, and decorated with   
the ornaments of a gentle and quiet spirit.   
  
She too dies; but her indestructible and immortal   
soul over which death has no dominion, goes not   
unadorned into the presence of the Eternal; for the   
jewels with which it decorated itself on earth are as   
indestructible as its own nature, and go with it to   
shine in the presence of God!

**All taken up with fashion, amusement, and folly!**  
  
"**Make the teaching about God our Savior attractive  
in every way.**" Tit 2:10  
  
It is a solemn thing to profess to be a disciple of Christ.   
  
It supposes you to be a new creature, that old things   
have passed away, and that all things have become  
new with you.  
  
It supposes that you have . . .  
new principles,  
new motives,  
new ends of life,  
new tastes and new pleasures.   
  
Now, your **profession** is to be maintained with a due   
regard to this. Your **conduct** must correspond with it.   
  
You must be dissimilar in these things, to those who   
make no such profession. They must **see** the difference   
as well as **hear** of it. You must compel them to say,   
"Well, we do not like her religion, but it is quite in   
harmony with her profession."  
  
Study your profession, and thoroughly understand   
what it implies and enjoins. Consider well . . .  
what holiness of conduct;  
what spirituality of mind;  
what separation from the world in spirit and taste;  
what devotional feelings;  
what faith, hope, love and humility;  
what amiableness and kindness of disposition,   
are included in that declaration you have actually   
made—"I am a Christian!"   
  
She who is bent upon eternity, cannot sink down into   
the levity of those who are **all taken up with fashion,   
amusement, and folly!**  
The possessor of true religion is satisfied with her   
own sources of enjoyment, without running to the   
amusements of the world for pleasure and excitement.

**One of the loveliest scenes**  
  
A married couple without mutual love, is **one of   
the most pitiable spectacles on earth!** They   
remain united only to be a torment to each other!  
  
A loving, united, harmonious family, where the   
children all promote the comfort of their parents   
and of one another; where each is studious to   
please and to perform all fond kindnesses for the   
rest, and all seek the happiness of each other, is  **one of the loveliest scenes** **to be found in our   
selfish and discordant world!**

**So much time thrown away on these elegant trifles!**  
"**Redeeming the time**, because the days are evil." Eph 5:16  
  
There are three things which, if lost, can never   
be recovered—**time**, the soul, and an opportunity.  
  
In order to be useful, it is necessary to cultivate habits   
of order, punctuality, and **the right employment of time**.   
  
There is no doing good without the proper use of time.   
  
Two things cannot be done at once. Benevolent service  
requires time. And how much time is wasted, which the   
miseries and needs of society require! "Redeem the time!"  
is a warning that should ever be sounding in our ears!  
  
We need time for the improvement of our **own souls**—and   
we need it for the good of **others**. We can do much with a   
proper use of time—and nothing without it. There is scarcely   
anything to which the injunction of our Lord more strictly   
applies than to time—"Gather up the **fragments** that nothing   
be lost." Order redeems time, so does punctuality—therefore   
order and punctuality are ways of supplying the time   
necessary for the exercise of deeds of mercy.   
  
Redeem time from useless reading, and other selfish   
entertainments—and also from that excessive addictedness   
to the worldly accomplishments of music, arts, and fancy   
craft-works, which are so characteristic of the present day.   
That some portion of time may be given to these things is   
admitted. I am not for parting with the exquisite polish which   
skill in these matters imparts to female elegance. I love to   
see the decorations of female mind and manners. Of this I   
may have to speak again in a future chapter, and therefore   
shall merely now enquire—when the cries of misery are   
entering into her ears, and the groans of creation are arising   
all around her; when countless millions abroad are living and   
dying without the light of the gospel and the hope of salvation;   
when at our own doors will be found so many passing in   
ignorance and wickedness to their eternal destinies—is it   
humane for a Christian woman to spend so much precious   
time each day over her knitting, crotchet, or embroidery   
work? As she sits plying those needles, and bringing out,   
it may be, the tasteful design, hour after hour—does she   
never hear the cry of human woe, "Come over and help us!"   
Does it never occur to her, how many souls have gone into   
eternity unprepared to meet their God, since she took her   
chair and commenced her daily entertainment?  
  
Or, even leaving out of view the employment of her time   
for deeds of mercy to **others**; is it not an afflicting sight   
to behold **so much time thrown away on these elegant   
trifles**, which might be employed in cultivating one's own   
mind and heart, by reading useful Christian literature?   
  
You cannot, systematically, do good either to yourself   
or others, without redeeming time for the purpose!

**True religion**  
  
**True religion** is . . .  
**personal**,  
**experimental**,   
**practical**.  
  
It is a thing of the **heart**—and not merely   
external religious forms.   
  
**True religion** is a **living** principle in the soul . . .   
influencing the mind,  
alluring the affections,  
guiding the will,  
directing and enlightening the conscience.   
  
**True religion** is a **supreme**—not a subordinate matter.   
It demands and obtains the throne of the soul. It guides   
the whole character—and requires the whole man and all   
his conduct to be in subordination.  
  
**True religion** is not an occasional thing—but **habitual**.  
It takes up its abode in the heart—and not merely   
visits it at certain times and at particular seasons.   
  
**True religion** is not a partial thing—but **universal**.   
It does not confine itself to certain times, places,   
and occasions—but forms an integral part of the   
character—and blends with everything we do.  
  
**True religion** is **noble** and **lofty**—not an abject,  
servile, and groveling thing. It communes . . .  
with God,  
with truth,  
with holiness,  
with heaven,  
with eternity,  
with infinity!  
  
**True religion** is a **happy**—and not a melancholy thing.   
It gives peace that passes understanding, and joy that   
is unspeakable, and full of glory!  
  
**True religion** is a **durable**—and not a transient thing. It . . .  
passes with us through life,  
lies down with us on the pillow of death,  
rises with us at the last day, and  
dwells in our souls in heaven as the very element of eternal life!  
  
Such is **true religion**—the most **sublime** thing in the   
world—sent down to be our comforter on earth—and our   
guide to everlasting life through all this gloomy valley!  
  
  
  
  
**Literature, science, politics, commerce, and the arts**,   
are all important in their place and measure; and men   
give proof that they duly, or rather unduly estimate their   
importance—by the devoted manner in which they attend   
to them. To multitudes, these thing are everything.   
  
Yet man is an immortal creature, and there is an eternity   
before him—and what direct relation have these things   
to immortality? Or what influence do they exert on our   
everlasting destiny in the eternal world? More—do they   
make us either virtuous or happy in this world? Is there   
any necessary connection between any, or all of these   
things—with human felicity? They call out and employ the   
noble faculties of the mind; they raise man from savage   
to civilized society; they refine the taste; they embellish   
life; they decorate the stage on which the great drama   
of existence is carried on—and give interest to the   
performance!  
  
But do any of these things reach the seat of man's   
chief pleasures or pains—the heart? Do they . . .  
cure its disorders,  
correct its tastes,  
mitigate its sorrows, or  
soften its weightiest cares?   
  
Do any of these things comfort man amid . . .  
the wreck of his fortunes,  
the disappointment of his hopes,  
the loss of his friends,  
the malignity of his enemies,  
the pains of a sick chamber,  
the struggles of a dying bed,  
the prospect of a coming judgment?   
  
No! True religion is that, and that alone, which can   
do this! And this it can do, and is continually doing!

**The surest guide to success in this world**  
  
What is your life, but a voyage to eternity!  
  
A life altogether unprepared for, must be a life   
of perpetual mistakes, faults, and miseries.  
  
The chief preparation for life is the formation of a   
moral and spiritual character. Genuine piety, the   
parent of sound morality, is **the surest guide to   
success in this world**. And as true religion is the   
best guide to happiness in this world, likewise it   
is the only way to happiness in the world to come.  
  
True piety will preserve you from all the habits which   
tend to poverty and misery—and aid the formation of   
all habits which tend to usefulness and happiness.  
  
  
  
**"Who can show us any good?"**  
  
Many are asking, **"Who can show us any good?"**   
Psa 4:6  
  
Man is made for happiness, and is capable of it. But  **what** is happiness—and **how** is it to be obtained?   
To possess and enjoy it, man must be furnished with   
some good—suited to his nature, adapted to his   
condition, and adequate to his capacity and desires.  
  
**The nature of the chief good** has been, in every age,   
the interesting subject of most earnest philosophic   
inquiry. But how various and opposed, have been the   
conclusions at which the inquirers have arrived on this   
important subject. Varro, a learned Latin writer, who   
lived before Christ, reckoned up more than two hundred   
different opinions on this subject—thus plainly evincing   
man's ignorance of his own nature, circumstances, and   
needs.   
  
Not perceiving what it is that has made him miserable—man   
cannot know what will make him happy! Unacquainted with,   
or rather overlooking, the disease—he cannot know the remedy!   
  
He feels an aching void within, **an unsatisfied craving after   
something**—but knows neither the nature, nor the source, of   
the food adapted to meet and satisfy his hungry appetite.   
  
The vagrant spirit of man is seen wandering from God—the   
fountain of bliss—roaming through this "dry and thirsty land,   
where there is no water;" **anxiously looking for happiness**,   
but never finding it; coming often to springs that are dry,   
and to cisterns that are broken; until weary of the pursuit   
and disappointed in its hopes, it is ready to give up all in   
despair, and reconcile itself to misery, under the notion   
that happiness is but a fiction!  
  
In this sad and hopeless mood, the victim of grief   
and despondency is met by the Bible, which takes   
him by the hand, and leads him to the fountain of   
living waters. Such is the design of Scripture—to   
show first of all what will **not** make man happy,   
and then what will.   
  
Upon all the most coveted possessions of this world,   
it pronounces the solemn and impressive sentence,   
"Vanity of vanities! All is vanity!" It interrogates singly   
every coveted object of human desire, and asks, "What   
are you?" only to receive the melancholy answer, "Vanity!"   
  
Nothing 'on earth' can satisfy the soul of man, as its   
supreme good. **Science** has multiplied its discoveries, **art**its inventions, and **literature** its productions. **Civilization**has opened new sources of luxury, and **ingenuity** has   
added innumerable gratifications of appetite and of taste.  
Every domain of nature has been explored; every conceivable   
experiment been made, to find new means of enjoyment,   
and new **secrets of happiness**. But still the heart of man   
confirms, and the experience of the human race prolongs   
the echo—"Vanity of vanities! All is vanity!"  
  
What is the nature and the source of happiness?   
  
What is . . .  
to terminate the weary pursuits,  
to revive the languid hopes,   
to gratify the anxious desires,   
of destitute and sorrowing people,   
hungering and thirsting after bliss?  
  
What human reason is thus proved to be too ignorant   
and too weak to decide, the Bible undertakes to settle;  
and explicitly, imperatively, and infallibly, determines  
for all and forever. Only Biblical Christianity . . .  
suits the nature,  
meets the needs,  
alleviates the sorrows,  
satisfies the desires,   
of the human soul—and is its portion forever.   
  
Only Christianity . . .  
finds man depraved—and makes him holy;  
finds him little—and makes him great;  
finds him earthly—and raises him to heaven!  
  
"You are my portion, O my God. Your favor is   
life, and your love is better than life. You are   
the center, the rest, the home of my heart!"   
  
"Everyone who drinks this water will **thirst again**;  
but whoever drinks the water I give him will never  
thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in  
him a spring of water welling up to eternal life!"  
Joh 4:13-14  
  
  
  
**The idol of our day!**  
  
One of the evils of our age, is **an excessive love   
of pleasure**, which leads to self-indulgence, and   
indisposes the mind for sober thought and true piety.   
  
**Love of pleasure** is one of the growing tendencies of   
the day in which we live, and threatens infinite damage   
to the present and eternal welfare of mankind, by   
bringing on an age of frivolity, sensuality and 'practical   
atheism'.  
  
Find your pleasure, young men . . .  
in the improvement of your mind,  
in attention to duties,  
in true piety, and  
in active benevolence.   
Is there not scope enough for enjoyment here?  
  
**Excessive worldliness** is another of the dangers of this   
age. In our wealthy and materialistic country, there is   
most imminent peril of sinking into the mere worldling,   
and living only to get wealth. Never was there so great  
a danger of having . . .  
the **conscience** benumbed,   
**moral** **principles** prostrated,   
the **heart** rendered callous,   
the **intellect** emptied of its strength,   
as in the age in which we live!   
  
Wealth is **the idol of our day!** Without watchfulness   
and prayer, you are in danger of . . .  
bowing devoutly at its shrine,  
becoming its worshipers, and   
immolating your souls as a burnt-offering on its altars!  
  
  
  
**A bad word!**  
  
"We may throw the dice, but the Lord  
determines how they fall." Pro 16:33  
  
"Luck!"There is no such thing in our world,   
none in nature, none in human affairs.   
  
**Luck** means that an event has no cause at all.   
It is **a bad word**—a heathen term. Drop it from   
your vocabulary! Trust nothing to luck, and   
expect nothing from it. Avoid all practical   
dependence upon it or its kindred words . . .  
**fate**,   
**chance**,   
**fortune**.  
  
Never forget your dependence upon God. He can   
exalt you to prosperity—or sink you into the lowest   
depth of adversity. He can make everything to which   
you set your hand to prosper—or to fail. Devoutly   
acknowledge this. Abhor the atheism that shuts   
God out of His own world!

(Choice devotional selections from   
the works of John Angell James)

**The sin of killing time**  
  
**"Only fools idle away their time."** Pro 12:11  
  
Idleness is a **complicated** vice. Yes, I say VICE!   
  
First it is a most **wasteful vice**. It wastes time,   
which is more precious than rubies; it wastes a   
man's mental faculties; it wastes property.   
  
Idleness is a **disgraceful** vice. How reproachful is it   
in a being made to be active, to spend life in doing   
nothing, and to throw away his mental powers in sloth.   
  
Idleness is a **criminal** vice. God has commanded   
us to be active, and will call us to account for **the   
sin of killing time**.   
  
Idleness is a **dangerous** vice. Doing nothing is next   
to doing evil—and is sure to lead to it. From its very   
inaction it ultimately becomes the active cause of all   
evil. "The Devil tempts all men; but the idle man   
tempts the Devil."  
  
Idleness is a **wretched** vice. An idle man is the   
most miserable of all God's creatures. Woe be   
to the man who is doomed to bear the pain and   
penalties of a slothful disposition.  
  
"And we urge you, brothers, **warn those  
who are idle**." 1Th 5:14  
  
  
  
  
**Fortified by true piety**  
  
"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead,  
bring them up in the training and instruction of  
the Lord." Eph 6:4  
  
**Parents!** How momentous a duty is it to give sound   
Christian instruction to your children at the earliest   
period in which they can receive it; and endeavor,   
by the most judicious, affectionate, and persevering  
methods, to **form their character** by true religion!  
  
Train them up in the fear of God—that they may  
leave home **fortified by true piety**, to encounter  
the temptations of the world, and to endure the  
trials of life.  
  
Next to God Himself, a pious child is a parent's   
best companion amid the infirmities of old age,   
and in the chamber of sickness and death.  
  
  
  
**Self-seeking, men-pleasing ministers**  
"Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of  
God? **Or am I trying to please men?** If I were still  
trying to please men, I would not be a servant of  
Christ." Gal 1:10  
  
A fearless disregard of . . .  
smiles or frowns,  
character or consequences,  
opposition or approbation,  
pay or popularity,   
will always distinguish the true servant of Christ   
from **self-seeking, men-pleasing ministers**.  
  
"For we speak as messengers who have been approved  
by God to be entrusted with the Gospel. **Our purpose  
is to please God, not men.** He is the one who examines  
the motives of our hearts." 1Th 2:4  
  
  
  
**By its own powerful and holy instinct**  
  
"I will give you a new heart with new and right desires,  
and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your  
stony heart of sin and give you a new, obedient heart."  
Eze 36:26  
  
The new nature, **by its own powerful and holy instinct**,   
will turn away your feet from every forbidden place, and   
every unhallowed scene. Panting after God, and thirsting   
for the living God, taking pleasure in His ways, you will   
shudder at the idea of being found in the haunts of vice,   
or in the society of the vicious. It will be unnecessary to   
forbid your going to the tavern, the theater, the house   
of ill fame, the gambling-table, or horse-race. Your own   
renewed and sanctified nature will be a law against   
these things.  
  
  
  
**The shrine of Mammon**  
  
"You lack only one thing. Go and sell all you have and  
give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure  
in heaven. Then come, follow Me." At this, the man's  
face fell, and he went sadly away because he had  
many possessions. Mar 10:21-22  
  
You see what was the defect in this young man. He did not   
possess the faith which overcomes the world. He wished   
to unite two things utterly irreconcilable—the love of God   
and the love of the world. He wanted to serve two masters,   
God and Mammon. It was not open vice and profligacy that   
kept him from true religion here, and from heaven hereafter.  
  
It was the more decent and reputable sin of supreme   
attachment to worldly things. He could give up many   
sins, but he could not give up his besetting sin—supreme   
regard to wealth. He could do many things, but he could   
not give up all to follow Christ. He could give up open   
vice, but he could not deny himself and take up his cross.   
He had many good qualities, but he lacked one thing.  
  
**If open vice has slain its thousands, worldliness has   
slain its tens of thousands!**   
  
Of all the false gods, **the shrine of Mammon** is most  
resorted to—it is from that idolatrous temple, the broadest   
and most beaten path to the bottomless pit will be found.   
In the crowd which press along that path, are included, not   
only the knaves, the cheats, and men of dishonorable   
character; but men who follow things which are just, and   
honest, and true, and reputable; who yet rise to no higher   
than to be the **worshipers of this sordid deity**. Yes, even   
Mammon can boast of devotees who scorn all that is vile,   
dishonorable and unjust.   
  
In the broad road which leads to destruction, there is a path   
for the lovers of the world—as well as for the lovers of vice!  
  
  
  
  
**Other Baals!**  
  
"How long are you going to waver between two  
opinions? If Jehovah is God, follow Him! But **if  
Baal is God, then follow him!**" 1Ki 18:21  
  
There are **other Baals** in this age, in all the various   
forms under which they are objects of human idolatry.   
  
It is true you are not called, invited or disposed,   
to bow the knee to idols of wood, stone, or metal.   
  
These, however, are not the only way in which idolatry   
may be practiced. **Everyone has a god**, and if man does   
not love and worship Jehovah, he will make a deity of   
his own image. Survey, young men, **the idols which   
you are called upon to worship!**  
Among them, sustaining a high place, is **the idol of   
SENSUALITY**. This goddess is decked out with all that   
can pollute the imagination, inflame the passions, or   
excite the evil propensities of a youthful heart. Before   
this image, multitudes of devotees of both sexes bow   
the knee and offer the most costly sacrifices of property,   
health, principle, and reputation!  
  
Near her is **the bewitching and smiling image of   
WORLDLY PLEASURE**, with the sound of music, the   
song, and the dance—alluring the giddy and thoughtless   
to its orgies; and throwing the spell of its fascinations   
over the imagination of multitudes who go merrily to   
their ruin!  
  
**MAMMON, the despicable deity of wealth**, is there,   
glittering with gold, and offering riches to his eager   
followers as the reward of their diligent and faithful   
adherence. His liturgy is the cry of "Money! Money!   
Money!" His sacrifices are the time, the bodies, the   
comfort, and the souls of his worshipers!  
  
Near this is **the shrine of HUMAN KNOWLEDGE**.   
This idol is only evil, when raised above the place   
of faith, piety, and virtue. When thus exalted above   
Scripture, it is a deceiving, corrupting idol—the false   
goddess of a Pantheon of Vices.   
  
Nor must we leave out **the idols of FALSE RELIGION**,   
the chief of which is **Popery**—the anti-Christ of the   
Apocalypse, "the Man of Sin sitting in the temple of God,   
exalting itself above all that is called God." This idol,   
taking the name of Christ as its designation, assuming   
the cross as its symbol, and boasting of an apostle as   
its first pope; enriched by wealth; venerable for antiquity;   
dignified by learning; decorated by sculpture, architecture,   
and painting; and adding the abysmal policies, and most   
serpentine craft to all these other dangerous qualities,   
has fascinated countless millions! And, notwithstanding   
the monstrous absurdity of its doctrines, the blood-stained   
page of its history, and its hostility to the liberties of   
mankind—is now putting forth the most arrogant claims,   
and making the most audacious attempts for the conquest   
of our country!  
  
These idolaters have chosen their god, and are the   
determined and devoted worshipers of their Baals!   
  
They have hardened their hearts, and seared their   
consciences, except it be an occasional qualm in the   
season of death or sickness.   
  
They congratulate themselves upon their having thrown   
off all the weaknesses and fears of Christianity, and   
upon their being now enabled to pursue their downward   
course unchecked by the restraint of conscience. Unhappy   
men, blind, and glorying in their blindness; benumbed in   
all their moral faculties, and exulting in their stupidity!   
With every tie cut, which held them to piety and truth, they   
account it a privilege that they are drifting unobstructed to   
destruction—determined to be lost, and rejoicing that   
nothing bars their path to the bottomless pit!  
  
"These men have set up idols in their hearts!" Eze 14:3  
  
"Their hearts were devoted to their idols!" Eze 20:16

**Saving faith**   
  
**Saving faith** expresses itself not only in worship,   
in religious zeal, in charity to the poor—but in a   
systematic and strong restraint upon the passions,  
imagination, temper, and appetites.  
  
**Saving faith** will ensure you . . .  
the protection of omnipotence;  
the guidance of omniscience;  
the companionship of omnipresence;  
the supplies of all-sufficiency.  
  
**Saving faith** will fill your intellect with the thoughts   
of God's own mind, and your soul with the joy of   
God's own heart—and thus furnish you at once with   
the supreme truth, and the chief good.  
  
**Saving faith** will mingle its own heavenly   
pleasures with the pure delights of earth.   
  
**Saving faith** will preserve you equally from the snares   
of prosperity, and the withering blasts of adversity.   
  
**Saving faith** will be . . .  
your nurse in sickness,  
your companion in solitude, and  
your preserver amid the corruptions of society.  
  
**Saving faith** will be your shield against  
temptations to sin, and the insidious   
attacks of infidelity and false philosophy.   
  
**Saving faith** will be . . .  
the guide of your youth,  
the protector of your matured life,  
and the prop of your old age.   
  
**Saving faith** will prepare you for early death, or   
for living until old age. It will smooth the pillow   
of death, by giving you immortal hopes amid the   
dissolution of nature. It will rise with you from the   
grave in that day when death shall be swallowed   
up in victory, and will put you in possession of   
glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life!

**These are the fools of whom Solomon speaks!**  
  
"Whoever walks with the wise will become wise; but   
**the companion of fools** shall be destroyed!" Pro 13:20  
  
Young men! There are evil companions to be avoided!  
  
The workhouse,   
the lunatic asylum,   
the prison,   
the gallows,   
the bottomless pit,  
all, all, attest the truth of this, by the millions they   
have swallowed up in their jaws of destruction!   
  
**Evil companionship** has ruined . . .  
more characters,  
more fortunes,  
more bodies,  
and more souls,  
than almost anything else that could be named.   
  
Young men! Evil companionship is one of your first   
and most pressing dangers. Character assimilates to   
that which surrounds it. You must take your character,   
to a certain extent, from your companions.  
  
Do not have bad companions! Men . . .  
who scoff at Christianity,  
who ridicule the godly,  
who make light of sin and laugh at conscience,  
who are lewd in their actions, or obscene in their talk,  
who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God,  
who are extravagant in their habits,  
who are loose in their moral principles,  
**these are the fools of whom Solomon speaks**,   
—who will bring their own destruction upon you,   
if you do not avoid them!  
  
With much the same emphasis do I warn you against **bad   
BOOKS**. There are books that inflame the imagination and   
corrupt the taste—that by their excitement unfit the mind   
for the sober realities of life—or by continuous light   
entertainment, indispose the mind for what is serious   
and holy. These are all to be avoided.   
  
In some respects bad books are more mischievous than  
bad companions, since they are more accessible, and   
more constantly with us. They can be more secretly   
consulted, and **lodge their poison more abidingly** in . . .  
the imagination,   
the intellect, and   
the heart!  
  
A bad book is a bad companion of the worst kind, and   
prepares for bad companions of all other kinds!  
  
"Whoever walks with the wise will become wise; but   
**the companion of fools** shall be destroyed!" Pro 13:20

**A most dangerous propensity!**  
  
"Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." 2Ti 3:4  
  
A pleasure-loving **youth** will become a pleasure-loving **man**.  
  
A love of pleasure, a taste for amusement, is **a most   
dangerous propensity!  
  
  
  
  
Novels**  
  
As to **novels**, I join with every other moral and religious   
writer in condemning, as the vilest trash, the greater part   
of these productions, which have carried a turbid stream   
of vice over the morals of mankind.   
  
**Novels** . . .  
corrupt the **taste**,  
pollute the **heart**,  
debase the **mind**,  
demoralize the **conduct**.   
  
**Novels** throw prostrate the **understanding**; sensualize   
the **affections**; enervate the **will**; and bring all the high   
faculties of the **soul** into subjection to a wild imagination.  
  
**Novels** generate a morbid, sickly sentimentalism,  
instead of a just and lovely realism.  
  
A wise man should despise **novels**, and a godly  
man should abhor them!  
  
  
  
  
**The theater!**  
  
I do not hesitate for a moment to pronounce **the theater**to be one of the broadest avenues which lead to destruction!   
  
**Fascinating**, no doubt it is—but on that account the more   
**delusive** and the more **dangerous!** Let a young man once   
acquire a taste for this species of entertainment, and yield   
himself up to its gratification, and he is in imminent danger   
of becoming a lost character—rushing upon his ruin!   
  
All the evils that can . . .  
waste his property,  
corrupt his morals,  
blast his reputation,  
impair his health,  
embitter his life,  
and destroy his soul,   
lurk in the confines of **the theater!** Vice, in every   
form, lives, and moves, and has its being there!   
  
Myriads have cursed the hour when they first exposed   
themselves to the contamination of **the theater**. >From   
that fatal evening, they date their destruction!  
  
Take warning then, and have nothing to do with **the   
theater**. Avoid it as one of the avenues to the broad   
road that leads to destruction. The danger is greater   
than I describe. The doors of **the theater** are as the   
jaws of the devouring lion!  
  
"Do not follow the crowd in doing evil." Exo 23:2  
  
  
  
  
**Our life is a bubble!**  
  
"**What is your life?** You are a **mist** that appears  
for a little while and then vanishes!" Jas 4:14  
  
Our world is a valley of tears. **Our life is a bubble**,   
raised from those tears, inflated by sighs; which, after   
floating a little while, decked with a few gaudy colors   
—is touched by the hand of death, and dissolves!  
  
Poverty,   
disease,   
misfortune,   
unkindness,  
instability,   
death,   
all assail the travelers as they journey onward   
to eternity through this gloomy valley.  
  
"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on  
what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary,  
but what is unseen is eternal." 2Co 4:18

**When the honey is all sucked!**  
  
**Love of worldly pleasure** is a great impediment   
to true piety. It has been most wickedly said,   
"**Youth** is the time for pleasure,  
**manhood** is the time for business,  
**old age** is the time for religion."   
It is painful to observe, that if the two latter parts   
of human life are neglected, the first is not.   
  
Young people too often answer the description given by   
the apostle, "Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God."   
  
In youth, there are many temptations to this wicked   
propensity . . .  
the **senses** are vigorous,  
the **spirits** lively,  
the **imagination** ardent,  
the **passions** warm, and  
the **concerns** of life but few and feeble.   
  
Hence many give themselves up to the impulses of their   
corrupt nature, and are held in alienation from a life of   
piety—**by a love of pleasure**. Some are carried away by   
a vain and frivolous love of dress and show; others by   
a delight in mirth and parties; others by games, balls,   
and theatrical performances; others by the sports of   
the field; others by intemperance and debauchery.   
  
It is admitted that all these gratifications are not equally   
degrading in themselves—nor equally destructive of   
reputation and health. But **if indulged in as the chief   
good**, they may all prevent the mind from attending   
to the concerns of true religion.   
  
**A predominant love of worldly pleasure**, of any kind—is   
destructive in every point of view. It often **leads** on from   
gratifications which, in the opinion of the world, are decent   
and moral—to those which are wicked and immoral. It is   
incompatible with the duties and comforts of domestic life.  
It hinders the improvement of the understanding, and keeps   
the mind barren and empty. It prevents from becoming the   
benefactors of society. But its greatest mischief is, that it   
totally indisposes the mind for true religion, and thus extends   
its mischief to eternity! **In short, if a predominant love of   
worldly pleasure is cherished and persisted in, it ruins   
and damns the soul forever!**  
  
My children, beware of this most dangerous propensity for   
worldly pleasure! Consider where it leads—resist it to the   
uttermost—and ask grace from God to acquire a better taste.  
  
Yes, **if you live for worldly pleasure**, and neglect true religion,   
you are giving up an exceeding great and eternal weight of   
glory—for light and frivolous gratifications, which are but for   
a moment! You are, for the sake of a few years' empty mirth,   
entailing everlasting ages of unmitigated torments!   
  
Besides, though worldly pleasure may temporarily gratify  
—it does not really satisfy! **When the honey is all sucked**—it leaves a sting behind!   
  
And what are the pleasures of the world, compared with   
those of true piety?   
But the shadow to the substance;   
the stagnant pool to the fresh and running fountain;  
the smoking candle to the midday sun!   
  
**Shall worldly pleasure cheat you of eternal salvation?**

**He certainly acts as an atheist!**   
  
Fathers! **Your children are immortal beings!** The stamp  
of eternity is upon them! Everlasting ages are before them!   
They are like the rest of the human race—**depraved, guilty,   
and condemned creatures**; and consequently in danger of   
eternal misery! Yet they are, through the mercy of God,   
creatures capable of attaining to glory, honor, immortality,   
and eternal life. Looking upon them in this light, what   
should be your chief concern for them—and what should   
be your conduct towards them?   
 **Fathers! Your children are hastening to either   
eternal happiness—or eternal torment!**  
  
The man who does not make **the eternal welfare  
of his children**, the supreme end of all his conduct   
towards them, may profess to believe as a Christian  
—but **he certainly acts as an Atheist!**  
Once more let it be stated, and stated with all possible   
emphasis—that the chief design of this work is to form   
the pious character of its readers, and to implant those   
virtues which shall live, and flourish, and dignify, and   
delight—infinite ages after every object that is dear . . .  
to avarice or pride,  
to learning or science,  
to taste or ambition,  
shall have perished in the conflagration of the universe!  
  
It is in the highest degree inconsistent, absurd, cruel,   
and wicked—for a Christian parent not to be supremely   
desirous of the everlasting welfare of his children! Let   
a supreme concern for their immortal interests be at   
the bottom of all your **conduct**, and be interwoven   
with all your parental **habits!**

**Taste & distaste**  
  
True religion changes the moral nature, producing . . .  
a dislike and dread of sin, and  
a love of holiness and virtue.   
  
Piety is **a spiritual taste**; and, like every other taste,   
it is accompanied with a **distaste** for the opposites   
of those things or qualities which are the subjects   
of its delight. Sin is that bitter thing which the soul   
of a true Christian hates. It is the object of his   
antipathy—and therefore of his dread. He turns from   
it with aversion and loathing, as that which is offensive   
and disgusting. It is not merely that he is commanded   
by authority to abstain from sin—but he is led away from   
it by **the expulsive power of a new attraction**. He may   
have sinful propensities of his carnal nature—but he   
resists the indulgence of them, for it is sin against God.   
  
When you have once tasted the sweetness of true   
religion—how insipid, how nauseous, will be those   
draughts of 'wicked pleasure' with which the sinner   
intoxicates and poisons his soul!   
  
When you have acquired a relish for the pure,   
calm, satisfying joys of faith and holiness—how   
entirely will you disrelish the polluting, boisterous,   
and unsatisfying pleasures of sin!   
  
When you have once drunk of the waters of the river   
of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne   
of God and of the Lamb—how loathsome will be the   
filthy turbid streams of licentious gratification!

**The pursuits of butterflies and grasshoppers,   
and canary birds!**  
  
**Pleasure** is the supreme good, and chief object of pursuit of   
many. To pleasure, they have devoted their lives. Some are   
living for sports, others for the gratification of the appetites,   
and others for the enjoyment of the round of fashionable   
amusements. Pleasure, in one form or other, is the chief  
object of pursuit with myriads.   
  
As to the **gratification of our animal appetites**, it should  
not be difficult to persuade us, that to sink to the level of   
the brute creation, and **hold communion with swine, and   
goats and rats**, cannot be the chief end of a rational being.   
  
To many, **fashionable amusements** seem to be the purpose of   
life. Multitudes live for pleasures of this kind. Ball succeeds to   
concert; the private party to the public assembly; the card party   
to the dinner party. **In this busy round of fashionable follies,  
many pass their lives away!**   
  
Can it be, that the chief object of existence is to **sing**, and **play**,   
and **dress** and **dance**? Do not these things, when we reflect upon   
them, look more like **the pursuits of butterflies and grasshoppers,   
and canary birds**—than of rational creatures? Is it not melancholy   
to see beings with never-dying souls, sinking to the amusements   
of children; and employing time as if it were given them for nothing   
but mirth; and using the world as if it were created by God only to   
be a sort of playground for its inhabitants?  
  
Does this kind of life really satisfy those who pursue it?   
  
Far, very far, from it! Can any person, in reality, be farther   
from happiness than those who live for pleasure?  
  
"O Lord, save me from the men of this world—who  
have their portion in this life!" Psa 17:14  
  
  
  
**A bubble that rises, and shines, and bursts!**  
  
"Be very careful, then, how you live—**not as fools**  
but as wise, **redeeming the time**, because the  
days are evil." Eph 5:15-16  
  
Paul implies that a man can give no greater proof   
of folly, nor more effectually act the part of a fool,  
than to waste his time. While on the other hand,   
a just appreciation and right improvement of time   
are among the brightest displays of true wisdom.   
  
We must value time correctly, and improve it diligently.  
  
**Time is the most precious thing in the world.** God  
distributes time miserly—by the moment—and He  
never promises us another moment! We are to highly   
**value**, and diligently to **improve** the present moment,  
by the consideration that for anything we know, it   
may be our last.   
  
Time, when once gone, never returns. **Where is   
yesterday?** A moment once lost, is lost forever!   
  
We should never forget that our time is among the talents   
for which we must give account at the judgment of God.   
We must be tried not only for what we have done—but for   
what we neglected to do. Not only for the hours spent in   
sin—but for those wasted in idleness. Let us beware of   
wasting time.  
  
It might stir us up to diligence in the improvement of our   
time, to think how much of it has been already misspent.   
What days, and weeks, and months, and years, have   
already been utterly wasted, or exhausted upon trifles   
totally unworthy of them. They are gone, and nothing  
remains of them but the guilt of having wasted them.   
We cannot call them back if we would. Let us learn to   
value more highly, and to use more kindly, those days   
which remain.   
  
How **much** of our time is already gone—and how **little**   
may be yet to come? The sands of our hour-glass may   
be almost out! **Death may be at the door!**   
  
When you begin a day, you don't know that you shall end it!   
When you lie down, you don't know that you shall rise up!   
When you leave your house, you don't know that you shall   
ever return!   
  
For what is your life? It is even as a vapor that appears for   
a little while and then vanishes! Life is **a bubble that rises,   
and shines, and bursts!** We know not in any one period of   
our existence—but that it may be the last. Surely, surely,   
we should then improve our time, when we may be holding,   
for anything we know, the last portion of it in our hands!  
  
You are immortal creatures, and must live forever in torment   
or in bliss! And certainly you cannot be forming a right   
estimate of the value of time, nor be rightly employing it,  
if the soul be forgotten, salvation neglected, and eternity   
left out of consideration!

**Our great concern!**  
  
"There are three things that will endure—**faith**, **hope**, and  
**love**—and the greatest of these is love." 1Co 13:13  
  
Real Christianity consists of these three apostolic graces.  
  
All else is but her earthly attire, which may vary in fashion   
and color, without affecting her substance and life, or   
destroying her symmetry. Had this been understood,   
believed, remembered, and practiced from the beginning . . .   
what monstrous systems of error;  
what iron yokes of spiritual tyranny;  
what bloody persecutions;  
what ecclesiastic arrogance and presumption;  
what disfigurements of **the simple and spiritual religion   
of the meek and lowly Jesus**, by pagan rites and external   
ceremonies; what foul blots upon the fair form of   
Christianity—would the world have been spared!   
  
Amid the controversies and decrees of church councils,   
how has the still small voice of the apostle been stifled,   
which says, "There are three things that will endure—  
**faith**, **hope**, and **love**—and the greatest of these is love."   
  
How forward have men been to **admire** this sacred trio,   
but how slow to **imitate** them!   
  
**Poets** have sung their charms!   
**Painters** have delineated their beauty!   
**Music** has chanted their praises!  
**Eloquence** has emblazoned their worth!  
  
What remains but for preachers to make them the   
prevailing themes of their ministry—and for professing   
Christians to exhibit them in the practice of their lives!  
  
When this shall everywhere be done, and they shall  
universally come in place of a heartless orthodoxy and   
an external ritualism—then the world will see Christianity   
as she is, and will covet to be like her. But, until then,   
multitudes will look upon Christianity with suspicion,   
and not a few turn from her with disgust!  
  
**Our great concern** should be to promote a healthful,   
spiritual, robust, and godly piety in our churches; for   
which no external improvements in our architecture,   
our music, or our services, can be a substitute!  
  
What we should seek to maintain in our churches, is   
the more powerful dominion of faith, hope, and love,   
compared with which, many of those matters which are   
now rife among us, are but of very small importance.  
  
**Faith**, **hope**, and **love** are the great themes of the   
Christian ministry, are something more than matters   
of theory—something more than mere theses for the  
theologian to discuss before an audience. They are   
matters of eternal life or death—and should be preached   
as if the preachers believed them to be so.  
  
  
  
**The great idol!**  
"People will be **lovers of themselves**." 2Ti 3:2  
  
**Selfishness** is the cause of all sin—the opposite of all   
holiness and virtue.  
  
**The essence of man's sin**, the sum of his moral depravity,   
is to love himself supremely; to seek himself finally and   
exclusively; to make self, in one shape or another, the   
center to which all his busy thoughts, anxious cares and   
diligent pursuits, constantly tend.   
  
**Self-love** is the most active and reigning principle in fallen   
nature! **SELF** is **the great idol** which mankind are naturally   
disposed to worship; and **selfishness** the grand interest to   
which they are devotedly attached!  
  
Selfishness is contrary to the habitual temper of our Lord   
Jesus Christ. "For even Christ did not please Himself."  
  
The perfection of all virtue lies in unselfish love. The nearer   
we approach to this state of mind, the nearer we come to   
sinless moral excellence. "Love is not self-seeking."  
  
"Do nothing out of **selfish ambition** or vain conceit, but in  
humility consider others better than yourselves." Php 2:3  
  
  
  
**The loathsome moral leprosy!**  
  
"Love does not boast—it is not proud." 1Co 13:4  
  
**Pride** has a high and overweening conceit of its own   
possessions and acquirements, and ostentatiously   
boasts of what it is, has done, can do, or intends to do.   
  
**Pride** signifies such an exalted idea of ourselves, as   
leads to self-esteem—and to contempt of others.   
  
**Pride** is self-admiration—self-doating.  
  
**Pride** is the sin which laid the moral universe in ruins.  
  
**Pride** is the original sin, the inherent corruption of our   
nature. **Pride** spreads over humanity with contagious   
violence. **Pride** is **the loathsome moral leprosy**, raging   
alike through the palace and the cottage, and infecting   
equally the prince and the peasant.  
  
Love is no less opposed to VANITY than it is to pride!  
  
Pride differs from vanity thus—  
**pride** causes us to value ourselves;   
**vanity** makes us anxious for applause.  
  
**Pride** renders a man odious;   
**vanity** makes him ridiculous.   
  
Love does not boast of, or ostentatiously display,   
its possessions, abilities, or good deeds.   
  
"Love does not boast—it is not proud." 1Co 13:4  
  
  
  
**Although they should spend every penny!**  
  
"**If I give all I possess to the poor** and surrender  
my body to the flames, but have not love, **I gain  
nothing!**" 1Co 13:3  
  
This representation of the indispensable necessity  
of Christian love, is most striking. It supposes it  
possible that a man may distribute all his substance  
in acts of apparent beneficence—and yet after all be  
without true religion!  
  
**Actions** derive their moral character from the **motives**  
under the influence of which they are performed.  
  
Therefore, many actions which are beneficial to **man**,  
may still be sinful in the sight of **God**, because they  
are not done from a right motives!  
  
The most diffusive generosity—**if prompted by pride,  
vanity or self-righteousness**—is of no value in the   
eyes of the omniscient Jehovah! On the contrary, it   
is very sinful!  
  
It is too evident to be questioned, that many of the  
**charities** of which we are the witnesses, are done from  
any motives but the right ones. We readily see that  
multitudes are lavish in their monetary contributions,   
who are at the same time totally destitute of love to   
God. They are, as it respects real religion, less than   
nothing, **although they should spend every penny**of their property in relieving the needs of the poor!  
  
If our munificence, however great or self-denying, be   
the operation of mere selfish regard to ourselves, to   
our own reputation, or to our own safety—and not of   
pure love**—it may do good to** **others**, but will do   
none to ourselves!  
  
"**If I give all I possess to the poor** and surrender  
my body to the flames, but have not love, **I gain  
nothing!**" 1Co 13:3

**Seraph or demon?**  
  
Many conclude that they are true Christians, because   
of the **intensity of their religious feelings**. Possessed   
of much excitability and warmth of temperament, they   
are, of course, susceptible of deep and powerful   
impressions from true religion. They are not without  
**joy—**and they are not without their religious **sorrows**.   
Their **tears** are plentiful—and their **smiles** in proportion.   
  
See them in the house of God, and none appear to feel   
more under the preaching of the Word than they do. The   
sermon exerts an influential power over their affections,  
and the preacher seems to have their hearts at command.   
They talk loudly of "happy frames and precious seasons".  
  
But follow them from the house of God to their own   
**homes**—and, **O, how changed the scene!** The least   
offense, perhaps an unintentional one—raises a storm   
of angry passion, and the man who looked like a **seraph   
in the sanctuary**—seems more like a **demon at home!**   
  
Follow them from the Sabbath into the **other days** of   
the week, and you will see the man who appeared **all   
for heaven** on the Sunday—**all for earth** on the Monday!   
  
Follow them from the assembly of the saints to the   
places of **business**—and you will see **the man who  
looked so devout**; now . . .  
irritated and quarrelsome,  
selfish and unfair,  
crude and insulting,  
envious and malicious!  
  
Yes! And perhaps in the evening of the same day,   
you will see him at a prayer meeting, enjoying, as   
he supposes, the holy season!  
  
Such is the delusion under which many are living!  
Their religion is, in great part, is a mere selfish   
religious voluptuousness!

**The necessary fruits of our doctrines**  
  
Let us remember that HUMILITY and LOVE are   
**the necessary fruits of our doctrines**, and the   
highest beauty of our character!  
  
**True Christian love** must be . . .  
blended with all our **habits**,  
diffused through all our **conduct**,  
forming our **character**,  
breathing in our **desires**,  
speaking in our **words**,  
beaming in our **eyes**.  
  
This is true religion—practical religion.   
  
"If I have the gift of **prophecy** and can fathom  
all **mysteries** and all **knowledge**, and if I have  
a **faith** that can move mountains—but have  
not love, **I am nothing!**" 1Co 13:2

"Whoever does not love does not know God,  
because God is love." 1Jn 4:8

**I can conceive of no higher heaven**  
In the sublime visions of the Apocalypse, where   
heaven is opened to our view, it is Christ who is   
represented as the glory of that place . . .  
lighting up all countenances with joy,  
filling all hearts with gladness, and  
making all tongues vocal with praise.   
  
Jesus is the sun of that blessed world—the orb   
of that nightless, cloudless, and eternal day!  
  
"I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better   
by far!" This was the heaven Paul longed for. That one   
idea of 'being with Christ' filled his soul. To be absent   
from the body, and present with the Lord—was the   
prevailing wish of his truly Christian heart.   
  
Jesus is the object of the Christian's supreme   
regard. Are there not moments when he has . . .  
such views of Christ's glory,  
such conceptions of His amazing mercy,  
such a sense of His love,  
such feelings of gratitude and affection,   
that he is ready to say, "If I feel all this now,   
when I only believe, what must be the felicity . . .  
of beholding His full-orbed glory,  
of gazing upon His face,  
and hearing His loving voice!   
**I can conceive of no higher heaven**, no more perfect   
paradise, than to be in the presence of Him who died   
for me upon the cross!"  
  
There is something wonderfully impressive and delightful,  
in thus resolving the bliss of heaven into a one state of   
mind, consisting of an adoring and grateful love, for a   
being to whom we are indebted for redemption **from** an   
infinitude and eternity of torment, and **to** an infinitude   
and eternity of bliss; and who adds to all these claims   
upon our gratitude, additional claims upon our homage   
and admiration—for His own infinity and eternal glories!

**Elegance, entertainment, and luxurious gratification**  
  
"For the world offers only the lust for physical pleasure, the  
lust for everything we see, and pride in our possessions.  
These are not from the Father. They are from this evil  
world." 1Jn 2:16  
  
**The 'spirit of the world' has come into the church!**  
  
**Elegance, entertainment, and luxurious gratification**  
are occupying far more than they ought to do, the minds   
of professing Christians!  
  
"Therefore, come out from them and separate yourselves  
from them, says the Lord. Don't touch their filthy things,  
and I will welcome you." 2Co 6:17

**A decent, flowery, down-hill   
way to eternal destruction!**  
  
Christ is . . .  
the supreme object of a true Christian's love,  
the chief source of his felicity,  
the highest end of his life.  
  
The **first object** of a Christian's desire, pursuit   
and expectation—is the salvation of his soul.   
  
Our **great business** on earth—is to fit for heaven.  
  
Our **main concern** in time—is to prepare for eternity.   
  
The **world** is, indeed, **a very dangerous foe** to the   
believer. To very, very many, it is the most **destructive**one. They are not so likely to be subdued by 'open vice'  
as by worldly-mindedness.   
  
Worldliness is **the sin of the age**, and has deeply  
infected the church of Christ.  
  
"Do not love the world or anything in the world.   
If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father  
is not in him." 1Jn 2:15  
  
This verse ought to ring through all Christendom,   
and make the **ears** of millions tingle—and their   
**hearts** to palpitate with fear and alarm!  
  
**What is the world?**   
  
Not merely open sin and vice, profligacy, idolatry,   
infidelity or heresy. Oh no! The world contains many   
things besides the lust of the eye, the lust of the   
flesh, and the pride of life—things . . .  
more decent,  
more innocent,  
more rational,  
more commendable,  
than these vile objects!  
  
Everything on earth, however fair, laudable and   
excellent in itself—everything besides God, is the   
world.   
  
Your **business** is the world,   
your **family** is the world,  
your **comfortable home** is the world,   
the **wife** of your bosom is the world,   
the **children** whom God has given you are the world.  
  
"What! then," you exclaim, "are we not to love these?"   
Yes, in proper degrees—but not more than God. You are   
not to seek your highest happiness from them. You are   
not to be more solicitous to secure them, than heaven.  
It is of a 'supreme love' which the apostle speaks.  
  
"Anyone who loves his father or mother **more** than Me is  
not worthy of Me; anyone who loves his son or daughter  
**more** than Me is not worthy of Me." Mat 10:37  
  
Christian professors, there is need to have these solemn,   
yet righteous demands, sent with a voice of thunder into   
your places of business and scenes of domestic comfort.   
You have need to be told that . . .  
all this engrossing solicitude about business;  
all this eager haste to be rich;  
all this ambition for larger houses;  
all this taste for elegance, show and fashion;  
all this competition for name and fame,   
which leads to a neglect of salvation, to departure from   
God, to indifference to heaven—is the love of the world,   
which is incompatible with the love of the Father!   
And not less so . . .  
that supreme concern about domestic enjoyment,  
that taste for fashionable amusements, or even  
that more refined and simple love of home-bred delights,   
which leaves out God, salvation, heaven and eternity!  
  
Here, here, I repeat, is your **peril**.   
  
Here the **enemy** with which you have to do battle!   
  
It is not **vice**.   
  
It is not **profligacy**.   
  
**It is worldly-mindedness!**  
  
Do we not see mere professors throwing   
themselves wholly—body, soul, and spirit . . .  
into their trade,  
into the cherished objects of their ambition,  
into their entire devotedness to a worldly life.   
  
**In** these things, and **for** them, they live!   
These things . . .  
bind round and overgrow their heart,   
stifle all serious thoughts,   
smother all heavenly desires.  
  
**The road that leads to destruction** is broad enough   
to comprise many parallel paths. And there is one path  
crowded with professors of religion, walking in company,   
with cheerful appearance, and elegant attire, and elastic   
step—but still **walking to perdition!** Oh, yes, there is a   
way 'through the church'—**a decent, flowery, down-hill   
way to eternal destruction**, and there are many who   
take that road!  
  
  
  
**The sweetest ingredients in the cup of life**  
  
The purest happiness of an earthly nature, is that which   
springs up in a comfortable home, where there is a loving   
union of hearts between man and wife.   
  
The tender sympathies,   
the delicate affections,   
the minute attentions,   
the watchful solicitudes,   
the ceaseless kindnesses **of marital love**,  
—are **the sweetest ingredients in the cup of life**,  
and contribute a thousand times more to earthly   
enjoyment, than all the possessions of wealth, and   
all the blandishments of rank, station, and fashion.

**You are the one who has done this!**"They all know that the the hand of the Lord has  
done this. In His hand is the life of every creature  
and the breath of all mankind." Job 12:9-10  
  
"Be still, and know that I am God." Such is the admonition   
which comes to you—and which comes from heaven. **It is God   
Himself who has bereaved you**—through whatever second   
causes He has inflicted the blow. Not even a sparrow falls to   
the ground without His knowledge—much less a rational and   
immortal creature. He has the keys of death, and never for a   
moment entrusts them out of His hand—the door of the   
sepulcher is never unlocked, but by Himself!  
  
Though men may drop and die as unheeded by many, as the fall   
of the autumnal leaf in the pathless desert—**they die not by   
chance!** Every incident which has reduced you to your present   
sorrowful condition, is an individual decision of infinite wisdom.   
Whether therefore, **the death of your husband** was slow or   
sudden; at home or abroad; by accident or disease—it was   
appointed, and all its circumstances arranged, by God. Be still,   
therefore, and know that He is God, who does His will among   
the armies of heaven, and the inhabitants of earth, and allows   
no one to question His proceedings.  
  
Bow down before Him with unqualified submission—and find   
relief in acquiescence to His wise and sovereign will.   
  
Submission forbids all passionate invective; all rebellious   
language; all bitter reflections on second causes; and all   
questionings about the wisdom, goodness, or equity of   
the God of Providence. You should not only suppress all   
murmuring and complaining **language**—but all **thoughts**and **feelings** of this kind. Submission is that state of the   
soul under afflictive dispensations of Providence, which   
produces an acquiescence in the will of God—as just, and   
wise, and good. It expresses itself in some such manner   
as the following. "I deeply feel the heavy loss I have   
sustained, and my nature mourns and weeps. But as I   
am persuaded it is the Lord's doing, who has a **right** to   
do as He pleases, and who is at the same time too **wise**to mistake, and too **benevolent** to put me to unnecessary   
pain—I endeavor to bow down to His holy will."   
  
Did we really believe in the doctrine of Providence, and   
that He who superintends its administration, unites to an **arm of omnipotence—**a **mind of infinite knowledge**, and   
a **heart of boundless love**—submission would be easy!   
  
Christian mourner, consider God as the author of all your   
trials—as well as of all your comforts! View Him as your   
Father! Be assured that He loves you too well to do you   
any harm! Be confident that He is making all things work   
together for your good!  
  
"I was silent; I would not open my mouth, for **You  
are the one who has done this!**" Psa 39:9

**Continually churning up mire and dirt!**  
  
"The wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot  
rest, whose waves are **continually churning up mire  
and dirt**." Isa 57:20  
  
Until the carnal mind, which is enmity against God,   
is regenerated and brought to love God supremely,   
there can be no true happiness or peace. As long as   
the heart is under the dominion of selfishness, and   
all those lusts and passions to which it gives rise,  **it must be miserable!**  
  
In the absence of Christian love, the human bosom  
must be the seat of uneasiness and distress.  
  
Happiness does not arise from **possessions**, so much   
as from **dispositions**. Happiness is not what a man has,   
or where he dwells—but what he IS. The great source   
and springs of felicity, are rooted in our nature. There   
are certain dispositions, the absence of which would   
render heaven a place of torment to us; and others,   
which would raise for us an Eden in the midst of the   
dreariest wilderness on earth.   
  
It is true that many, in the absence of Christian love,  
pretend to some kind of enjoyment, and have it too;   
for there are 'pleasures of sin', such as they are. But   
as to solid happiness—that which befits and satisfies   
a rational, moral, and immortal creature—it may with   
the greatest truth be affirmed, that the wicked are   
like the troubled sea which cannot rest—but is   
**continually churning up mire and dirt!**  
As well may we expect quietude and comfort in a den   
of wild beasts, or in a field of battle—as in a heart   
where the vile passions of anger, wrath, malice, envy,  
pride, and revenge—have taken up their abode and   
predominate. How demon-like is the feeling when   
these turbulent evil passions gain the ascendancy!   
What agitation and what torment are the result!   
  
"The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual  
immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and  
witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage,  
selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy;  
drunkenness, orgies, and the like." Gal 5:19-21

**The pastor**

"We were as **gentle** among you as a mother feeding  
and caring for her own children." 1Th 2:7  
  
Oh! what churches we would have, if Christian   
love had its full scope!   
  
**The pastor** would labor with the most earnest,  
indefatigable, and unselfish zeal for the eternal   
welfare of the flock; and make it evident that   
compassion for souls, and not filthy lucre—was   
the impulse of all his conduct. Affection would   
beam in his eyes, and breathe in his spirit, while   
"the law of kindness" would dwell on his lips.   
  
He would preside over the people in the meekness   
of wisdom; and, instead of proudly lording it over   
God's heritage, he would rule them in love.   
  
Over all his talents, however brilliant, he would put   
the 'garment of humility'. And, with respect to all his   
success, however great, he would speak in the language   
of modesty. He would neither envy his more gifted or   
successful brethren, nor proudly vaunt over his inferiors.   
  
To all under his pastoral care, even the most illiterate   
and poor, he would conduct himself with the humility   
and love of true benevolence. He would labor to correct   
their errors, whether doctrinal or practical; and have   
no greater joy than to see them walking in the truth!  
  
"Be an example to all believers in what you teach, in the  
way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity."  
1Ti 4:12  
  
  
  
**The meek and gentle and passive virtues**  
  
**The meek and gentle and passive virtues** of the   
gospel, are generally looked upon with disesteem,   
and treated with contempt by the world. Is . . .  
poverty of spirit,   
humility,   
self-abasement,   
the forgiveness of insults,  
patience under provocation,   
—admired, applauded, imitated? Quite the contrary!   
  
The men who would practice these Christian graces,   
must make up their minds to endure the world's scorn,   
and to be treated as **poor weak-spirited creatures**.  
And yet this is the spirit of true piety—for this is the   
disposition of Jesus!  
  
When Jesus Christ came into the world, He found it full   
of the notion that human glory consisted in ambition,   
pride, and revenge. Hence He took particular pains to   
correct this notion, giving, in His sermon on the mount,   
a delineation the very opposite of this. Indeed, the   
design of that sermon was to rectify the mistakes then   
universally prevalent on the subject of true piety and   
of happiness; and to teach the world that His disciples   
were to be **pre-eminently distinguished by . . .**  
humility,  
penitence,  
meekness,  
purity,  
peaceableness,  
forgiveness,  
thirsting after righteousness.   
  
These are the qualities of a true Christian, and everyone   
who bears the character, must sedulously cultivate its   
appropriate dispositions, and be willing to bear the ridicule  
to which they will expose him. Bearing their scorn, he will  
wait with patience for that world where humility and   
meekness will be honored and rewarded—and love, their   
parent disposition, be crowned with glory!  
  
  
  
**The flaming scimitar of the Sultan**  
  
**MOHAMMEDANISM**  
  
This system of imposture, abounding as it does with   
minute and ridiculous ceremonies, and a slavish regard   
to absurd ritual observances; enforces, by the authority   
of its founder, the most ferocious and blood-thirsty   
hatred to all who do not receive it with implicit faith.   
  
Wars against all other religions are not only enjoined   
in many passages of the Koran—but are declared to be   
in a high degree 'meritorious' in the sight of Allah.   
  
How completely Islamism has filled its votaries with the   
most ferocious bigotry and the most merciless intolerance,   
is known by universal testimony. They everywhere pour   
insulting contempt upon all who are not Muslims, and   
feel a savage delight in adding cruelty to insult.  
  
The spirit of the system is everywhere visible in the absolute   
despotism of the governments of those countries in which it   
prevails. Where Islam is found, the arts and the sciences do not   
flourish, and liberty withers in its shade. **The flaming scimitar  
of the Sultan** is its patron and defense. It was propagated by   
the sword, and it is **essentially and unalterably cruel**.   
  
Such is Islamism—a curse to the world, and the reverse of   
all that is holy and beneficent.   
  
  
  
**A very common supposition**  
It is **a very common supposition** that it is   
an **easy** thing to be a Christian. And if to be   
a Christian were nothing more than . . .  
going to a place of worship,  
indulging in pious emotions,  
subscribing to religious institutions, and  
professing certain religious opinions,  
—the supposition would be correct—for   
nothing is more easy than all this!  
  
**But if the spirit of true piety is . . .**   
poverty of spirit,   
humility,   
self-abasement,   
forgiveness of insults,  
patience under provocation,   
penitence,  
meekness,  
purity,  
peaceableness,  
thirsting after righteousness,  
—then must it be obvious to everyone who knows   
his own heart, that to be a true Christian is the   
most **difficult** thing in the world!

**One gracious purpose of mercy!**  
"And we know that **God causes everything to work  
together for the good of those who love Him**, and are  
called according to His purpose for them." Rom 8:28  
  
**Providence** is God's government of the universe.  
  
Providence is that mighty scheme . . .  
which commenced before time was born;  
which embraces the annals of other worlds besides ours;  
which includes the history of angels, men, and devils.   
  
Providence comprises the whole range of events which   
have taken place from the formation of the first creature,   
to the last moment of time—with all the tendencies,   
reasons, connections, and results of things.  
  
Providence encompasses the separate existence of   
each individual, with the continuation and influence   
of the whole, in one harmonious scheme.  
  
We are puzzled at almost every step, at the deep,   
unfathomable mysteries of Providence!  
  
How often is Jehovah, in His dealings with us, a God   
who hides Himself! How often does He wrap Himself in   
clouds, and pursue His path upon the waters, where we   
can neither see His goings, nor trace His footsteps!   
How many of His dispensations are inexplicable, and   
of His judgments how many are unfathomable by the   
short line of our reason!   
  
But whatever we don't know now, we shall know hereafter.  
The crooked will be made straight, the clouds of darkness   
will be scattered, and all His conduct towards us placed in   
the broad day-light of eternity.   
  
We shall see how all the varying, and numerous, and   
seemingly opposite events of our history, were combined   
into **one gracious purpose of mercy**, which was most   
perfectly wise in all its combinations.   
  
Delightful, most delightful, will it be to retrace our winding   
and often gloomy course, and discern at each change and   
turning, the reason of the occurrence and the wisdom of God.  
Delightful will it be to discern the influence which all our   
temporal circumstances—all our disappointments, losses,   
and perplexities—had upon our permanent and celestial   
happiness. How much of divine wisdom, power, goodness,   
and faithfulness, will our short and simple history present,  
and what rapturous fervor will the discovery give to the   
song of praise which we shall utter before the throne of   
God and the Lamb!

**The whole Bible, condensed into a single term!**  
  
I heard the sound of a vast crowd in heaven shouting,  
"Hallelujah! **Salvation** is from our God!" Rev 19:1 **Salvation!** What a word! And what a blessing!   
  
**One word**—but containing millions of ideas!  
  
It is **the whole Bible, condensed into a single term!**  
  
God's eternal councils;  
Christ's redeeming work;   
the Spirit's sanctifying power;  
all the riches of divine grace;  
all the blessings of eternal glory,   
are in substance comprehended in those few syllables!  
  
**That one word** is a boundless, fathomless ocean   
of blessedness—it passes knowledge!   
  
All that preachers have ever said;   
all that authors have ever written;   
all that Christians have ever felt, imagined, hoped for,  
leave its full meaning yet to be explained.   
  
It can be comprehended only in heaven!   
  
It can be developed only in eternity!  
  
I heard the sound of a vast crowd in heaven shouting,  
"Hallelujah! **Salvation** is from our God!" Rev 19:1

**Satan's Vicar**  
  
**The three great works of the devil** are . . .  
Idolatry,  
Mohammedanism,  
and Popery.  
The Mohammedan power, symbolized in the book of the   
Apocalypse by the "false Prophet," is, with the Papal Beast,   
to be cast into the lake which burns with brimstone and fire.   
  
We are aware of the dreadful nature of **Popery**. We regard   
Popery as **the masterpiece of Satanic deceit and malice**  
—his richest trophy, and his proudest triumph. The Pope is   
more **Satan's Vicar**, than that of Christ, upon earth. And   
the Vatican his chosen seat of dominion among men.  
  
**Idolatry** was a prominent Satanic invention. **Mohammedanism**  
was a mighty stretch of diabolical craft. But **Popery** transcends  
both! The other two were devices outside the pale of Christianity  
—Popery is within it. They opposed Christianity—Popery corrupts it.  
They try to destroy it—Popery goes far to make it destroy itself!

**The rotten plank!**  
  
Not everyone who **says** to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter  
the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will  
of My Father who is in heaven. **Many** will **say** to Me on  
that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name,  
and in Your name drive out demons and perform many  
miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew  
you. Away from Me, you evildoers!' Mat 7:21-23.  
  
These dreadful words should sound through the whole church   
with the solemnity and impressiveness of an alarm bell. What   
a salutary fear and trembling they should awaken! To what a   
close and anxious examination they should lead!   
  
Mistaken professors are **going by myriads to the bottomless  
pit!** Myriads and myriads are walking to eternity over **the rotten   
plank** of a 'formal and insincere profession', which will break   
beneath their feet and let them fall into the burning gulf below!  
  
I will never cease to sound the note of warning to these deluded  
professors. For not only is it a **dreadful** thing to go down to the  
pit with a lying profession, but a **possible** thing! Not only is it a  
possible case, but a **common** one! "MANY will say to Me on  
that day!"

**Distress in heaven?**  
  
Will it cause **distress in heaven**, to know that our   
unsaved beloved friends and relatives are forever lost?  
  
The only way of solving this difficulty, is to realize that a   
perfect knowledge of God, and of the wisdom and justice  
of all His designs and operations, will constitute a chief   
part of the happiness of heaven. We shall be . . .  
so convinced of the equity of His dealings towards the wicked,  
so divested of all the weakness of 'human sentimentalism',   
so absorbed in the love of what is right and just,   
that **the absence of our loved ones from the world of   
glory**, will cause no interruption of our heavenly bliss!  
  
This, I acknowledge, is now hard to conceive. The day shall   
reveal it. "**Now we know in part** and we prophesy in part, but  
when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears." 1Co 13:9-10  
  
After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great  
multitude in heaven shouting: "Hallelujah! Salvation and   
glory and power belong to our God, for **true and just are His   
judgments!**" And again they shouted: "Hallelujah! **The smoke   
from her goes up for ever and ever!**" Rev 19:1-3.

**The design of Christ's work**  
  
"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.   
The old things have passed away. Behold, all things  
have become new." (2Co 5:17)  
  
**The design of Christ's work** is not merely to   
deliver from hell, but also from sin. The salvation   
of Christ is designed to make you a new creature,   
and to restore the image of God to your soul.  
  
All true Christians. . .  
love God,   
hate sin,  
feel Christ precious,  
give themselves to prayer,  
live holily.   
  
  
  
**Like a concealed worm at the root of a flower**  
  
It may be that your hindrances to a more rapid   
growth in grace, arise from some specific cause,   
some sin indulged, some corruption cherished. Is   
there not some sacrifice which you are unwilling   
to make, or something which you are unwilling to   
surrender? You must give up the forbidden thing,   
or your growth in grace is impossible! That one sin   
will, **like a concealed worm at the root of a   
flower**—eat out the very life of your piety, and   
cause it to droop, wither, and decay.   
  
  
  
**A misspent life**  
  
Time, with ceaseless flow rolls onward, and is ever bearing   
you on its resistless stream—to the boundless ocean of   
eternity. Yes, to eternity!   
  
**A misspent life** can never be spent over again! A fault   
committed in reference to the 'chief end of existence' can   
never be rectified. It is a mistake on which death sets the   
seal of eternity—a mistake which will require everlasting   
ages to understand and deplore it!   
  
The chief object of life must be something **important**.   
A rational creature could not be justified in setting up   
a mere trifle as the end and purpose of existence. It   
marks a base and abject state of mind, or at any rate,   
great childishness of taste—to allow one's thoughts,   
feelings and aspirations, to be attracted, as to their   
center—to a mere triviality.   
  
God has given to man noble faculties—and to see them   
all devoted to some mere petty trifle, as their supreme   
aim—is **a sad and a humiliating spectacle**.

**Who are they, and from where did they come?**  
After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude,   
which no man could number, out of every nation and of all  
tribes, peoples, and languages, standing before the throne  
and before the Lamb, dressed in white robes, with palm  
branches in their hands. They cried with a loud voice,  
saying, "Salvation be to our God, who sits on the throne,   
and to the Lamb!" Revelation 7  
  
Who are they that send forth such strains? **Who are they,   
and from where did they come?** "These are those who   
came out of the great tribulation. They washed their robes,   
and made them white in the Lamb's blood. Therefore they   
are before the throne of God, they serve Him day and night   
in His temple. He who sits on the throne will shelter them with   
His presence. They will never be hungry, neither thirsty any   
more; neither will the sun beat on them, nor any heat; for   
the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shepherds them,   
and leads them to springs of waters of life. And God will   
wipe away every tear from their eyes."   
  
They were once upon earth; once men of like passions with   
yourself. There is not a **burden** that oppresses your heart, but   
oppressed theirs. There is not a **fear** that agitates your mind,   
but agitated theirs. There is not a **temptation** that assails you,   
but assailed them. There is not an **obstacle** that terrifies you,   
but terrified them. They were once as **ignorant**, as **weak**, as   
**sinful**, as **timid**, as **discouraged**, as you are now. There is   
not a **sorrow**, a **perplexity**, or a **danger** with which you   
are painfully familiar—but they passed through before you.   
  
But there they are in heaven, more than conquerors over all   
these things, through Him who loved them. He who saved   
them has engaged to save you; nor is His ear heavy, nor His   
arm shortened. "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so   
great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight,   
and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance   
the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the author  
and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before   
Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at   
the right hand of the throne of God."

**What will He do with the lambs?**   
  
"He will feed His flock like a shepherd. He will gather  
the **lambs** in His arm, and carry them in His bosom."   
(Isa 40:11)  
  
It is said of our Divine Redeemer, "He will feed His flock  
like a shepherd." And in His flock there are lambs which   
can neither travel fast nor far. And **what will He do with   
the lambs?** "He will gather the lambs in His arm, and carry   
them in His bosom." He will not carry them on His shoulder  
—the emblem of strength; but in His bosom—the image of   
tender love.  
  
Weak grace is real grace, and is in connection with the  
infinite source in Christ's fullness.   
  
  
  
**A new creation**"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is **a new  
creation**. The old things have passed away.  
Behold, all things have become new!"  
(2Co 5:17)  
  
There must be a Divine alteration of disposition. Our . . .  
views and tastes,  
pains and pleasures,  
hopes and fears,  
desires and pursuits,   
must be changed!  
  
We must be brought to love **God** supremely, for His   
holiness and justice—as well as for His mercy and   
love; to delight in Him for his transcendent glory   
—as well as for His rich grace.  
  
We must have a perception of the beauties of **holiness**,   
—and love Divine things for their own excellence.   
  
We must mourn for **sin**, and hate it for its own evil   
nature—as well as its dreadful punishment.   
  
We must feel delight in the **salvation of Christ**, not only   
because it delivers us from hell—but makes us like God,   
and all this in a way which honors and glorifies Jehovah.   
  
We must be made partakers of true **humility** and universal   
**love**, and feel ourselves brought to be of one mind with God,   
in willing and delighting in the happiness of others.   
  
We must be brought to feel an identity of heart with God's   
cause, and to regard it as our honor and happiness to do   
anything to promote the glory of Christ in the salvation of   
sinners.   
  
We must feel a longing desire, a hungering and thirsting   
after **holiness**—as well as come to a determination to put   
away all sins, however gainful or pleasant.   
  
We must have a **tender conscience**, that shrinks from  
and watches against little sins, secret faults, and sins of   
neglect and omission—as well as great and scandalous   
offences.   
  
We must **love the people of God**, for God's sake,   
because they belong to Him and are like Him.   
  
We must practice the self-denying duty of **mortification of   
sin**—as well as engage in the pleasing exercises of religion.   
  
Nothing less than such a view of Christ in His glorious   
mediatorial character, and such a dependence by faith   
upon His blood and righteousness for salvation—as   
changes the whole heart, and temper, and conduct,   
and throws the world as it were into the background,   
and makes glory hereafter, and holiness now, the   
supreme concern—is saving religion.  
  
  
  
**The great storehouse of iniquity!**   
  
"**From the heart** come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries,  
sexual immoralities, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies.  
These are the things that defile a man." Mat 15:19-20  
  
The heart is the polluted fountain from whence all the   
muddy streams of evil conduct flow! **The heart is** **the   
great storehouse of iniquity!** Men sometimes make   
excuse for their evil deeds, by saying, that they have   
good hearts at the bottom. This, however, is an awful   
mistake, for every man's heart, not excepting the most   
wicked, is really worse than his conduct!  
  
Men think little of sin—but does God?   
  
What turned Adam and Eve out of paradise? Sin!   
  
What drowned the old world in the flood? Sin!   
  
What brought disease, accidents, toil, care, war,  
pestilence, and famine into the world? Sin!   
  
What has converted the world into one great   
burying-place of its inhabitants? Sin!   
  
What lights the flames of hell? Sin!   
  
What crucified the Lord of life and glory? Sin!   
  
**What then must sin be?** Who but God, and what   
but His infinite mind—can conceive of its evil nature?

**Is he a brute? Is he a maniac?**  
  
"What will it benefit a man, if he gains the whole world   
yet loses his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange  
for his soul?" (Mat 16:26)   
  
Consider what the loss of the soul includes. It is the loss   
of everything dear to man as an immortal creature. It is   
the **loss of Heaven**, with all its honors, felicities, and   
glories. It is the loss of everything that can contribute   
to our eternal happiness.   
  
The loss of the soul includes in it all that is contained in   
that dreadful word, **Hell**. Hell is the eternal endurance   
of the wrath of God. It is the coming down of the curse   
of the Almighty upon the soul; or rather, it is the falling   
of the soul into that curse, as into a lake which burns   
with fire and brimstone.   
  
All the **tears** that ever have been or ever will be shed on  
the face of the earth; all the **groans** that ever have been   
or ever will be uttered; all the **anguish** that ever has been   
or ever will be endured by all the inhabitants of the world,   
through all the ages of time—do not make up an equal   
amount of **misery** to that which is included in the loss of   
one human soul!  
  
Consider that the eternal loss of the soul is not a rare,   
but a very common occurrence. The loss of the soul is so   
tremendous a catastrophe, that if it happened only once   
in a year, or once in a century, so as to render it barely   
possible that it should happen to you—it would be reckless   
carelessness not to feel some solicitude about the matter!  
How much more, then, when, alas! it is **an every-day   
calamity!** So far from its being a rare thing for men to go   
to hell—it is a much rarer thing for them to go to heaven!   
Our Lord tells us, that the 'road to destruction' is thronged,   
while the 'way to life' is traveled by few. Hell opens its   
mouth wide and swallows up multitudes in perdition! How   
alarming is the idea, and how probable the fact—that **you**   
may be among this number! Some who read these pages   
will very likely spend their eternity in hell.  
  
Concern, then, deep concern about the salvation of your   
soul, is the most reasonable thing in the world! Can that   
man have a soul, or know that he has one, who is careless   
about its eternal happiness? Is he a man—or **is he a brute?**   
Is he a rational being—or **is he a maniac?** Ever walking   
on the edge of the precipice that hangs over the bottomless   
pit—and not concerned about salvation! Oh, fatal, awful,   
destructive indifference!   
  
Look into the **bottomless pit**—can you be too anxious to   
escape its torments? Look into **heaven**—can you be too   
anxious to obtain its glories? Look into **eternity**—can you   
be too anxious to secure immortal life?  
  
  
  
  
**What a bauble!**  
  
"The unsearchable riches of Christ!" Eph 3:8  
  
How poor and trifling are all those objects which   
so much engross the time and attention of the   
great bulk of mankind!  **What a bauble** is **wealth**, compared with   
the unsearchable riches of Christ!   
  
How insignificant is the **honor** which comes from   
man, compared with the honor which comes from   
God!   
  
And how contemptible the **pleasures of sin**,   
which are but for a season—those short-lived   
enjoyments for which men barter their souls   
and eternal salvation!  
  
"The world and everything in it that people desire  
is passing away; but those who do the will of God  
live forever." (1Jn 2:17)

**Continually dropping into eternal burnings!**  
 **What deep pity** has been felt, and properly felt,   
for the population of those towns in which the   
ravages of the **pestilence**, or natural **disaster**,   
have been unusually extensive!  
  
But oh, Christians! think of the more awful ravages   
of the **plague of sin**—which is sweeping crowds of   
immortal souls from your own neighborhood into   
everlasting misery! There are thousands of immortal   
creatures perishing in sin at your very doors! Souls   
are continually going down to the bottomless pit,   
from the houses on your right hand and your left!   
Men and women and their families are **continually   
dropping into eternal burnings**, almost before   
your eyes! And will you not go to their houses, and   
entreat them to think of their soul's eternal welfare?

"As He saw the crowds, His heart was filled with  
**pity** for them." (Mat 9:36)

"And when He drew near and saw the city, He  
**wept** over it." (Luk 19:41)  
  
"Brothers, **my heart's desire** and prayer to God for  
them is that they may be saved." (Rom 10:1)

"I have become all things to all people, so that I  
may by all means save some." (1Co 9:22)

**The rage of the present day**  
  
If we would be revived in piety, we must resist by faith the   
encroaching influence of the WORLD, and the engrossing   
power of seen and temporal things. The address to the   
church of Laodicea would lead one to suppose that it was   
a place of trade—and that trade had produced riches—and   
riches had produced . . .   
pride,  
worldly-mindedness,  
love of ease,  
indifference to divine things,  
and spiritual poverty.  
  
Most people in our country appear inordinately intent upon   
gaining the world. To be rich, or at least to be comfortable,   
to be reputable, to be stylish, to be fashionable, to live in   
larger houses, and to have finer furniture and more earthly   
things than others—seems to be the supreme concern of   
most! They must, whether they can afford it or not, vie   
with their neighbors in all their habits. This seems to be   
**the rage of the present day**—and the church of God is,   
in a measure, carried away by the delusion.   
  
Many seem almost without knowing it, to be possessed by   
a grasping at things beyond their reach, and an ambitious   
aspiring at some undefinable point of worldly elevation. All   
their time, all their attention, is absorbed—and all the vigor   
of their spirits is exhausted—in **this panting race after   
the world's possessions and comforts!**   
  
It is evident that . . .  
until this disposition be more subdued than it is,  
until our moderation be more known to all men,   
until we have lowered our estimate of the importance of wealth,  
until we have ceased thus to mind earthly things,   
until we have gained a greater victory over the world, or   
are anxious to gain it—our piety cannot be revived. It is   
**like seed growing amidst thorns**—and though a fertile   
shower and a warmer sun should cause it to spring afresh   
during a more than ordinarily genial season—yet it is still   
among thorns, which will be sure to choke the grain!  
  
I am afraid that we have not . . .  
that simplicity of taste,  
that contentment,  
that moral courage to be indifferent to the world's opinions,  
that sobriety of mind,  
that comparative unconcernedness about finery and splendor  
—which are necessary to prepare us for a high state of piety.   
  
Let us, then, consider this matter. Let us attend to the   
apostolic admonition, "Be not conformed to this world  
—but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."   
  
The spirit of the world, and the spirit of piety, cannot dwell   
together in the same bosom. "You cannot serve God and   
Mammon." "If any man loves the world, the love of the   
Father is not in him." "Are you seeking great things for   
yourself? Seek them not!" "Do not lay up for yourselves   
treasures on earth," so much as treasures in heaven.   
Remember that "one thing is needful!" "Take heed,   
and beware of covetousness, for a man's life does not   
consist in the abundance of the things that he has."  
  
But if we will be rich, if we will be anxious about many   
things, if we will be full of worldly ambition, and earthly   
mindedness and covetousness—then we cannot experience   
much revival in piety—and **need not add hypocrisy to  
lukewarmness!** For very little better than a hypocrite,  
is the man who prays for the effusions of the Holy Spirit  
—and yet will not moderate his extreme concern after   
worldly wealth.  
  
We must also put away our worldly-mindedness, our   
ambition, our excessive concern to be conformed, as far   
as possible, to the showy, expensive, and luxurious habits   
of the people of this world. We must restrain our taste for   
voluptuous ease, extravagance and self-indulgence. We   
must give up our concern to be accounted fashionable.

**An inundation of worldliness**  
  
"Do not love the world or the things that belong to the world.  
If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him.  
Because everything that belongs to the world—the lust of  
the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one's lifestyle  
—is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world  
with its lust is passing away, but the one who does God's will  
remains forever." (1Jn 2:15-17)  
  
What an unearthly spirit, what an impress of eternity, what  
a temper of heaven should there be in us! Professing to   
believe all this, to hope for all this, to love all this, to yield   
up ourselves to all this—ought we not to be a people really,   
practically differing from the people of the world—seen,   
known and acknowledged to be different . . .  
in our prevailing spirit,  
in our pleasures,  
in our tastes,   
in our feelings and conduct in regard to wealth,  
in the maxims which govern us?   
  
Ought we not to appear to be the conquerors, and not the   
captives, of the world? But is it so? Is not the very opposite   
to all this, the present characteristic of many professors? Has   
not **an inundation of worldliness** flowed in upon the church?   
  
In the habits of some professing Christians, there is a too   
prevailing taste for an expensive, showy style of living; an   
undue ambition to be in vogue; an excessive sensitiveness   
about fashion, refinement, needless show, extravagance,   
luxury and appearance. This is seen in their feverish concern   
to live in large houses, and possess elegant furniture.   
  
Fashion is the goddess to whose shrine too many bow with  
ardent devotion. Just look at the conduct of many professors   
of religion. Are they not almost as completely swallowed up   
in the eagerness to be rich, as the openly ungodly?  
  
Christians must be upon their guard, lest they become too   
eager for the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the   
pride in one's lifestyle.

**A consistent Christian!**  
  
**The following duties are common to all Christians:**  
unreserved, cheerful, perpetual devotedness to Christ,   
entire and constant dependence on the Holy Spirit,  
a life of faith,  
spirituality of mind,  
separation from the world,  
heavenly mindedness,   
supreme regard to eternity,  
universal and high toned morality,   
eminent social excellence in all the relative duties of life,   
all the gentle and passive virtues.   
  
O, what a character is that of **a consistent Christian!**  
  
How holy,  
how heavenly,   
how humble,   
how gentle,   
how benevolent,   
how just,   
how devout,   
how useful,   
how happy!!

**Be holy in every aspect of your life**  
  
"As the One who called you is holy, you also are to **be  
holy in every aspect of your life**; for it is written—  
**Be holy**, because I am holy." (1Pe 1:15-16)  
Let him turn away from all the 'conventional piety' of the   
day, and study with devout attention what the Scriptures   
teach of the true nature of genuine piety.   
  
Let him, in a season of closet devotion, examine his own   
piety, and compare it with the Scriptural standard.   
  
Let him, upon discovering his great and numerous   
shortcomings, humble and abase himself before God,   
in a spirit of true contrition.   
  
Let him reject all excuses which his own deceitful heart,   
and lukewarm, worldly-minded Christians will be ever   
ready to suggest. He must be thoroughly convinced   
that nothing can, or will, be admitted by God as an   
apology for a low state of personal piety.   
  
Let him intensely desire to be raised from his low state  
into a more exalted state of spirituality, devoted zeal and   
heavenly-mindedness. Let him set himself most vigorously   
to the work of mortifying sin, and crucifying the flesh.   
  
Let him redouble his diligence in attending the means of   
grace, and especially let him give himself to reading the   
Scriptures, meditation and prayer.   
  
Let him add a season of humiliation and supplication,   
to obtain a new and copious effusion of the Holy Spirit.   
Without the influence of the Spirit, we are only building   
a Babel to proclaim our folly, or a mausoleum to entomb   
our fleshly endeavors.   
  
Let him cultivate a new and more delicate sensibility of   
conscience, in reference to all matters of offense, both   
towards God and man.   
  
Let him give himself to Christian vigilance, watching   
always against sin.  
  
Let him, in short, intelligently, resolutely, and unalterably,   
make up his mind to enter upon a new course of personal   
godliness; so new that his past attainments shall seem as  
if they were nothing. There is such a thing as starting   
afresh, as forgetting the things that are behind—and so   
must it be with him who would be really in earnest. He   
will wake up from his slumbering, dreamy profession,   
saying, "I have slept too long and too much! I must now   
throw off the spirit of sloth, and give all diligence to make   
my calling and election sure."

**Propensity for amusements and entertainments**  
  
A great hindrance to earnest piety, is the taste for   
amusement, which characterizes the present day.   
  
Every age has had its sources of pleasure, and its means   
and methods of diversion—to relieve the mind from the   
fatigue and oppression of the more serious occupations   
of life. The human mind cannot be kept always upon the   
stretch, nor can the heart sustain, without occasional relief,   
its burden of care. I would not rob the believer of his few   
brief holidays, nor condemn as irrational or unchristian,   
his occasional oblivion of worldly vexations amidst the  
beauties of nature, or the pleasures of the social circle.   
**There is a time to laugh—as well as to weep.**   
  
Still, it may be seriously questioned, whether among   
professing Christians, the **propensity for amusements   
and entertainments** has not been growing too fast, and   
ripened into something like a passion for worldly pleasures.   
  
The very craving after diversion and amusement, which there   
is in some people, shows a morbid state of the soul. It might   
be supposed, judging from the representations of true religion   
which we find in the word of God, and from the general principles   
contained in it—that a Christian has rendered unnecessary, all   
such sources of enjoyment, which worldly people resort to.   
  
To hear all this talk, then, about the necessity of entertainment;   
and the impossibility of relieving the exhaustion of labor, and the   
monotony of life, without parties, games, and diversions—sounds   
very like a growing weariness of the yoke of Christ!  
  
This growing desire after amusement marks a low state of piety.   
The godly Christian is very well content to forego many things   
in which the people of the world see no harm.

(Choice devotional selections from   
the works of John Angell James)

**You will die this year!**  
  
This is what the Lord says: "I am going to remove you from   
the face of the earth. **You will die this year!**" Jer 28:16  
  
This may be the case with any one of the readers of the   
present address, and therefore every one of them should   
seriously reflect upon such a possibility.   
  
This year you **may** die—for you **must** die some time—and   
that time may as likely come this year as any other.   
  
This year you may die—because you have no revelation   
from God that you shall not.  
  
This year you may die—because you are ever and   
everywhere exposed to the causes that take away life.   
  
This year you may die—because **life is the most   
uncertain thing in the world**, and you have not   
the assurance of a single moment beyond the present.   
  
This year you may die—for it is all but certain that   
many of the readers of this address will die this year  
—and why not you?   
  
This year you may die, although there is now no   
indication of approaching death; for many during   
the past year have been cut off, and many during   
the present year will die, who may now seem very   
likely to live—and why not you?  
  
How many, then, are the probabilities that before   
next new year's day, your place will be vacant in   
the family, at the scene of your daily occupation,   
and in the house of God! Ought not this to induce   
a habit of solemn, pensive, devout, practical,   
profitable, reflection. Bring home the thought. Take   
up the supposition, and say, "Yes, it is possible, by   
no means improbable, that I may die—this year!"   
  
Are you really prepared for your latter end, by being   
a partaker of genuine faith, the new birth, a holy life,   
and a heavenly mind? Or are you a mere nominal   
professor, having a name to live, while you are dead?  
Do you recognize in yourselves, and do others see in   
you, the marks of a state of grace? Put the question   
to your own hearts, ask yourselves, "What am I? Am   
I a spiritual, heavenly, humble servant of God? Am I   
really crucified with Christ, dead to the world, ripening   
for glory? Is there anything heavenly about me? Is my   
temper sanctified, my walk consistent?"  
  
Is your soul in that state in which you would desire   
it to be found when death strikes? Are you, in your   
devotional habits, your temper, your general behavior,   
as you should be—with eternity so near? Would you   
desire to die—just as you are now?  
  
How many false professors will be unmasked this   
year, and appear with astonishment and horror, as   
self-deceivers, formalists, and hypocrites! How many   
in reply to the plea, "Lord, Lord, I ate and drank in   
your presence"—will hear the dreadful response,   
"Depart from me, I never knew you!" and thus find   
there is a way to the bottomless pit—from the   
fellowship of the church! In whatever state you die   
this year—*that* you will be forever! The seal of eternal   
destiny will be put upon you! Your last words in time,   
and your first in eternity, might be, "I must be what   
I am—*forever!"*The grand secret is about to be revealed, whether you   
are a child of God—or a child of the devil! That next   
moment after death—which imagination in vain attempts   
to paint, is to arrive—and, waking up in eternity, you will   
shout with rapture, "I am in heaven!"—or utter with a   
shriek of despair, and surprise, the dreadful question,"What! Am I in hell forever!"

**Ever walking on the precipice of eternity!**  
  
Reader! Did you ever, in serious moments, and in   
a serious manner, ask such questions as these:   
  
What am I?   
  
Where did I come from?   
  
Who sent me here?   
  
What is my business in this world?   
  
What is to become of me when I die,   
and leave this present world?  
  
Does not reason press such inquiries on your attention?   
You find yourself in existence, possessing a rational soul;   
you know you cannot remain here long, and must soon   
go and lie down in the grave with your forefathers. But   
does your history end there? Is there no world beyond   
the tomb? There is! You are not only mortal, but immortal.   
  
**Immortality!** What a word! What a thing! Did you ever   
ponder the idea? A deathless creature—with an everlasting   
existence! Such is your soul. You are **ever walking on   
the precipice of eternity**—and any moment you may   
fall over it!   
  
Eternal duration alone, apart from the consideration   
whether it is to be spent in torment or in bliss—is a   
solemn idea. You are to live somewhere—forever!   
Should this matter be allowed to lie forgotten among   
the thousand unconsidered subjects? Should it be   
treated with indifference, excite no reflection, produce   
no concern? Ought you not to be concerned? Going on   
step by step to eternity—should you not pause, ponder,   
and say, "Where am I going?"   
  
For a person to realize that he is immortal, and yet to   
care nothing about where he is going to spend eternity,   
is the most monstrous inconsistency in the universe!  
  
Can any man know . . .  
how holy God is,   
how evil a thing sin is,   
how great a blessing salvation is,  
how glorious heaven is,  
how dreadful hell is,   
how solemn eternity is,   
and not not be concerned about his eternal soul?   
  
Astounding spectacle! A rational creature, anxious   
about a thousand things, yet not concerned about   
the eternal soul! Agitated, perplexed, inquisitive   
about little matters of mere passing interest, which   
the next day will be forgotten; and yet neglecting   
that great subject, which swallows them all up, as   
the ocean does the drops of rain that fall upon it.   
Your health, your property, your prospects, your   
friends, anything, everything, but your soul, and   
your soul's salvation, seizes and carries you away!   
  
Did you ever weigh the import of that most awful   
of all words—**hell**?   
  
**Death** is a dreadful monosyllable! From the cold touch   
of that 'last enemy' all rational beings recoil with horror.   
  
But death is only as the dark, heavy, iron-covered door   
of the prison, which opens to, while it conceals, the sights   
and sounds of the dungeon. Oh that first moment after   
death! what disclosures, what scenes, what feelings   
come with that moment! That moment **must** come—  
and it **may** come soon!

**Immorality**, whether public or private, if it spreads through   
society, and especially through the rising generation, will be   
a canker to all that is great, glorious, and free, in this noble   
nation; and England's flag, floating so loftily and proudly,   
will be dragged down into the mud, and **trampled   
underfoot by a swinish generation!**  
  
Be thankful, be humble, be consistent, be watchful. There   
is no logic so convincing, no rhetoric so persuasive, as **the   
power of uniform and conspicuous excellence**. Add to   
the substance of your moral worth, the brightest polish of   
an amiable disposition, and all the kindnesses of life. Be   
courteous, generous, benevolent, cheerful, active and useful.

**One life to spend**  
  
"**This one thing I do**. Forgetting the things which are behind,  
and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press  
on toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in  
Christ Jesus." (Php 3:13-14)  
  
There are many secondary and subordinate ends of life, but   
there can be only one that is supreme. The salvation of the   
immortal soul, and a preparation for heaven, form the great   
end of man's life upon earth.   
  
Man has but **one life to spend**, and he should be careful,   
anxiously careful, yes almost painfully careful, not to throw   
it away upon an undeserving object. Think of his coming to   
the close of his brief and troubled sojourn in this world with   
the melancholy confession, "Life with me has been a lost   
adventure!" We would help you to guard against this   
catastrophe, and assist you so to select your object, and   
lay your plan, that after a prosperous, happy, and useful   
life, even death itself—instead of being the wreck of your   
hopes, shall prove the consummation of your hopes, and   
be your eternal gain.   
  
Our one thing, our chief end of life, is the same as Paul's,   
the pursuit of glory, honor, immortality; our hope is the   
possession of eternal life. There it is before you in all its   
simplicity, and, we may add, in all its sublimity.   
  
  
**True piety**   
  
**True piety** will be the guide of our youth, the comfort of   
our manhood, and the staff of our old age. If we succeed  
in life, it will preserve us from the snares of prosperity.   
And if we fail, it will be our solace in adversity. Should   
we be exposed to the temptations of bad company, piety   
will be our shield; or, if we should dwell much alone, it   
will be the comforter of our solitude. Piety will guide us   
in the choice of a companion for life, sweeten the cup of   
marital happiness, and survive the severance of every   
earthly tie. It will refresh us with its cooling shade amidst   
the heat and burden of life's busy day, be the evening star   
of our declining years, and our lamp in the dark valley of   
the shadow of death, and then rise with us as our eternal   
portion in the realms of immortality.  
  
True piety will guard you from the snares to which   
youth are ever and everywhere exposed. It will . . .  
comfort you in sorrow,  
cheer you in solitude,   
guide you in perplexity.

**The low state of piety among professors**  
  
Ah, my friend, let me tell you in the beginning of   
your career, that you cannot expect too little from   
man—nor too much from God.   
  
Many are discouraged by witnessing **the low state of   
piety among professors**. They hear little from the lips   
of many Christian professors, but, "What shall we eat   
and drink? How shall we be adorn ourselves? What is   
the news of the day?"   
  
They see so much worldly-mindedness, so much   
imperfection of temper, so many things unworthy   
of the Christian character, that they can scarcely   
believe there is reality in religion, and are sometimes   
ready to give it all up as a mere name. Nay, from   
some of these very professors they receive plain hints   
that they are too concerned, too precise, too earnest   
and urgent.   
  
  
  
**How far people may go**  
  
It is amazing, **how far people may go**, and **not**   
be really converted. They may have many and deep   
religious impressions, many and strong convictions;   
they may have much knowledge of their sinful state,   
and a heavy and burdensome sense of their guilt;   
they may look back upon their past lives and conduct   
with much remorse; they may be sorry for their sins;   
and may desire to be saved from the consequences of   
them, being much alarmed at the prospect of the   
torments of hell.   
  
Was not **Judas** convinced of sin, and did not he weep   
bitterly and confess his sin, and was not he filled with   
remorse? Was not **Cain** convinced of sin? I have known   
many people, who at one time appeared to be more   
deeply impressed with a sense of sin, and to have   
stronger convictions and remorse, than many who   
were truly converted—and yet they went back again   
to the world and sin. Nor is a detestation of sin always   
a true sign of conversion. Unconverted people may even   
wish to be delivered from the fetters of those corrupt lusts,   
which have long held them fast; for there are few notorious   
sinners, who do not frequently hate their sins, and wish and   
purpose to reform. Yes, people may sometimes desire to   
be delivered from all sin; at least they may desire it in a   
certain way, because they think that it is necessary in   
order to be saved from hell.   
  
And as conviction of sin may exist without conversion,   
so may religious joy. The stony ground hearers "heard   
the word, and with joy received it," and yet they had   
"no root in themselves, and endured only for a while."   
The Galatians had great blessedness at one time, which   
the apostle was afraid had come to nothing. Multitudes   
rejoiced in Christ when he made His entrance into   
Jerusalem, who afterwards became His enemies. Many   
take great pleasure in hearing sermons, and going to   
prayer-meetings, and singing hymns, and frequenting   
church meetings, who are not truly born of the Spirit.   
So also do many people leave off sinful actions, and give   
up many wicked practices, and seem to be quite altered   
for a time, and yet, by their subsequent history, show   
that they are not converted.   
  
There may be considerable zeal for the outward concerns   
of religion, as we see in Jehu, without any right state of   
mind towards God. Many have had great confidence of   
the reality of their conversion; they have had dreams  
and spiritual impressions, as they suppose—and yet   
too plainly proved, by their after-conduct, that they   
were under an awful delusion. But it would be almost   
endless to point out **the various ways in which men   
deceive themselves**, as to their state. Millions who   
have been somewhat, yes, much concerned about   
religion, have never been born again of the Spirit.   
Perhaps as many are lost by self-deception, as by   
any other means. Hell resounds with the groans   
and lamentations of souls which perished through   
the power of deceived hearts!

**Then hell itself is full of penitents**  
  
Repentance is more, much more than 'mere sorrow for sin'.  
True sorrow for sin is a part, and only a part, of repentance.   
If mere sorrow comprised the whole of repentance, then   
Cain, Ahab, and Judas all repented! **Then hell itself is   
full of penitents**, for there is weeping and wailing and   
gnashing of teeth forever. Many, very many, grieve for   
their sins, who never repent of them. Men may grieve   
for the **consequences** of their sins, without mourning   
for the sins themselves.   
  
Repentance signifies an entire change of a man's   
views, disposition, and conduct, with respect to sin.   
  
The author of repentance is the Holy Spirit—it is the   
effect of Divine grace working in the heart of man.   
  
No man knows what sin is, and how sinful he is, who   
does not clearly see that he has deserved to be cast   
into "the lake which burns with fire and brimstone."   
  
  
  
**All sins in one!**  
  
"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,   
and with all your soul, and with all your mind; and  
you shall love your neighbor as yourself."   
  
Alarming representation! Have you thus loved God,   
and your neighbor? Confounding and overwhelming   
question! What a state of sin have you been living in!   
Your whole life has been sin, for you have not loved   
God! And not to love God, is **all sins in one!** Who   
can think of greater sin than not loving God? To   
love the world, to love trifles, to love even sin—  
and not to love God!

**But what is that misery?**   
  
When man was created, he was created holy—and   
consequently happy. He was not only placed in a   
paradise which was without sin—but he was blessed   
with a paradise within him. His perfect holiness was   
as much the Eden of his soul, as the garden which   
he tilled was the Eden of his bodily senses—it was in   
the inward paradise of a holy mind that he walked   
in communion with God. The 'fall' cast him out of  
this 'heaven upon earth' . . .   
his **understanding** became darkened,   
his **heart** became corrupted,   
his **will** became perverted,  
his **nature** became earthly, sensual, and devilish.   
  
Not only was his conscience laden with guilt, but,   
as a necessary consequence, his imagination was   
full of terror and dread of that holy God, whose   
voice and presence formerly imparted nothing but   
transport to his soul. He became afraid of God, and   
unfit for him. His whole soul became the seat of   
fleshly appetites and sinful passions.   
  
In his former innocence he had loved God supremely.  
He had been united to God by a feeling of dependence   
and devotedness. But now he was cut off from both  
these feelings, and **came under the domination of   
an absorbing and engrossing selfishness.** Such is   
the sinful nature he has transmitted to all his posterity.  
They are . . .  
not only guilty—but depraved;   
not only under the wrath of God—but robbed of His image;   
not only condemned by God—but alienated from Him.   
  
True it is, that hell will be some place set apart for the   
wicked, where the justice of God will consign them to   
the misery which their sins have deserved. **But what   
is that misery?** An eternal abandonment of them to   
themselves, with all their vices in full maturity! Hell   
is not only the wrath of God suffered, but that wrath   
coupled with an eternal endurance of all the tyranny   
of sin!  
  
Hence, then, the design of the death of Christ is not   
only to deliver us from the penalty of sin, but also   
from the polluting consequences of sin.

**One verse in Scripture**  
  
"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the  
word, that you may grow thereby." (1Pe 2:2)  
  
And as those infants thrive best who are fed from   
the bosom of their mothers—so those Christians   
grow most in grace, who are most devoted to a   
spiritual perusal of the Scriptures.   
  
Meditate on what you read. If we would gain knowledge   
from books, we must not only see the matters treated of,   
but steadily ponder them. Nothing but meditation can enable   
us to properly understand or feel. In reading the Scriptures   
and pious books, we are, or should be, reading for eternity.   
Our profiting depends not on the quantity we read, but the   
quantity we understand. **One verse in Scripture**, if   
understood and meditated upon, will do us more good   
than a chapter, or, even a book, read through in haste,   
and without reflection.   
  
  
  
**Salvation!**  
  
"Let us rejoice and be glad in His **salvation**." Isa 25:9  
  
What a blessing is salvation! A blessing that includes . . .  
all the riches of grace;   
all the greater riches of glory;  
deliverance from sin, death, and hell;  
the possession of pardon, peace, holiness, and heaven!  
  
Salvation is a blessing immense, infinite, everlasting;   
which occupied the mind of Deity from eternity, was   
procured by the Son of God upon the cross, and will   
fill eternity with its happiness.   
  
Oh, how little, insignificant, and contemptible is the   
highest object of human ambition, to say nothing of   
the baser matters of men's desires, compared with   
salvation! Riches, rank, fame, and honors, are but as   
the small dust of the balance, when compared with the   
"salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."   
  
"My mouth will tell about Your righteousness and Your  
salvation all day long, though I cannot sum them up."  
Psa 71:15   
  
"He alone is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold;  
I will not be shaken." Psa 62:6

**Eternity, vast eternity, incomprehensible eternity**  
  
Reader! You are an immortal creature, a being born for   
eternity, a creature that will never go out of existence.   
Millions of ages, as numerous as . . .  
the sands upon the shore,   
the drops of the ocean,   
the leaves of all the forests on the globe,  
will not shorten the duration of your existence.   
  
**Eternity, vast eternity, incomprehensible eternity**,  
is before you! Every day brings you nearer to everlasting   
torments—or felicity. You may die any moment—and you   
are as near to heaven or hell as you are to death.  
  
Reader, whoever you are, you will remember the contents   
of this small treatise, either with pleasure and gratitude in   
heaven—or with remorse and despair in hell!

**We need to re-study our Bibles**  
**We need to re-study our Bibles**, and learn   
what real Christianity is—how holy, how heavenly,   
how spiritual, how loving, how morally and socially   
excellent a matter it is.   
  
What separation from the world,   
what devoutness,   
what intense earnestness,   
what conscientiousness,   
what enlarged benevolence,   
what unselfishness,   
what zealous activity,   
what unearthliness,   
what seeds of celestial virtue—  
our profession of godliness implies.   
  
Having examined this, and obtained an impressive   
idea of it, let us **survey our own state**, and ask if   
we do not need, and ought not to seek, more of the   
prevalence of such a piety as this, which, in fact, is   
primitive Christianity.   
  
Is our spiritual condition what it **ought** to be, what   
it **might** be, what it **must** be—to fulfill our high   
commission as the salt of the earth and the light of   
the world? A Christian, acting up in some tolerable   
measure to his profession, walking in the holiness   
of the Gospel—is the strongest and most emphatic  
testimony for God to our dark revolted world, next   
to that of Christ himself.

**I would ask**  
**I would ask**, what there is among you . . .  
of 'living by faith';  
of the spiritual and heavenly mind;  
of the victory over the world;  
of devotional habits;  
of Bible meditation;  
of the practice of self-denial;  
of Christian charity;  
of the meekness and gentleness of Christ;  
of the stamp of immortality;  
of the anticipation of eternity;  
of the patient waiting for the coming of our Savior,  
all of which are enjoined in the word of God, and  
implied in our profession of Christianity  
  
Do we not see, almost everywhere, instead of these things,   
a superficial, secular, and temporizing kind of piety; a piety   
without any depth of feeling, any power of principle, or any   
distinctness of character; a cold, spiritless orthodoxy, united   
with a heartless morality; a mere exemption from gross vice   
and fashionable amusements; an observance of forms and   
decencies—but a lamentable destitution of love, of Christian   
temper, and tenderness of conscience?   
  
Enter the social spheres of professing Christians, listen to their   
conversation, witness their entertainments, observe their spirit.   
How frivolous, how worldly, how different from what might be   
expected from redeemed sinners, from the heirs of immortality,   
from the expectants of everlasting glory!   
  
Follow them home to their domestic circle, and behold their   
pervading temper—how irascible, how worldly, how destitute   
of spirituality! Witness the cold and lifeless formality—the late,   
hurried, irregular, and undevout seasons of their family devotions,   
together with the shameful neglect of the pious instruction of   
their children! Witness the shortness and inconstancy of their   
times for private prayer, and think how little communion with   
God, how little study of the Scriptures, how little self-improvement,   
can be carried on during such fragments of time, snatched from   
the greedy and all-devouring passion of earthly-mindedness!   
  
The spirit of prayer is expiring amidst the ashes of its own dead   
forms, and the Bible reduced, in many houses of professing   
Christians, to the degradation of a mere article of furniture,   
placed there for show—but not for use.   
  
Who will deny that this is but too correct a representation   
of modern piety; or admitting it, deny the need in which our   
churches stand of a revival?

**Ah! are we prepared to say this?**   
  
"As the One who called you is holy, you also are to  
be holy in every aspect of your life; for it is written—  
Be holy, because I am holy." (1Pe 1:15-16)  
If we would increase in holiness, we should pray, "O God,   
let my soul prosper and be in health, at all events! Improve   
my personal piety, my Christian temperament and spirit,   
though it be at the sacrifice of my temporal comfort. Supply   
my deficiencies, mortify my corruptions, increase my spirituality,   
and enkindle in my heart the flame of holy love, though it be   
necessary, in order to accomplish this purpose, to diminish   
my worldly ease and enjoyments."  **Ah! are we prepared to say this?**

**A languid and feeble plant**  
I come now to the state of piety in your own hearts. Is it so lively, so vigorous, so elevated, as it should be? Consider what our profession amounts to, what our principles are, what our creed includes.   
  
We believe that we are immortal creatures, going on to eternity, and that we shall exist through everlasting ages in inconceivable torment or felicity; that we are sinners by nature and practice against God—and as such, under the sentence of the divine law, which sentence is eternal death, an everlasting sense and endurance of the wrath of God; that we have been delivered from our state of condemnation through the sovereign, rich, and efficacious grace of God, granted to us through the mediation of Jesus Christ; that we are pardoned, and in a state of favor with Jehovah; that we are going on to glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life, and shall dwell forever with Christ and his saints and angels, in glory everlasting; that we are redeemed by Jesus Christ and purified from iniquity to be a peculiar people, zealous for good works, and designed to show forth the praise of God by the beauties of holiness.  
  
Are not these our principles and profession? Think, then, what kind of people ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness; how dead to the world, caring but little about its profits and losses, its pains and pleasures; how heavenly in our anticipations and aspirations; how spiritual in our thoughts and feelings; how devotional in our habits; how self-denying in all our gratifications; how fond of the Holy Scriptures, and devoted to the perusal of them; how given to meditation and contemplation, to private prayer and self-communion; how devoted to communion with God, and how impressed with a sense of the unutterable, inconceivable love of Christ; how replete with love to our brethren, and benevolence to the whole family of man!   
  
Should it not be seen by others, as well as felt by ourselves, that we look not at the things which are seen and temporal—but at the things which are unseen and eternal? that our eye, our hope, our heart, are upon eternity?   
  
But is this, indeed, our state, or the state of Christians in general? Do they indeed live the life of that faith, and painful mortification, and habitual restraint, and aspiring spirituality, and heavenly-mindedness—which are so often inculcated in the Word of God, as the very essence of vital and experimental Christianity?   
  
What do we know in this age, when profession is easy and piety generally safe from persecution. We abstain from immoralities, and public amusements, and from many private engagements which are the symbols of love to the world—and to these things we add an attendance upon an evangelical ministry, and the forms of domestic and private piety—and all this so far is well. But as to the real culture of the heart; the mortification of the corrupt and earthly affections of the soul; the deep sense of the love of Christ; the withdrawal of our affections from the world, to set them on things above; the high communing of our spirits with God; the blissful anticipation of an eternity to be spent with the Lord Jesus; the conflicts and the triumphs of the fight of faith—of these things, alas! we know little but the names, and are ready, in some cases, to wonder what they mean. Yet are they all continually alluded to in the Scriptures.   
  
I am well convinced that the piety of the present day is **a languid and feeble plant**, it has run up to a great height, perhaps, under the influence of a long season of unclouded sunshine; but it lacks depth and tenacity of root, strength of stem, and abundance of fruit—and that, were the wintry season and frosty nights of persecution again to return, it would droop its head, and shed its leaves, and give full proof of its sickly and delicate constitution.   
  
It is greatly to be feared, that in these times of peace and prosperity in the church, many have entered her gates, and joined her fellowship—who know nothing at all of spiritual religion, and whose example and spirit exert a deadening influence upon others.

**A self-indulgent, ease-loving spirit**  
  
I now mention, as a second fault—**a self-indulgent, ease-loving spirit**; an cowardly, weak disposition which shrinks from those duties, occupations, and engagements which require a sacrifice of bodily repose and comfort. The words of our Lord are still the standing-rule of discipleship, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." If there be meaning in words, these must imply that the true Christian spirit is self-denial. This was not intended to apply exclusively to that time, or to any age of persecution, or to any peculiar external condition of the Church. It is the perpetual law of Christ's kingdom for all ages, all countries, all people. We can no more be Christians without a spirit of self-denial, than we can be without repentance and faith, or truthfulness, justice, or chastity. It is a state of mind and a course of conduct essential to personal godliness. We must all, in one sense or other, be cross-bearers.   
  
But in what does self-denial consist? Not in the self-imposed austerities of Catholicism or hermitism; nor in the self-inflicted penances of superstition—nor in the privation of the sober and moderate enjoyment of the lawful gratifications of our compound nature. Grace is not at war, any more than Reason, with the instincts of humanity; the Creator has not implanted these in our nature to be violently torn up by the Redeemer and Sanctifier. All that piety does with them, is to keep them in due subjection to itself; not to eradicate them—but so far to crop their excessive growth as to prevent their overshading and chilling our virtues. To the wearer of sackcloth, the wallower in filth, the half-starved abstinent, the recluse of the cell, God says, "Who has required this at your hand?" This is not self-denial—but self-degradation, a disgusting caricature of the virtue recommended by our Lord. It is self-gratification under a hideous form; self-pleasing in a way of self-torture; the worship of self in a Moloch shape.   
  
**Self-denial** means the subjection of all the promptings of self-love to the will of God. It is the surrender of ourselves to God, to do his will and please him in the way of his commandments, rather than ourselves. In other words, it is to prefer known and prescribed duty, to selfish gratification. This state of mind will develop itself in various ways. If anyone has injured us, Christian duty says, "Freely forgive him." Sinful self says, "Retaliate." The maxim of the devil says, "Revenge is sweet;" and sinful self affirms the same. Revenge is self-indulgence—forgiveness, with our corrupt hearts, is self-denial. So also, in a different case, if we have injured another, reason, piety, conscience, all say, "Confess your fault." The evil heart says, "No, I cannot thus humble myself." Self-denial requires confession—self-indulgence resists it.   
  
So again, the whole business of internal sanctification, in our present imperfect state, is a course of self-denial. We are to "mortify our members," to "crucify the flesh," to "keep under our body." All this implies and requires self-denial—for it is a resistance rather than a gratification of our sinful nature. Indeed, the whole course of the Christian life is one continued habit of self-denial, or the subjection of our sinful self to our renewed and holy self.   
  
Self-denial requires often the sacrifice of personal and relative gratification for the benefit of others and the good of Christ's cause.

**Mere catacombs filled with these lifeless forms**  
  
"Having the appearance of godliness, but denying  
its power. (2Ti 3:5)  
  
Are not the doctrines of the gospel calculated by their   
nature, and intended by their design, to produce a spiritual   
frame of mind? Ah! but how much of dull, dormant, dead   
orthodoxy—is there in the bulk of modern professors! What  
a discordance between their beliefs and their practice!   
  
Ah, what are some churches—but **mere catacombs filled   
with these lifeless forms** of Christian professors! I am   
speaking of the bulk of professors, and of them I do not   
hesitate for a moment to declare that there is an obvious   
and lamentable deficiency of spirituality of mind. Their   
affections are in a languid and lukewarm condition.   
  
Sound doctrine, if it is destitute of spirituality and heavenly  
mindedness—is but the lifeless statue of godliness.   
  
Oh, professing Christians, without holy and heavenly affections,   
what is your religion but a mere name? Attend then to the   
exhortations of the apostle, and "set your affections on things   
which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God."   
Cultivate a spiritual frame; acquire habits of pious thinking and   
feeling. Like the secret source of a spring of water, deep in the   
earth, yet continually welling up to the surface, and gushing   
out in sparkling ebullitions—let religion be in your soul, an   
inward source and spring of living piety, which, by its own   
force, is perpetually sending forth spiritual thoughts and   
heavenly aspirations; so that a stream of devout thought   
and feeling, deep and full, is more or less continually   
flowing through your life.

**Better than a ton of gold!**  
  
A grain of saving faith is **better than a ton of gold**,   
for it secures an inheritance in all the unsearchable   
riches of Christ, of grace, and of glory! It justifies,   
sanctifies, and eternally saves!   
  
Learn to think less and less of the wealth of this world,   
and more and more of the unsearchable riches of Christ!   
  
Lower the estimate which pride and vanity form of the   
importance of worldly distinctions.   
  
How dim, how worthless, does everything earthly   
appear when seen in the sunlight of the cross!   
  
It is by losing sight of Jesus, by living so far from   
Him, by forgetting Him—that we let the world get   
so much the upper hand of us.   
  
We must meditate more upon the cross.   
We must dwell more upon Calvary.   
We must be more familiar with the crucified One.   
  
"But as for me, I will never boast about anything  
except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through  
whom the world has been crucified to me, and I  
to the world." (Gal 6:14)

**Prayer**  
  
If there is one thing which is more suited to our condition,   
and more prompted by our necessities than any other—it is   
prayer.   
  
If there is one duty which is more frequently enjoined by   
the precepts, or more beautifully enforced by the examples   
of Scripture, than any other—it is prayer.   
  
If there be one practice as to which the experience of all   
good men of every age, every country, and every church,   
has agreed—it is prayer.  
  
If there be one thing which above all others decisively   
marks the spirit of sincere and individual piety—it is prayer.   
  
So that it may be safely affirmed, where the spirit of prayer   
is low in the soul of an individual, in a country, an age, or a   
church—whatever it may have, of morality, of ceremony, of   
liberality—the spirit of piety is low also.  
  
Every sincere act of adoration—increases our veneration   
for God's glorious character.  
  
Every confession of sin—deepens our penitence.  
  
Every petition for a favor—cherishes a sense of dependence.  
  
Every intercession for others—expands our philanthropy.  
  
Every acknowledgment of a mercy—inflames our gratitude.

Instead of the church **permeating** the world with its   
own spirit—it is receiving the spirit of the world into   
itself. Instead of directing, controlling, and sanctifying   
the spirit and ways of the age—it is itself directed,   
controlled, and contaminated by them.

**A dark sign**  
  
It will be **a dark sign** of the approach of an evil day,   
when our churches in choosing their pastors shall be   
guided rather by a regard to talent than to piety; by   
a love of eloquence, rather than of the gospel.

**The great object of life** to many professing Christians, seems to   
be to become rich. Their chief end does not appear to be so much   
to glorify God, and enjoy Him forever—as to obtain and enjoy the   
present world. Wealth is the center of their wishes—the invariable   
tendency of their desires. Jehovah is the God of their creed, but   
Mammon is the God of their hearts! They are devout adorers of   
the God of wealth.

**The way to win the ungodly** to piety, is not by showing   
them that their pleasures are ours—but that our pleasures  
are infinitely superior to any which they know!

**All their secularities and fashionable follies!**  
  
Two consequences result from the reception of unsuitable people   
to church fellowship. They not only are confirmed in their false   
views of their own case; but by their low state of pious feeling,   
or total destitution of it, by their worldly-mindedness and laxity,   
they corrupt others, and exert a deadening influence upon the   
whole church! Their example is a source of corruption to very   
many, who are allured by it into **all their secularities and   
fashionable follies**. One family of such worldly and lukewarm   
professors is often . . .  
a grief to the pastor,  
a lamentation to the spiritual part of the flock,  
a snare to many of the less pious, and  
a reproach to the church at large.   
Too many of this description find their way, in these days of   
easy profession, into all our churches. We need a deeper sort   
of piety in our churches, a more realizing sense of . . .   
the claims of Christ,   
the value of the soul,   
the misery of men without the Gospel, and   
the great ends and obligations of the Christian profession!

**EXCESSIVE INDULGENCE**  
  
Some very good people have erred here; they have taught, entreated, and prayed—and then wondered that their children did not become truly pious. But their excessive indulgence, their injudicious fondness, their utter neglect of all discipline, the relaxation of their authority, until the children have been taught to consider that they, and not their parents, were the most important people in the household.  
  
But there is another thing to be observed, and that is the mischief of **EXCESSIVE INDULGENCE**. Read the history of **Eli**, as recorded by the pen of inspiration. The honors of the priesthood and of the magistracy lighted upon him. He was beloved and respected by the nation whose affairs he administered, and to all appearance seemed likely to finish a life of active duty, in the calm repose of an honored old age. But the evening of his life, at one time so calm and so bright, became suddenly overcast, and a storm arose which burst in fury upon his head, and dashed him to the ground by its dreadful thunder bolts. Whence did it arise? Let the words of the historian declare, "I have told him, said the Lord, that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile—and he restrained them not!" Poor old man, who can fail to sympathize with him under the terror of that dreadful sentence, which crushed his dearest hopes and beclouded all his prospects—but the sting, the venom of the sentence, was in the declaration that a criminal unfaithfulness on his part had brought upon his beloved sons both temporal and eternal ruin! All this destruction upon his sons, all this misery upon himself, was the consequence of weak and criminal parental indulgence!

Doubtless it began while they were yet children; their every wish and every whim were indulged, their foolish inclinations were gratified; he could never be persuaded that any germs of malignant passions lurked under appearances so playful and so lovely; he smiled at transgressions on which he ought to have frowned; and instead of endeavoring kindly but firmly to eradicate the first indications of pride, anger, ambition, deceit, self-will, and stubbornness—he considered they were but the wild flowers of spring, which would die by themselves as the summer advanced. The **child** grew in this hotbed of indulgence—into the boy; the **boy** into the youth; the **youth** into the young **man**; until habit had confirmed the vices of the child, and acquired a strength which not only now bid defiance to parental restraint—but laughed it to scorn.   
  
Contemplate the poor old man, sitting by the way-side upon his bench, in silent despair, his heart torn with self-reproach, listening with sad presages for tidings from the field of conflict. At length the messenger arrives, the doleful news is told. The ark of God is taken, and his sons Hophni and Phinehas are slain! His aged heart is broken, and he and his whole house are crushed at once under that one sin—the excessive weakness and wickedness of a false and foolish parental indulgence!   
  
Parents, and especially mothers, look at this picture and tremble—contemplate this sad scene, and learn the necessity of judicious, affectionate, firm, and persevering discipline!

**Foul blots!**  
  
"Bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."   
(Eph 6:4)  
  
Parents! you are always educating your children for good  
—or for evil. Not only by what you say—but by what you   
**do**! Not only by what you intend—but by what you **are**!  
You yourself are one constant lesson which their eyes are  
observing, and which their hearts are receiving. Influence,   
power, impulse, are ever going out from you—take care   
then how you act! See the immense importance of **parental   
example**. What example is so powerful as that of a parent?   
It is one of the first things which a child observes; it is that   
which is most constantly before his eyes, and it is that which   
his very relationship inclines him most attentively to respect,  
and most assiduously to copy. Vain, worse than useless, is   
biblical instruction which is not followed up by godly example.   
Good advice, when not illustrated by good conduct, inspires   
disgust. There are multitudes of parents to whom I would   
deliberately give the counsel never to say one syllable to   
their children on the subject of religion—unless they enforce   
what they say by a better example. Silence does infinitely   
less mischief than the most elaborate instruction—which is  
all counteracted by inconsistent conduct!  
  
Would you see the result of parental misconduct—look into   
the family of **David**. Eminent as he was for the spirit of   
devotion, sweet as were the strains which flowed from his   
inspired heart, and attached as he was to the worship of   
the sanctuary—yet what **foul blots** rested upon his character,   
and what dreadful trials did he endure in his family! What   
profligate creatures were his sons! And who can tell how   
much the apostasy of Solomon was to be traced up to the   
recollection of parental example?   
  
Parents, beware, I beseech you, how you, act! O let your   
children see piety in all its sincerity, power, beauty, and   
loveliness!

**Rouse, Christian professors**, from your slumbers   
and your dreams! Multitudes of you are perishing in   
your sins—you are going down to the pit with a lie in   
your right hand! Your profession alone will not save   
you, and that is all that some of you have to depend   
upon. There are millions of professors of religion in   
the bottomless pit, who while they lived brought no   
scandal upon religion by immorality. But the life of   
God was not in their souls, they had a name to live  
—but were dead! They looked around upon the low   
standards of the day in which they lived, instead of  
studying the Bible for their standard of piety; and   
went to the judgment of God, saying, "Lord, Lord,   
have we not been called by Your name?" and then   
they met with the dreadful rebuff and rejection,   
"I never knew you, depart from Me!"

**Closet prayer**  
We live in a busy age, when Christians find little time for   
private prayer, reading the Scriptures, and meditation.   
  
Perhaps there was never so little private prayer among  
professors as there is now. A few hasty expressions or a   
few broken thoughts, poured out without solemnity or   
without coherence, or else a short form learned by rote,   
and repeated at night or morning, or perhaps both,   
constitutes, it is to be feared, all the private prayer   
which some offer to God.   
  
**Closet prayer** means a person's selecting some suitable   
time and place to be alone with God, to pour out into   
His ear with freedom and enlargement, all the cares,   
the sorrows, the desires, and the sins of a burdened   
heart and a troubled conscience. It signifies the act   
of a child going to commune with his Divine Parent,   
to give utterance to the expressions of his adoring   
gratitude, praise, and love. It is but too obvious that   
there is comparatively little of such closet exercises in   
this day of engrossing worldliness. What spirituality,   
what heavenly-mindedness, can you expect in the   
habitual neglect of the closet?

**Fearfully secularized**  
  
If asked to point out the specific and prevailing sin of the   
church in the present day, I cannot hesitate to reply—a   
prevailing worldliness of mind, heart, and conduct. The   
church is **fearfully secularized** in the spirit and temper   
of her members. The love of the world is become the   
master-passion, before which other and holier affections   
have grown dim and weak.  
  
The determination, as well as the concern, to be rich, has  
crept into the church! Those who profess to have overcome   
the world by faith, appear almost as eager as others, in all   
schemes for getting wealth, and by almost any means.   
  
This worldly spirit is also seen in the **general habits   
and tastes of professing Christians.**   
Their style of living,   
their entertainments,   
their associations,   
their amusements,   
their conversation—evince . . .  
a conformity to the world,  
a minding of earthly things,  
a disposition to adapt themselves to the world around,  
a desire to seek their happiness from objects of sense,   
rather than from those of faith—which proves the extent   
to which a secular worldly spirit is dominating the spirit   
of piety in the church.

**I am the servant of Christ**  
  
Are you taken up with getting and enjoying   
wealth, grandeur, and worldly ease?   
  
How deeply are the great bulk of professing   
Christians sunk in the love and pursuit of the   
world—and how almost entirely occupied by   
its cares or its enjoyments! They are absorbed  
in seeking selfishness, avarice, worldliness,  
indolence and luxuriousness.  
  
I am not to consider myself as sent into the   
world merely to get wealth, and enjoy myself.   
**I am the servant of Christ**, and must do my   
Master's work. I am bought with a price, and   
am not my own, and must yield myself up   
to my Divine owner.

**Worth nothing in themselves**  
True religion is not merely an outward observance of   
ceremonies, nor an attendance upon ordinances; these   
things are **worth nothing in themselves**—and are   
not acceptable to God. They are profitable only as they   
spring from the inward principle of a renewed, holy,   
and humble mind.   
  
True religion begins in deep conviction of sin, a sense   
of our fallen and ruined state as exposed to the wrath   
of God; and then goes on in a simple faith in the Gospel,   
leading to an entire, thankful, and peace-giving   
dependence on the blood and righteousness of Christ   
for acceptance with God.   
  
From this faith there arises love to God, to His people,   
to His ways, and to holiness. In proportion as faith is felt,   
it makes its possessor humble, meek, and benevolent;   
full of pity for man and zeal for the glory of God.

**Oh, where is the compassion for souls?**   
  
"For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the  
whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall  
a man give in exchange for his soul?" Mar 8:36-37  
  
Nothing can be more momentous than eternity!  
  
Ponder the worth of a soul! Weigh the solemn  
significance of that word, damnation! Measure,   
if you can, the height of salvation!   
  
What would you not do—to save your children   
from falling into the water or the fire? Oh, think   
of the bottomless pit—and the fire which is never   
quenched! Take a proper aim in all you do. Look   
as high as heaven, as deep as to the mouth of   
hell, and as far as eternity!  
  
The world is perishing around us! Sinners are going   
down to the pit before our eyes! Immortal souls by   
countless millions are crowding to the regions of   
eternal despair!   
  
How little are we affected by the terrific scene! How   
little are we pierced by a sense of the ignorance, sin   
and misery which appeal to our very senses! **Oh,   
where is the compassion for souls?**

It is **a distressing spectacle** in such a world as ours,  
where evil of every kind so much abounds—to observe   
the disgusting and odious selfishness of many of the   
rich, who are wholly taken up with their own luxurious   
gratification, as if born only to pamper their appetites   
and indulge their tastes—without bestowing a thought   
or a care upon the misery which prevails around them.

True religion makes you **holy, kind, gentle,   
good-tempered and happy**.

The whole system of the gospel is **a system of love**,  
God is love. Redemption is a manifestation of His love.  
Christ is love incarnate. His religion is love. All who   
make a profession of such a religion should therefore   
be distinguished by its characteristic feature—and   
shine forth in the mild beauty of holy love.

**Keep your heart!**  
  
"**Keep your heart** with all diligence, for out of it is the  
wellspring of life." Pro 4:2  
  
"I the Lord am the searcher of the heart, the tester of the  
thoughts, so that I may give to every man the reward of  
his ways, in keeping with the fruit of his doings." Jer 17:10  
  
It is the heart which is the constant object of divine notice   
and omniscient scrutiny. **Man** looks at the conduct—and   
conjectures the motive from the action. **God** looks at the   
heart—and determines the action by the motive. What our  
heart is—that are we in the judgment of the All-wise. The   
heart influences the conduct—"for out of it is the wellspring   
of life." As in the physical body, the heart is the fountain of   
that vital fluid which according as it is healthy or impure,   
carries vigor or feebleness, pain or ease, activity or torpor   
to the whole body—so is it also in the spiritual frame. Let   
us keep the heart—and the heart will keep the life.   
  
Why are Christians not more attentive to this duty? In some   
cases, there is too little real concern about spiritual things,   
too much lukewarmness of soul, too much absorption of mind   
in secular concerns. Then, also, there is real difficulty in heart  
work—it requires painstaking, retirement, resistance of the   
encroachments of the world. Many are afraid to have dealings   
with the heart. A careful examination would discover much   
that is evil, and much that they would rather not know, and   
which they would not like to put away.

**And where are they now?**  
  
My dear children, I would think it probable that during my   
fifty year pastorate here, nearly 20,000 children have been   
in our Sunday schools. **And where are they now?** Many   
are in eternity! Some, we hope, in heaven—others, we fear,   
in hell!  
  
During my pastorate I have witnessed multitudes of children   
that have grown up to be their parents' comfort and joy; and   
others breaking their parents' heart by their misconduct, and   
bringing down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. To   
which of these classes do you belong?

**Imagine what would be the results**  
**Imagine what would be the results**, if the Bible   
were circulated through the whole earth, its dictates   
everywhere obeyed, and its spirit generally imbibed.   
There would neither be tyranny in the prince, nor   
rebellion in the subject; there would be neither fraud   
nor violence, neither injustice nor oppression, neither   
war nor bloodshed.  
  
In short, if the Bible were universally circulated, believed   
and obeyed—every evil that renders man a foe to others   
and himself would be removed—and the whole family   
upon earth harmonized into order and happiness.

**Sickness and disease**  
  
Christians, like others, are exposed to the attacks of   
**sickness and disease**. "Wearisome nights, and months   
of vanity, are appointed to them." But their religion   
follows them into the sick chamber, and is their nurse,   
their companion, and their comforter—giving patience   
in the day, and songs even in the night. How soothing   
are its consolations, how pleasant are its reflections,   
how bright are its anticipations! It speaks to the sufferers   
of the sources of their sorrows, and tells them that they all   
proceed from their Father in heaven! It reminds them of . . .  
His unerring wisdom,  
His infinite love,  
His unfailing fidelity,  
His gracious presence in the scene of woe,  
His merciful design in every chastisement of His hand,  
the blissful outcome in which He will cause all to terminate.   
  
They can bear confinement, for God is with them. Their   
hours are not made heavy and irksome by the recollection   
of the mirthful scenes from which they are cut off, and the   
amusements to which they have no longer access. Their   
entertainment has come with them; they have brought the   
cup of their pleasure with them, and they can drink it amidst   
the languor of disease, as a refreshing cordial, or an   
exhilarating draught.

**The essence of heaven**  
  
This is heaven . . .   
perfect knowledge of God,  
perfect enjoyment of His favor,  
perfect love of His infinite excellences,  
perfect obedience to His commands,  
perfect conformity to His image,   
all this by a soul refined in its tastes,   
enlarged in its capacity, and immortal   
in its duration!   
  
What other sources of enjoyment will be open to   
the blessed in heaven, it is not for us now to know,   
or even to conjecture; doubtless there are some   
which it is impossible for us to understand. But the   
fountain of delight will be God, and **the essence of   
heaven** is the enjoyment of His love. He is the first   
truth, and the chief good; beyond which nothing   
higher remains to be known, nothing richer to be   
enjoyed!

The Gospel is **the grand universal remedy**—the comforter of sinful and sorrowful man.   
Can a man really believe . . .  
that God loves him,  
that the Eternal is favorably disposed towards him,  
that all his sins are pardoned,  
that heaven secured to him,   
and not be glad, grateful, and happy?

**This is a fearful picture!**  
  
Fearful is the death of the worldling! Oh, from what he departs—and to what he goes! What a parting! To leave all he loved and admired—and go to his eternal destiny! To have acquired nothing, and saved nothing—but what he can no longer keep! After crossing the dark waters of death, he will be set ashore in a vast and black eternity, naked and destitute, with nothing to relieve, support, or comfort him! And who shall describe the scene that follows? It is done by one whose solemn pencil was guided by an unerring hand.   
  
"There was a rich man who would dress in purple and fine linen, feasting lavishly every day. But a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, was left at his gate. He longed to be filled with what fell from the rich man's table, but instead the dogs would come and lick his sores. One day the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torment in Hell, he looked up and saw Abraham a long way off, with Lazarus at his side. 'Father Abraham!' he called out, 'Have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this flame!' " (Luk 16:19-24)  
  
**This is a fearful picture!** Of what?   
An infidel? No!   
An immoral and profligate man? No!   
A bloody tyrant? No!   
A remorseless oppressor of the poor? No!   
  
**This is a picture of a worldling!** Of a man whose sin was that he sought his happiness entirely from earthly sources. It was not our Lord's intention to describe a man of ill-gotten wealth, but one whose whole happiness was derived from his wealth—one who cared for nothing but what he saw, and tasted, and handled, and felt—who had what he sought, and then, having passed his time in a life of earthly gratification, went away to spend his eternity in a state of banishment from that God whose favor was never, in his estimation, essential to his happiness.  
  
Such a termination of his sensual course is just what the worldling might expect and ought to expect; for if he slighted God's favor, and did not even seek for it; if he made himself, or strove to make himself, happy without it; if he valued everything more than God, and set his wealth, or rank, or fame, or pleasure, above God's love; if he cared not for salvation, and thought heaven of such little consequence, as not to be worth his pursuit; has he any reason to complain of being denied that which he never asked for, and which he is not fit for? In banishing such a man from heaven, God does but give him his choice. God does but leave him to himself. There ends the earthly course, and begins the eternal one—of him who seeks for happiness in earthly vanities.

**Beautiful bubbles!**  
  
Many are saying, "Who can show us any good?"   
Psa 4:6  
  
There is certainly some pleasure in the gratification of the   
appetites—in the enjoyment of health, friends, property,   
and fame. **Even sinful objects have their pleasures.**   
There could be no power in temptation, if sin yielded no   
enjoyment. But viewing man as a rational, moral, and   
immortal creature; as a sinner subject to the stings of a   
reproachful conscience, and under the displeasure of the   
God he has offended; as liable to all the vicissitudes of a   
tearful existence, and ever exposed to the fear and stroke   
of death—he needs something more for his happiness than   
can be found in the objects of this world. He has . . .  
needs which they cannot supply;  
cravings which they cannot satisfy;  
woes which they cannot alleviate;   
anxieties which they cannot dispel.   
  
For each one that is even tolerably successful in gaining   
felicity from visible objects, there are many who utterly fail.   
Their schemes are frustrated; their hopes perish; **their air   
castles vanish as they journey on in life**; and each   
ends a course of worldly-mindedness, by adding another   
to the millions of examples which had proved this present  
world to be vanity.   
  
In some cases, abundance and unobstructed enjoyment   
produce boredom. Tired of old pleasures, they look about   
for new ones, and plead the oft-repeated inquiry, "Who will   
show us anything good?" Novelty perhaps comes to the   
relief of their discontented, restless, and dissatisfied minds;   
but novelty itself soon grows old, and still something new   
is wanted. There remains an aching void within, a craving,   
hungry appetite for bliss—unsatisfied, unfed. They hunt   
for enjoyment . . .  
in endless parties of pleasure,  
in every place of amusement,  
in every scene of diversion;  
in the dance, and in the game;  
in the theater, and in the concert;  
amidst the scenes of nature, and  
in the changes of foreign travel;  
but happiness, like a shadow ever flitting before them,   
and **ever eluding their grasp**, tantalizes them with its   
form, without yielding them its substance, and excites   
their hopes—only to disappoint them!  
  
What are all the pleasures of time and sense, all the   
objects of this visible world—but as the **dropping of   
pebbles into a deep chasm**, which, instead of filling   
it up, only tell him how deep it is—by awakening the   
dismal echoes of emptiness and desolation.  
  
Look at the worldling. Does he succeed in his quest for  
happiness? Is he satisfied? Let him possess all he seeks,   
all he wishes, all that earth can furnish; let rank be added   
to wealth, and fame to both; let a constant round of   
fashionable amusements, festive scenes, and elegant   
parties, follow in endless succession, until his cup is full   
to overflowing. What does it all amount to? "All that my   
eyes desired, I did not deny them. I did not refuse myself   
any pleasure. When I considered all that I had accomplished   
and what I had labored to achieve, **I found everything to   
be futile and a pursuit of the wind!** There was nothing   
to be gained under the sun." (Ecclesiastes 2)  
  
Have not multitudes since Solomon's time, made the same   
melancholy confession? Is it not a general admission, that   
the pleasure of worldly objects arises more from hope and   
anticipation, rather than possession? They are like **beautiful   
bubbles**, which, as they float, reflect the colors of the rainbow  
—but dissolve and vanish when grasped! Tell me, votaries of   
earthly good, have you realized what you expected? Are not  
the scenes of festivity and amusement resorted to, by many   
with aching hearts? Does not the smiling countenance often   
conceal a troubled spirit; and is not the laugh resorted to in   
order to suppress the sigh?   
  
Even if it were granted, that the possession of wealth, the   
gratifications of taste, and the indulgence of appetite, could   
give happiness in seasons of health and prosperity—they   
must inevitably fail in the day of sickness and adversity. If   
they were satisfying for a season—**they are all fragile and   
uncertain!** All the enjoyments of this life are like gathered  
flowers, which are no sooner plucked than they begin to lose   
their beauty and their fragrance while we look at them and   
smell them; and which, however mirthful and beautiful they   
appeared while they were growing—begin to wither as soon   
as they are in our hands!  
  
Many are saying, "Who can show us any good?" Psa 4:6

**Your idol?**  
What is it, that you are looking to and depending upon for happiness? Is **HEALTH your idol**, and the source of your happiness? How soon may we be smitten with disease—and doomed to wearisome nights and months of vanity in the chamber of sickness. Will riches smooth the pillow of sickness? Will the counting money or the surveying estates, when it can be done only in imagination, enchant the sleepless hours, and cheer the long sad days of ceaseless pain? Will the recollection of the parties you have attended, the pleasures you have enjoyed but cannot any longer enjoy—enliven the gloom of the solitary chamber? Will the sound of carriages at midnight, taking the votaries of pleasure to or from the scenes of fashionable resort, impart to your feverish frame any relief, or to your distressed mind any comfort? Oh, what, in that long, dark season of trial which may be coming upon you, will the pleasures and possessions of earth do for you?   
  
What is it, that you are looking to and depending upon for happiness? Is **WEALTH your idol**, and the source of your happiness? How justly is it called in Scripture, "uncertain riches!" and "deceitful mammon!" "Riches," said the wise man, "make to themselves wings and fly away as an eagle towards heaven." And is it not most strange folly to stake your happiness on that which, like an uncaged bird, may at any moment be upon the wing, and soaring where we cannot follow? What changes have we witnessed in the circumstances of men; what rapid falls from wealth to poverty! How many do we know who, by those vicissitudes which are ever going on in this commercial country, and in this speculating age, have descended from the sunny heights of prosperity—to dwell the remainder of their days in the gloomy valley of poverty below! This may be your case. Your treasure, like the volatile quicksilver, may slip through your fingers when you think you hold it firmest. What will you do for comfort then? Your friends, like summer birds, will migrate when your winter has come upon you! You will no longer be able to have parties—and who invites the child of misfortune to theirs? Those who once shared your hospitalities, will forget you in the season of your humiliation, for your presence will no longer grace their circle. What, then, will you do, when the world frowns—and you have no one else to smile upon you?   
  
What is it, that you are looking to and depending upon for happiness? Is **PLEASURE your idol**, and the source of your happiness? How soon may you be unfitted by sickness or change of circumstances for this, and have the sweet and intoxicating cup dashed from your lips! How soon may your place be vacant at the resort of the mirthful and the fashionable! And then with what melancholy feelings will you contrast the amusements of the ball-room, the concert, or the party—with the abode of poverty or disease!   
  
What is it, that you are looking to and depending upon for happiness? Are **FRIENDS your idol**, and the source of your happiness? Alas! alas! how soon may 'the spoiler' enter your earthly paradise, and convert that joyous scene into a desert, by the death of the most endeared objects of your affection! What! depend for your supreme felicity on the frail continuance of a beating pulse! Death enters, not only into the scenes of discord and strife, but also into those of the purest love and sweetest harmony—and, disregarding the entreaties of marital or parental love, bears off the object to which, more than all the universe besides, you looked for your bliss!   
  
Where, then, will you find satisfaction? The finite has failed—and the infinite God has not been sought! The human and earthly has been taken away—and the divine and heavenly has not been acquired. That one death has covered earth with sackcloth, and has thrown a pall over all that it contains. Is happiness, then, to be found amidst such uncertainties?

"**The meekness and gentleness of Christ**"   
2Co 10:1  
  
Our Christian profession involves in it far more than an   
orthodox creed, a regular attendance upon religious   
ordinances, and an abstinence from gross immorality.   
It involves the image of Jesus, yes His very mind and   
spirit. **The meekness and gentleness of Christ** are to   
be our badge of distinction, the token of our submission   
to His authority, and the evidence of our sincerity.   
We must mortify our pride, curb our rashness, allay   
the heat of anger, and extinguish resentment. We   
should be discreet, mild, and courteous, in all our  
language and conduct, weighing the import of   
words before we utter them, and calculating the   
consequences of actions before we perform them.

One of the most difficult duties which ever our   
proud hearts have to perform, is to say, "**I have   
done wrong, forgive me.**"

**The true spirit of Christianity**   
  
Quarrels among Christians! Is there not a contradiction   
here? Do Christians ever quarrel with one another? Does   
not Christianity, where it is really possessed and felt in its   
proper influence, imply all that is loving, and kind, and   
peaceable? Certainly! And if every professor of it really   
lived under its influence, there would be no such thing   
as brother trespassing against brother. Christianity is,   
in every aspect of it—a religion of love.   
God is love.   
Christ is love.   
The law is love.   
The gospel is love.   
Heaven is love.   
  
That one word "love," comprehends everything.   
  
Perfect love not only casts out fear, but malice. In   
heaven there will be no quarreling, because every   
one of its inhabitants is perfect in love. The design   
of Christianity is not only to conduct us to heaven,   
but to fit us for it—and it does this by imparting to   
us the spirit of love. **The true spirit of Christianity**   
is that which the apostle has, with such exquisite   
beauty, described in the thirteenth chapter of the   
first epistle to the Corinthians.

**This heavenly exotic**  
  
The church of God in general has yet failed to exhibit   
in any considerable and attractive prominence, that   
spirit of holy love, by which it was intended by its   
Divine Founder to be characterized. The 'wolf and   
the serpent' are too often to be seen, where only   
the 'lamb and the dove' should be found.   
  
Christianity has not yet left the impression of its   
exceeding loveliness, as deeply stamped as it should   
be on the characters of its professors. Of all its graces,   
none is so faintly and imperfectly traced as Christian   
love. It has been found more easy, at any rate more   
common, to subdue the lustful disposition, than the   
irascible disposition. And yet it is as much the intention   
of Christ, that His people should be distinguished by   
meekness and gentleness—as it is by purity, justice  
and truthfulness.   
  
Love is pre-eminently the Christian grace. Equity,   
chastity, and veracity, have been found in the list   
of heathen virtues—but not charity. These other  
virtues have sometimes "shed their fragrance on   
the desert air" of paganism. But where has love   
been found—except in the garden of the Lord?   
  
Alas, that even there this plant of Paradise, **this   
heavenly exotic**, should so often look shriveled   
and worm-eaten; and thus fail to procure for its   
Divine Curator all the praise it should, and in its   
more flourishing condition would do. My concern   
is that Christian love should be cultivated with more  
care, and be seen with admiration in healthful vigor  
and in beauty.

**It is a pity**  
  
We pray for the conversion of our children. What   
fervent petitions are breathed out for them! Well,   
and how are these prayers followed up? By the   
serious, regular, and devout maintenance of family   
prayer? By clear instruction, affectionate counsels,   
faithful warning, and above all, a consistent exhibition   
of the beauties of holiness in ourselves? Do our children   
see in us, and hear from us, all that can recommend   
true religion, and that is calculated to win them to piety?   
Or, on the contrary, do they not place our conduct and   
our prayers in contrast, and think, if they do not say,   
that **it is a pity** their father does not act more as he   
prays?   
  
There is often a shocking inconsistency between   
our prayers, and our actions.

**The religion of some people**  
True religion is **life**—and it is a vigorous life—not   
sickly, declining life.   
  
**The religion of some people** is just enough to make   
them miserable. It spoils them for the world, without   
fitting them for the church. Their religious profession   
is an encumbrance upon them, and is in the way of   
their worldly enjoyment. These are the men who are   
so taken up with the world, that they do not desire   
the joy of true religion, and are unwilling to cast out   
a single earthly care or enjoyment, though it were to   
make way for all the consolations of the Spirit!

**Spiritual joy**  
  
Oh! how numerous are the machinations of Satan to   
keep God's people from being happy—when he cannot   
keep them from being holy! How numerous and how   
subtle are the methods by which he causes the children   
of light to walk in darkness!   
  
Many suppose that spiritual joy means something   
mystic, ecstatic, almost seraphic. They are not   
contented with the calm, sweet, serene enjoyment   
of peace.   
  
**Spiritual joy** has nothing to do with frivolity,   
merriment and lightness.  
  
Nothing spectral in appearance,   
nor sepulchral in tone,   
nor ascetic in habit,   
nor cynical in spirit,   
should characterize a Christian.  
He is a child of light, and should live, and act, and   
speak as such. He should be like one bending his way   
back to paradise, and bearing the trials of earth, with   
the recollection of his happy destiny, and the prospect   
of his future glory! He should have something of the   
bliss of heaven—and much of its seriousness too.   
  
By spiritual joy, I mean the joy produced by true   
religion. It is that holy peace which is the result of   
divine truth . . .  
understood,  
believed, and  
contemplated.   
It is not mere exhilaration of the animal spirits,   
the joyousness produced by good health, worldly   
prosperity, friendship, or gratification of taste.   
  
It is true, that his spiritual delight may blend itself, and   
does, with his more common pleasures—sweetening,   
sanctifying, and elevating them all—but still it is of a   
different kind. It is the joy of faith, of hope, of love.  
It is joy in God, in Christ, in holiness, in heaven.   
  
Spiritual joy is ordinarily a calm, unruffled feeling; a   
composed and serene state of mind. It is a tranquil   
river which flows through the soul, noiseless in   
proportion as it is deep. Spiritual joy is a sweet rest,   
diffusing a feeling of joyous repose over the heart.

**The springs of true happiness**  
  
**The springs of true happiness** gush out from the   
foot of the cross! But how little do many who profess   
to have drank the living water, appear as if they had   
been at the crystal stream, and were satisfied with it!   
  
Mere 'religious professors' do not desire this spiritual joy.   
They certainly would have some kind of enjoyment; they   
desire to be gratified. But it is only the joy . . .  
of friendship,   
of health,  
of success in business,  
of a comfortable home, and   
a quiet fire-side that they long for.   
They do not desire . . .  
the peace of believing,  
the pleasure of communing with God,   
the delight of holiness and hope,   
the felicity of a sense of pardoned sin,   
the gratification arising from the exercises of devotion.

(Choice devotional selections from   
the works of John Angell James)

**We must learn it by painful experience!**  
  
The death of Christian friends should impress us with, even   
as it shows us—the **vanity of the world**. All that poetry ever   
wrote, even the most mournful, beautiful, and pensive of its   
strains—all that philosophy ever argued—all that morality ever   
taught, conveys no such view, and is calculated to produce   
no such impressions, of the emptiness of the world—as the   
desolate chamber, the vacant place, the deserted chair, the   
picture—of some dear object of our heart's affection!  
  
It is at the tomb of that loved, lost friend, the world stands  
stripped of its false disguise, and is presented to us as a   
shadow! Gloom now covers everything. Scenes that once   
pleased, please no more. Favorite walks are shunned, or   
re-trodden only to remind us of the dear companion that   
once shared their beauties with us. Seasons return, but   
not to bring with them the delights with which the presence   
of one beloved object associates them. We go about in the   
bitterness of our spirit, crying, "Vanity of vanity—all is vanity   
and vexation of spirit!" We are ready to sigh for death to   
relieve us from the tedium of existence, and the sense of   
emptiness!  
  
Be it so! It is all true! The world **is** empty! And it was intended   
by God that it should be! The world contains no satisfying bliss!   
It is a cistern, a broken cistern, which can hold no water. God   
told us so, but we would not learn this by His word—so now  **we must learn it by painful experience!** If we cannot be   
taught by 'faith', since we must learn—we are in mercy taught  
by 'feeling' it to be empty!   
  
Oh let us go to the fountain that is full, flowing, open! Let   
us go to the fountain of living waters! If there is emptiness,   
nothingness, in the world—there is fullness in God! Is there   
enough in Him to satisfy millions of millions, and not enough   
to satisfy us? Let us crucify the world. There is more   
happiness in a crucified world, than in an idolized one!  
  
If our hearts cannot die to the world anywhere else—let   
them be crucified at the tomb of those we love!

**The plough and the harrow**  
  
In some people we discover a striking and beautiful   
mellowness of character, **as the result of God's   
chastening hand**. The roughness, harshness,   
arrogance, and haughtiness of their conduct, which   
once rendered them annoying and offensive, are   
scraped off—and a sweet gentleness, humility,   
meekness, and softness of manner, and a tenderness   
of spirit have come in their place. There is now . . .  
a gentleness in their speech,  
a mildness in their look, and  
a kindliness and cautiousness in their manner,  
which tell us how the haughty spirit has been broken,   
and the proud loftiness of their mind has been brought   
down. An unusual loveliness has been spread over their   
character, a holy amiableness has been infused into their   
temper, and a stubborn self-will has yielded to a kind   
consideration of the wishes and feelings of others;  
which convince all around them, how much the Spirit   
of God has done in them, and for them, by the afflictions   
they have endured. How **the plough and the harrow**   
have broken up the hard soil, and pulverized the rough   
clods of their stubborn nature, and prepared it for the   
growth of the precious seed of the kingdom.   
  
"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your   
word. It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might  
learn Your statutes. I know, O Lord, that Your judgments  
are righteous, and that in faithfulness You have afflicted  
me." (Psa 119:67, Psa 119:71, Psa 119:75)

**These predominant sins**  
  
Almost all of us have 'favorite pet sins'—which there is not   
ordinarily that concern and labor for putting them away,   
which there should be. They are indulged, instead of being   
resisted. Thus they gain strength by such indulgence, and   
most sadly disfigure our character and disturb our spiritual   
peace!  
  
**Prosperity**, like sunshine upon weeds, often causes them to   
grow rapidly! And then God in great faithfulness, love and   
mercy sends **adversity**, like frost, to kill them. Upon a bed of   
sickness, and in other severe trials—they are often remembered,   
understood, and seen in all their sinfulness. They are then   
lamented, confessed, and mortified.   
  
Nothing can be a darker sign than for a professor's conscience   
to be so dull and drowsy during a time of trial, as to leave him   
unadmonished respecting **these predominant sins**.   
  
It is sometimes a blessed fruit of tribulation, that **these   
predominant sins** have been weakened, if not eradicated.   
It is worth any amount of suffering to secure this result.   
Happy the Christian who comes out of the furnace, with   
his dross removed by the fire! No matter what he has lost  
—he has gained freedom from these inward enemies of   
his peace and purity.   
  
  
  
**We all know more than we do**; and we should be   
more solicitous to reduce to practice what we already   
know, than to acquire still more of 'mere theory'.

**Pulpit buffoonery**  
  
One characteristic of Whitefield's manner which deserves particular attention, was his **solemnity**. He never degraded the pulpit by low humor and low wit; abounding in anecdote—but he was uniformly solemn. His deep devotional spirit contributed largely to this, for his piety was the inward fire which supplied the ardor of his manner.   
  
He was eminently a man of **prayer**; and had he been less prayerful, he would also have been less powerful. He came into the pulpit from the closet where he had been communing with God, and could no more be trifling, merry, or humorous at such a time, than could Moses when he came down from the fiery mount to the people! Happily the age and taste for **pulpit buffoonery** is gone, I hope never to return.   
  
It was the stamp and impress of eternity upon his preaching that gave Whitfield such power. He spoke like a man who stood upon the borders of the unseen world, alternately enrapt in ecstasy as he gazed upon the felicities of heaven; and convulsed with terror as he heard the howlings of the damned, and saw the smoke of their torment ascending from the pit forever and ever. His maxim was to preach for eternity. He said if ministers preached for eternity they would act the part of true Christian orators.   
  
We need pastors imbued with his spirit, his piety, his dependence upon the Spirit of God, his love for souls, his devotedness, and his earnestness!  
  
And tell me, my brethren, what are all the prettinesses, the beauties, or even sublimities of human eloquence; what are all the similes, metaphors, and other garniture of rhetoric which many in this day are aiming at, to move, and bow, and conquer the human soul—compared with "the powers of the world to come?"

**The great moral magnet**  
  
"As for Me, if I am lifted up from the earth I will  
draw all people to Myself." (Joh 12:32)  
  
So said the Savior of men. The cross is for all ages and   
all countries **the great moral magnet** to draw men . . .  
from barbarism to civilization,  
from sin to holiness,  
from misery to happiness,  
and from earth to heaven!

"**One thing I do!**" Php 3:13   
  
Human life is so short, and the faculties of man are so limited,  
that he who would do some great thing, must do but one; and   
must do that one with such a concentration of his forces, as, to   
idle spectators who live only to amuse themselves, looks like   
enthusiasm, and almost draws upon him the charge of fanaticism.

**It is never to be forgotten**, amidst all the fluctuations   
of opinion, all the vicissitudes of earthly affairs, and even   
the advance of civilization, science, and social improvement  
—that human nature, in its spiritual condition and its relation   
to God, remains unchanged. The lapse of ages will never   
improve our natural corruption, nor will the progress of   
science and advance of civilization eradicate it. Man as he   
is born into the world in sin, and grows up in it, will still,   
as ever, need both the redemption and the regeneration   
of the gospel of Christ.

The great stream of the population is dashing in one   
mighty cataract over the precipice of impenitence and   
unbelief—**into the dreadful gulf below!**

**Oh wonderful, ineffable, inconceivable exchange!**   
  
The SUDDEN DEATH of a real Christian, is an   
unspeakable blessing. Such a one is spared . . . .  
the languors of sickness,  
the racking pain,  
the anguish sometimes almost intolerable,  
and all the other terrible harbingers of death protracted   
through wearisome nights and months of vanity! To be   
exempt from the heart-rending pangs of separation at   
the last faltering adieu; to be saved from those gloomy   
apprehensions which sometimes arise in the minds of the   
strongest and holiest of believers when contemplating   
the portals of the tomb; to be carried through the iron   
gates of death before we knew we were drawing near   
to them; to wake up in a moment, as from a dream, at   
the sound of the seraphim's song—and exchange in an   
instant of time the sights of earthly objects for the   
glorious realities of heaven—and the society of friends   
below for the innumerable company of angels; to find   
ourselves suddenly in the presence of God and the Lamb,   
and see the smile of welcome upon the countenance of   
the Savior—and with a burst of astonishment and   
gratitude to exclaim,   
"And is this heaven? and am **I** there?   
How short the road! How swift the flight!"  
  
**Oh wonderful, ineffable, inconceivable exchange!**"In vain our fancy strives to paint   
The moment after death,   
The glories that surround the saint,   
When he resigns his breath!   
  
"Thus much, and this is all we know—  
They are completely blessed,   
Are done with sin, and care, and woe,   
And with their Savior rest!"  
  
Sudden death to a real Christian—is one mighty bound   
from earth to heaven! Sudden death to an unconverted   
sinner—is one dreadful stumble into hell. Oh, unutterable   
horror—to be surprised, overwhelmed, confounded in a   
moment—by exchanging the pleasures, the friends, the   
possessions, the prospects of earth—for those doleful   
shades, where peace and hope can never dwell.   
  
**You**, too, may die suddenly. Are you ready, quite prepared   
by repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ,   
and a holy life—for death—for speedy death—for sudden   
death? Prepare to meet your God! Prepare for death, for   
judgment and eternity! Prepare! Prepare!

**You will certainly die!**  
  
"But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge  
of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, **you  
will certainly die!**" (Gen 2:17)  
  
Every dying groan,   
every tolling death-bell,   
every funeral procession,   
every opened grave,   
proclaims the evil of sin, and is a warning against it!  
  
"For the wages of sin is death." (Rom 6:23)  
  
Death is the dreadful gate, the dark passage to eternity!   
  
True believers pass through this solemn scene uttering   
the song of triumph, "Thanks be to God, who gives us   
the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Old age, apart from moral excellence, is an object of   
detestation and loathing. A wicked old man is **the most   
shocking spectacle upon earth**—with the exception of   
a wicked old minister!

**Dumb dogs!**  
  
"Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow **worker**, fellow **soldier**"  
(Php 2:25)  
  
Some people seek the pastoral ministry, as an office which   
provides a good income—while they disregard all its duties   
and its obligations. Such doubtless there are, men who seek  
the ministry for the indulgence of a literary taste, or for the   
gratification of a propensity to idleness. It is too true that all   
sections of the church are cursed with some ministers of this   
description, who are each looking for his gain. "His watchmen   
are blind, all of them, they know nothing; all of them are **dumb   
dogs**, they cannot bark; they dream, lie down, and love to sleep.   
These dogs have fierce appetites; they never have enough. And   
they are shepherds who have no discernment; all of them turn   
to their own way, every last one for his own gain." Isa 56:10-11  
  
But look at the true, the good, the faithful minister,   
as described in Scripture. He is . . .  
a laborer,  
a watchman,  
a fisher,  
a soldier,  
a builder,  
a wrestler;   
all terms that employ toil, vigilance, effort, perseverance,   
and enduring self-denial. There are some men, whose lives   
and exertions justify the employment of such figures of   
speech. They do labor . . .  
in the **closet** by wrestling supplication;   
in the **study** by intense application;  
in the **pulpit** by earnest preaching;  
in the **church** by pastoral oversight;  
in the **houses** by counsel, reproof, and warning;   
by their pens as well as their tongues;  
on week days and on Sundays;  
at home and abroad.  
  
The faithful minister must be classed among those who  
have no leisure. As he maintains a holy, blameless and   
consistent life, many are . . .  
impressed by his example,  
enriched by his beneficence,  
blessed by his prayers, and  
instructed by his principles.

Truth and love are **the two most powerful things   
in the universe!** It is by the 'silken cord of love',   
united with the 'golden thread of truth', that the   
church must draw the world to Christ.

The Bible is **the central luminary** around which all true   
Christians revolve, in nearer or remoter orbits, reflecting   
the splendor of its beams, and governed by the power of   
its attraction.

**See how well the world goes on without them!**  
  
(John Angell James, "The London Missionary Society" 1849)  
  
Christ can do much by the weakest instrument; and He can do altogether without the strongest. He that could do without apostles and prophets, after he had removed them by death, can dispense with us! This should check the inflation of some proud men's minds, and repress that overweening conceit by which they destroy in part their own usefulness.   
  
It would surprise and mortify many, could they come out of their graves ten years after they had entered them, and still retained the ideas they once entertained of their own importance—to **see how well the world goes on without them!**   
  
If the death of ordinary individuals be but as the casting of a **pebble** from the seashore into the ocean, which is neither missed from the one nor sensibly gained by the other; the death of the more extraordinary ones is but as the sinking of a larger **rock** into the abyss beneath—it makes at the time a rumbling noise and a great splash; but the wave which it raises soon subsides into a ripple, the ripple itself as soon sinks to a placid level, the tide flows, ships pass, commerce goes on, and shore and ocean appear just as they did before the disruption!  
  
Ah! my brethren, let us seek to have our record in heaven, where it will be engraved in characters which will stand forever on the Rock of Ages! For it will soon be effaced here on earth, where it is only as a footprint upon the sand, which the next wave will speedily and entirely obliterate forever!

**A censurable, disgraceful, and destructive habit!**  
  
"That you not become **slothful**, but imitators of those who  
through faith and patience are inheriting the promises."   
(Heb 6:12)  
  
**Slothfulness**, in every aspect in which it can be viewed, and in   
every relation to human affairs, is **a censurable, disgraceful,   
and destructive habit!** With that incalculable source of energy   
which every rational and healthy mind carries about within itself,   
and with the many occasions and demands for its exercise, which   
in this busy world surround us—it is a sin and a shame for any   
man to "stand idle all the day long."   
  
**Indolence**, in reference to the concerns of this world, is bad   
enough. But where shall we find language sufficiently strong to   
describe the present guilt and future misery of indolence and   
sloth in reference to the soul and the soul's concerns? Of all   
the instances of folly, sin, and misery, which the inhabitants  
of earth present, the most astounding must be the sight of an   
impenitent sinner, slumbering in careless security over the   
over the bottomless pit!  
  
One would be led to imagine, did not experience testify to the  
contrary, that there is enough in that one word 'eternity' to   
rouse all men to the most intense concern, and to the most   
laborious diligence!  
  
Could that happy spirit who has lately left our world be   
permitted to address you from her throne of glory, with   
what an emphasis would she say, "Beloved friends, with   
whom on earth I took sweet counsel, and walked to the   
house of God in company, could you conceive of but a   
thousandth part of the glory which now surrounds me,   
you would account that world which so sinfully engrosses   
your attention scarcely worth a passing glance, or a   
momentary thought! Do not be slothful, when heaven   
or hell hangs upon your life! Do not be slothful, when   
eternity is before you! Do not be slothful, when infinite   
joy, or endless woe, attends on every breath!"  
  
How perilous to yourselves,   
how corrupting to others,   
how discreditable to religion,   
how displeasing to Christ,   
is **slothfulness** in the Christian profession!

**The highest class in the school of Christ**

"So that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who  
through faith and **patience** inherit the promises." Heb 6:12  
  
By **patience**, we mean a quiet waiting, amidst sufferings   
and sorrows—for the heavenly kingdom. Patience is an   
uncomplaining willingness to remain any length of time,   
and amidst any tribulation, for the glory to be revealed.   
  
No circumstances of life, (and let the sufferer hear and drink  
in the soul-comforting thought,) no circumstances of life seem   
to ripen the Christian so fast or so perfectly for heaven—as the   
experience of sorrow and affliction. Oh! then let our comforts   
go, then let our eyes weep, then let our hearts bleed—if **our   
Father is thus ripening us** for everlasting fruition and   
inconceivable bliss!  
  
"But **patience** must do its complete work, so that you may  
be mature and complete, lacking nothing." (Jas 1:4)  
  
James intimates, that when we are enabled to exercise the   
grace of patience, we have reached **the highest class in the   
school of Christ**, have nothing more to learn upon earth, and   
are ready and fit to depart, and to be with Jesus—and have  
then obtained as much grace as can be possessed, short of   
glory itself!  
  
Patience, then, sufferer, patience! The first moment, and the   
first glance of heaven will be an infinite recompense for all you   
suffer—for all you lose on earth! If every step on earth is a step   
of suffering—then let each be a step of patience!  
  
Weep you may—murmur you must not.   
  
Nature may pay the tribute of a groan—but grace must   
pay it with a smile.   
  
The shower of your tears may fall—but in the rays of the   
Sun of Righteousness must reflect the beauteous rainbow   
of the promise.   
  
Christian, you make your way to glory along the path of   
patient resignation, which, if it is like the Valley of Weeping,   
and has its briars and its thorns—has also its refreshing   
rain-pools of heavenly consolation!

**The base cares and the petty enjoyments   
of the present world**  
  
Sin is raging all around us!   
  
Satan is busy in the work of destruction!   
  
Men are dying!   
  
Souls are every moment departing into eternity!   
  
Hell is enlarging her mouth, and multitudes are   
continually descending to torments which knows   
no mitigation and no end!   
  
**Heaven** expanding above us!

**Hell** yawningbeneath us!

**Eternity** opening before us!  
  
How astounding is it sometimes to ourselves, that,   
favored with a certain, though distant, view of the   
celestial city, living almost within the sight of its   
glories and the sound of its music, **the base cares  
and the petty enjoyments of the present world**   
should have so much power over us, as to retard us  
in our heavenward course, and make us negligent   
and indolent, heedless and forgetful.  
  
**Time** is short, **life** uncertain, **death** at hand, and   
**immortality** is about to swallow up our existence   
in eternal life—or eternal death!

**Love of deception**  
  
They are a rebellious people, deceptive children, children who do not obey the Lord's instruction. They say to the seers, "Do not see," and to the prophets, "Do not prophesy the truth to us. Tell us flattering things! Prophesy illusions! Get out of the way! Leave the pathway. Rid us of the Holy One of Israel." (Isa 30:9-11)  
  
A wish to be deceived is a state of mind by no means uncommon. This was the case with the Jews at the time when this prophecy was delivered. Their national crimes were bringing destruction nearer and nearer. Their political horizon was perpetually becoming darker, and signs of the accumulating vengeance of Heaven were multiplying around them. The prophets, bearing the burden of the Lord, represented him as a holy Being, whom their transgressions insulted, and whose justice must necessarily be roused to avenge wrong. One denunciation followed another, until the people, alike unwilling to be reformed and to hear of the punishment which would come upon them for their impenitence, were anxious to change the tone of the prophets' faithful ministrations. They could not bear the pungent warnings of those holy men; they trembled under the solemn and impassioned appeals of Isaiah and his fellow-prophets, and endeavored, either by threats to silence, or by bribes to corrupt, the oracles of heaven.

The holiness of God was a subject peculiarly offensive to them—hence the exclamation, "Rid us of the Holy One of Israel!" They wanted to hear only of his mercy. They would have disrobed him of his garments of light, and silenced, if they could, the song of the seraphim, uttered in praise of his unsullied purity. The deity they wanted to hear of, was an indulgent being, who would overlook sin, and never punish the transgressor. They wished to hear no more of the rigid and strict requirements of the law—but to listen only to the soothing sounds of promise; they were anxious that the terrible thunders of justice should die away midst the soft whispers of mercy. They were determined to go on in sin, and therefore desired, whatever might be "right things," to hear only smooth things, and to be left to go on unmolested in their career of iniquity.   
  
Happy would it be for multitudes, if this **love of deception** had been confined to the Jews—if this demand for "smooth things" had been made only by them. But, alas! they have many, very many followers under the present dispensation. The faithful ministers of Jesus Christ meet with the same reception from many of their hearers, as did the prophets of the older economy.   
  
There are not lacking in our age many who are anxious to save their own souls and those that hear them; who, in their solicitude to be clear from the blood of all men, shun not to declare "the whole counsel of God." Their aim is not to please men—but to profit their hearers; not to satisfy their taste, or amuse their fancy, or lull them into a false peace, or wrap them up in unfounded security—but to save them from the wrath to come. Hence, they are anxious to convince them of sin, and by "the terrors of the Lord to persuade" them to urge the all-important enquiry, "What shall I do to be saved?" They know that without previous conviction, alarm, and penitence, there can be no true comfort and therefore their aim is, like that of the skillful surgeon, to probe the wound before they attempt to heal it. This many of their hearers cannot endure; they want smooth things, not right things; they cannot bear to have their consciences roused, their fears alarmed, and their minds rendered uneasy. They wish the preacher to avoid all harsh themes, and confine himself to more agreeable and palatable topics. The people to whom I here allude, are those people in our congregations, who, though they attend an evangelical ministry, have never yet been converted by the grace of God—but are still living either in open sin, or predominant worldly-mindedness; who know that if religion is indeed what they hear it often described, they can make no pretensions to it; who have no intention of altering their course, and who wish, therefore, to be left to pursue it, without being disturbed by the voice of ministerial faithfulness.

**Churches** should be purified as much as possible   
from all secularity, and conducted as much as   
possible in simplicity and godly sincerity, without   
the admixture of that fleshly wisdom which guides   
the affairs of this world. They should be divested   
of earthly pomp, guided by men of piety, and most   
cautiously preserved from that self-importance and   
self-dependence, which all imposing organizations   
of numbers, wealth, and influence, are apt to   
produce.

**True religion**  
  
**True religion** is . . .  
a principle of the heart;  
an element of the character;  
the habit of thinking, feeling, and acting  
aright in all our social relations;  
the basis of every virtue;  
the main prop of every excellence;  
the fear of the Lord, by which men depart from evil;  
faith working by love;  
such a belief in the gospel of Christ, as leads  
to a conformity to His example.  
  
**True religion**, though founded on a belief of doctrines,   
and nourished by the exercises of devotion—diffuses   
its influence over the entire character of man.   
  
**True religion** is the belief, the love, the worship,   
the imitation of Jesus.   
  
**True religion** is sound morality, animated and   
sanctified by the spirit of true devotion to Christ.  
  
**True religion** prescribes, not only homage to God,  
but follows him into the domestic circle.

**Imagining we are going on to heaven**  
  
"The human heart is more deceitful than anything  
else and desperately wicked!" Jer 17:9  
  
**Oh, the idea of imagining we are going on to   
heaven**—**when step by step we are advancing   
to hell!**   
  
Is this **possible**? It is! And the very possibility   
should awaken our alarm.   
  
Is it **common**? It is! And this should carry our   
solicitude to the highest pitch.   
  
What did Christ say on this matter? Read with awe   
and trembling. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord,   
Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he   
who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.   
Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we   
not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive   
out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will   
tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me,   
you evildoers!'" Mat 7:21-23.   
  
Read, I say, this passage in which our Lord with His   
own hand, sounds the alarm through the whole church.   
Ought you not to examine? Is not there need of it? Is it   
not all but madness to go on without it? Mistake! What   
in such a matter as salvation? Mistake! What in a matter   
in which an error will require an eternity to understand,   
and an eternity to deplore it!

Very many know the theory of divine truth, without   
feeling its influence on the heart, or exhibiting it in   
the conduct. They often see the right way; without   
walking in it. **Only those** who are renewed and   
sanctified by the truth, will be eternally saved.

**A holy, moral, useful, happy man**  
  
Explain to them the moral attributes of the great GOD. . .  
His holiness as opposed to all iniquity,  
His truth as manifested in the accomplishment of His word  
His mercy which inclines Him to pity the miserable.   
  
Endeavor to make them understand the exceeding sinfulness   
of SIN, as breaking through all the obligations imposed upon   
the conscience by the majesty and goodness of God. Strive   
to lead them to a knowledge of the total corruption of their   
nature, as the source and spring of their actual transgressions.  
Unfold to them their situation, as under the wrath of God on   
account of their sins. Show them their inability, either to   
atone for their guilt or renovate their nature.   
  
Lead them to CALVARY, and develop the design of the   
Savior's death as a sacrifice for sin, and teach them to   
rely upon His merits alone for salvation.   
  
Direct them to the HOLY SPIRIT as the fountain of   
grace and strength for the renewal of their hearts.   
  
Lay before them all the branches of Christian DUTY;   
those which relate to **God**, such as faith, repentance,   
love, obedience, and prayer; and those which relate   
to **man**, as obedience to parents, honesty to their   
employers, kindness to all. Enforce upon them the   
obligations of public worship.   
  
Particularly impress upon them, that genuine religion,   
while it is founded on a belief of God's word, does not   
consist merely of abstract feelings, or occasional duties,   
but in a principle of submission to the revealed will of   
Jehovah, implanted deep in the human heart, pervading   
the conduct, and spreading over the whole character,   
so as to form **a holy, moral, useful, happy man**.

**The impious mask of a cowardly heart**  
  
A man says there is no God, because he wishes there   
were none. He scorns spiritual religion, because spiritual   
religion condemns him. He is an infidel because he is a   
sinner. He is a scoffer because he is an infidel.   
  
The true and ultimate source of scoffing at true religion   
is an unrenewed, unsanctified mind—a heart that hates   
God, and abhors his image.   
  
The religion of the Bible is . . .  
too humbling for the pride of their intellect,   
too holy for the corruptions of their heart,   
too strict and too rigid for their indulgent lives,   
and they cannot endure it. And being unable to   
confound it by logic, or overwhelm it by eloquence,   
they treat it with derision.  
  
In some cases the scoffing may be traced up to fear,   
united with dislike. The scorner secretly trembles at   
the idea of a God, and of a judgment to come. He   
fears that there may be a reality in religion, and if   
there is—what is to become of him! The poor creature,   
like a scared child whistling as he passes through a   
graveyard to keep up his courage, or laughing at the   
story of a ghost, to conceal the palpitations of his   
heart, ridicules true religion to allay, if possible, the   
rising alarms of his conscience, and to avoid the   
terrors of his affrighted imagination.   
  
The sneering countenance is often **the impious mask   
of a cowardly heart** and of a trembling conscience.

**The abominable adage!**  
"Exhort the younger men to be sober-minded."   
Tit 2:6  
  
There are many things which tend to nourish the   
love of sensual pleasure in the **youthful** bosom. At   
their age care sits lightly on the heart, the passions   
are strong, the imagination is lively, the health is   
good, the social impulse is felt in all its energy, the   
attractions of friends are powerful; and this they   
imagine is the ideal time for them to take their fill  
of pleasure. They think that they shall settle down   
by and by, when the season of youth is past; and   
that sobriety, morality, and religion will all come   
in the proper order of nature.   
  
Worldly pleasure, decked in the voluptuous attire   
and the gaudy ornaments of a harlot, appears to   
their heated imagination, with all the attractive   
charms of a most bewitching beauty. They yield   
themselves at once to her influence, and consider her   
as abundantly able to afford them all the happiness   
they desire. Their great concern is to gratify their   
senses. The soul and all its vast eternal concerns   
is neglected for the pleasures of fleshly appetites!  
  
We frequently hear **the abominable adage**,   
"**Youth** is the time for pleasure,   
**manhood** is the time for business,   
and **old age** is the time for religion."   
  
It is not possible for language to utter, or mind to   
conceive, a more gross or shocking insult to God   
than this!—which is in effect saying, "when I can   
no longer enjoy my lusts, or pursue my gains— **then** I will carry to God a body and soul worn   
out in the service of sin, Satan, and the world!"   
  
The monstrous wickedness and horrid impiety   
of this idea is enough, one would think, when   
put clearly to him, to shock and terrify the most   
confirmed and careless sinner in existence!  
  
**Thoughtless and sensual young man**, who has   
no idea of happiness but as arising from fleshly   
indulgence, and who is drinking continually the   
intoxicating cup of worldly pleasure—pursue your   
course if you are determined on this mode of life;   
gratify your appetites; indulge all your passions;   
deny yourself nothing; eat, drink and be merry;   
disregard the admonitions of conscience, trample   
under foot the authority of Scripture—**but** do not   
think that you shall always prosper in the ways of   
sin, or carry forever that air of jollity and triumph.  
  
The day of reckoning is at hand, when for all these   
things, you will be called into judgment! God now   
witnesses, and takes account of all your ways, and   
will one day call you to His judgment, and repay you   
according to your doings! "For God will bring every   
act to judgment, including every hidden thing,   
whether good or evil." (Ecc 12:14)

**God's flock**  
"I exhort the elders among you: shepherd **God's flock**."   
(1Pe 5:2)  
  
The flock which is committed to their care is the **God's flock**  
—which is thus denominated to teach us that believers are the   
special property of Christ, which He owns, loves, and protects  
—in distinction from the wicked (who, are a kind of wild beasts   
in whom He has neither peculiar property nor pleasure). They  
are thus denominated also, to teach us that Christians are not   
to live solitarily and unconnected, but are to unite themselves   
with each other in visible communion and brotherly love, and   
are to submit to the guidance and directions of their great   
Shepherd, and in all things to manifest the simplicity,   
harmlessness, and innocence of which the sheep is the   
natural emblem.

**Handel's "Messiah"**  
  
Concerning **Handel's "Messiah"** with what sentiments   
may it be supposed the Son of God beholds the scenes   
of His suffering life, atoning death, and final appearance   
in judgment—blended with all the hilarity of a musical   
festival, and sung by graceless men and women—for   
the entertainment of the multitude!  
  
Let those whose spiritual vision is not quite obscured by their   
musical taste, compare the scenes of an oratorio when "the   
Messiah" is being performed—and those of the house of God   
when the Lord's supper is celebrated—and remembering that   
the subject is the same in both, let them ask if both can be   
right? Is the cross on which the Savior loved and died rightly   
appropriated—when it is used for the purposes of amusement,   
gaiety and fashionable vanity?   
  
The subject of the "Messiah," as revealed in the Holy   
Scriptures, is given for the purpose of bringing men to   
repentance, faith and salvation; to be the great means,   
through faith, of overcoming the world with all its lusts   
of the flesh, lusts of the eye, and the pride of life; to   
give a death blow to the love of the world in the heart   
of man; and to subjugate the senses and the imagination   
to unseen and eternal things.   
  
While in **Handel's "Messiah"**, the cross of Christ,   
instead of crucifying us to the world, and the world  
to us, is employed as an amusement to add new   
attractions to earth, and to yield new gratifications   
to sense, and thus to make man more effectually   
the captive of that world—of which he should seek   
by faith to be the conqueror.  
  
For what purpose is this 'sacred music' performed?   
It is for amusement! Purely for amusement! Is it, then,   
done, for the glory of God—to convert the most solemn   
and sacred topics of divine truth into a source of public   
entertainment? No! It is done to draw people together   
to hear the sufferings of the Messiah set forth for much   
the same purpose as they are called to be entertained   
by a dramatic representation of the sorrows of Hamlet  
or Romeo!  
  
  
 **He will carry them in His bosom**  
  
"He will tend his flock like a shepherd; He will gather the  
lambs in His arms; **He will carry them in His bosom**,  
and gently lead those that are with young." Isa 40:11  
  
**He will carry them in His bosom**—where He could not   
only hear, but feel every bleat they uttered; and have all   
the tenderness of His own heart excited by the anxious   
and fluttering pulsations of theirs!  
  
See Him in the midst of his disciples . . .  
how feeble were their perceptions,  
how weak their faith,  
how worldly their expectations,  
how slow their growth!  
  
Yet how kindly did He bear with their dullness,   
and how gently did He chide their imperfections.

**Wealth**  
  
The responsibility attached to wealth seems to be poorly  
understood.   
  
It should ever be borne in mind that the exercise of mercy   
and charity is represented by our Lord in his description of   
the judgment day, as one of the principal topics of scrutiny   
in that season of final retribution. What a spectacle of horror   
and amazement will the rich man then present, who lavished   
in selfish extravagance that princely fortune which was   
entrusted to him for the benefit of society. Let such men   
read the parable of Dives and Lazarus—its salutary and   
impressive warnings were delivered expressly for them!   
  
**Wealth**, considered as a means of sensual gratification,   
ranks but one step above the acorns of the swine; while   
as a means of relieving misery, wealth opens sources of   
felicity, as lofty and sublime as the joy of angels!

**Exhibit in their conduct**  
  
Those who profess to believe in the truth of Christianity,   
should be careful to **exhibit in their conduct** . . .  
the purity,  
the benevolence,  
the meekness, and  
humility of the gospel.   
  
Let every Christian embody in his own character and   
conduct, the evidence of Christianity, and prove that it   
is from heaven, by showing that it makes him heavenly.

The ungodly should consider their dreadful situation,   
**hastening . . .**  
from **sinning** to dying,  
from **death** to judgment,  
from **judgment** to the bottomless pit, and  
then from age to age of torment without end or   
mitigation! They are kindling for themselves a fire   
which shall burn to the lowest hell.

**An unholy minister**  
 **An unholy minister** is the most dreadfully guilty, and   
the most fatally mischievous person in existence! He is   
a living curse, a walking pestilence, diffusing a savor of   
death around him wherever he goes; from whom, as to   
any voluntary association, every godly person should flee   
with greater horror than from a person infected with the   
plague. His name is Apollyon—his work destruction.   
  
It is dreadful to reflect what multitudes are now in   
the bottomless pit, who were conducted there by the   
damnable heresies of such men's lives; from whose   
imprecations, envenomed by despair, the guilty authors   
of their ruin will find neither escape nor shelter through   
everlasting ages, but feel the guilt of blood forever upon   
their wretched souls!

**A mere pedestal for the preacher's fame!**  
  
"We preach Christ crucified!" 1Co 1:23   
  
From the cross, as the tree of life, hang in maturity   
and abundance—all those fruits of grace which are   
necessary to the salvation of the soul.   
  
Are we **guilty**—here is pardon.   
  
Are we **rebels** against God—here is reconciliation.   
  
Are we **condemned**—here is justification.   
  
Are we **unholy**—here is sanctification.   
  
Are we agitated with conscious **guilt**—  
here is peace for a wounded spirit.   
  
My brethren in the ministry—the pulpit is intended to   
be **a pedestal for the cross**.But alas! even the   
cross itself, it is to be feared, is sometimes used as   
**a mere pedestal for the preacher's fame!** We   
may roll the thunders of eloquence, we may dart the   
coruscations of genius, we may scatter the flowers   
of poetry, we may diffuse the light of science, we   
may enforce the precepts of morality from the pulpit  
—but if we do not make Christ crucified the great   
subject our preaching, we have forgotten our   
purpose, and shall do no good.   
  
Satan trembles at nothing but the cross. And if we   
would destroy his power, and extend that holy and   
benevolent kingdom of Jesus, it must be by means   
of the cross.  
  
"For I determined to know nothing among you except   
Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was with you in   
weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. My speech   
and my proclamation were not with persuasive words   
of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and   
power." (1Co 2:2-4)

**Fresh communications**  
  
The Holy Spirit is not only the efficient cause   
and author of our spiritual life; but He is also  
the sustainer of it.   
  
We need **fresh communications** of His grace   
every step of our course, to keep before us . . .  
the glory of God as our center, rest, and end;  
the loveliness, beauty, and preciousness of Christ;  
the evil of sin;  
the transcendent excellence of holiness;  
the sublimity and importance of heaven, and eternal life.

**The true believer** . . .  
seeks God as his supreme end,  
enjoys God as his chief good,   
obeys God as his Sovereign Ruler.

It is **an act of amazing love** that God should   
not only give us his Son—but his Spirit also!   
That God should make a temple for the Holy   
Spirit in our hearts, is a display of infinitely   
greater condescension, than for the greatest   
monarch upon earth to take up his dwelling   
in a mud hut.

**One thing is certain**—you are a sinner,   
a poor, miserable, and perishing sinner!   
The door of mercy is open, and you are   
welcome to enter in! You can go to God  
in no other way, but as a sinner. God meets   
His repenting enemies, only at the cross!  
"I have not come to call the righteous,  
but sinners to repentance." Luk 5:32

**No declension in piety**  
  
We are not to conclude that our piety is declining,   
merely because our feelings are not so lively and   
flashy as they once were. If there is a growth . . .  
in humility and meekness,   
in tenderness of conscience and self-denial,   
in a sense of the value of Christ,   
in dependence upon the Spirit,   
there is **no declension in piety**, although there   
may be less of vivid emotion than there once was.   
  
Just as there is no decay of strength in the human   
body, where the sprightliness and efflorescence of   
youth are gone, if the grave robustness of manhood   
remains. Nor should the aged believer mistake the   
'decay of nature' for the 'decline of grace'. He hears,   
he prays, he reads, he remembers, and enjoys with   
less ability than he once did; but this is the effect   
of old age, and not of backsliding.

**Declension in piety**  
  
There are three stages of departure from God—  
1. spiritual declension  
2. actual backsliding  
3. final apostasy  
  
They are intimately connected, and lead on, unless stopped   
by divine grace, from one to the other. There have been   
many people in these states in every age of the church—  
there are some now. Professors are continually falling away   
from Christ, some only in heart, others openly in conduct;   
some partially and for a season, others totally and forever.   
The hopes of pastors and churches are continually receiving   
the bitterest disappointment from the relapses of those who   
"did run well." Like the blossoms in the spring, for a time they   
excited the most pleasing anticipations—but a blight came on  
—the blossom went up as dust, and the root appeared to be   
rottenness.   
  
**Declension in piety**, means a diminution of its vigor at the heart;   
a loss of the power of godliness, or, to use a scriptural phrase,   
"a leaving of our first love." There is no immorality; no open sin;   
but an utter decay of pious affection. The whole amount of piety   
that is left—is cold, heartless, dead formality. The fundamental   
doctrines and precious truths of the Gospel, though not   
renounced, are not relished and fed upon with that eager   
appetite, keen relish, and exquisite zest which they once were.   
The means of grace, though not neglected—are mere forms,   
imparting no quickening power, and yielding no spiritual   
enjoyment. Pious affections of peace, joy, love, delight in   
God, and hope of heaven—are almost extinguished. The   
vigor of watchfulness, spirituality of mind, and the severity   
of mortification of sin are relaxed—under the idea that so   
much strictness in religion is not necessary. The tenderness   
of the conscience is blunted—and little sins of temper, of the   
heart and the tongue, are committed with far less repugnance   
than formerly. Besetting sins, once nearly subdued—acquire   
fresh life and power. In short, piety has lost its hold upon the   
mind, the heart, and conscience, as an elevating, sanctifying,   
and satisfying reality. Delight in God, the love of Christ, the   
joyful hope of heaven, have well near ceased!

**Those in affliction**  
  
**Those in affliction** should restrain their grief, and not be   
swallowed up of overmuch sorrow. An excessive degree   
of distress, a refusal to be comforted, a disposition to   
nourish grief—is a temper dishonorable to a Christian,   
who, in the darkest and dreariest scenes of human life,   
ought never to appear like those who are without God   
and without hope.   
  
PATIENCE must have its perfect work, that you   
may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing.   
  
RESIGNATION must not only suppress the murmur,  
but dictate words of confidence and peace. "Though   
He slays me, yet will I trust in him," must be your   
declaration, as well as your purpose.   
  
FAITH—strong, steady faith—which cleaves closer   
to Christ, in proportion as other things fail, must   
be in exercise.   
  
HOPE, as the anchor of your soul, must keep   
your little bark safe amidst the storm.   
  
MEEKNESS must put forth all its power and beauty in   
preventing peevishness, and producing a sweetness   
of temper in the midst of perplexing and ruffling   
circumstances.   
  
ASSURANCE that all things are working together for   
good, should bear the soul above the low and cloudy   
horizon of present trials, and enable it to spot eternal   
sunshine beyond the storm; and rendered the brighter  
by the gloom, from the midst of which it is contemplated.   
  
While at the same time, a deep concern should be   
manifested for **a sanctified use of every affliction**.   
Concern should be manifested . . .   
to glorify God in the fires,  
to have every corruption mortified,  
to have every grace strengthened;  
to die to earth,   
to live for heaven.

**A showy and extravagant style of living!**  
  
"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the   
things that are above, where Christ is, seated at   
the right hand of God. Set your minds on things   
that are above, not on things that are on earth."  
(Col 3:1-2)  
  
Avoid, I beseech you, **a showy and extravagant   
style of living!** Do not be ambitious of obtaining . . .  
a large, luxurious house,  
elegant furniture,  
fine, expensive clothing,  
and a country residence.   
  
What are these things to a man whose heart should   
be set on things that are above, not on things that   
are on earth?

**The worm of pride** feeds upon the root of piety!   
Pride will prevent that deep humiliation before God,   
that self-abhorrence, that self-annihilation, that entire   
dependence, and sense of ill-desert which are essential   
to the spirit of true piety; and, at the same time, pride  
will call into active operation many tempers most   
inimical to godliness.

**Prosperity**  
"Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world;  
they increase in riches." Psa 73:12  
  
Worldly-mindedness is a very common fruit of prosperity.   
  
O how difficult is it to maintain this pure, spiritual, unearthly,   
heavenly taste—in the midst of prosperity! How difficult is it   
to help loving the world—when it puts on all its charms,   
smiles upon us, and caresses us!   
  
Many prosperous Christians are miserably low in spiritual   
piety, have little enjoyment of God, and little communion   
with Christ.   
  
**Prosperity**, by multiplying the sources of earthly gratification,   
tends to take us off from those which are spiritual and divine.  
  
Prosperity tends . . .  
to carnalize our affections,  
to vitiate our holy taste, and  
to wither our devotion.   
  
Nothing is more beautiful in our world than the manifest   
association of humble piety and temporal prosperity; it is   
the temper of heaven united with the possession of earth.   
The man who makes this attainment, is great in the   
kingdom of God. His prosperity is maintained without   
injury to himself. Let the prosperous Christian aim at   
this beautiful combination.   
  
"Keep vanity and lies far away from me. Don't give me either  
poverty or riches. Feed me only the food I need." Pro 30:8

**Inconsistent professors**  
"We exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and  
charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who  
calls you into his own kingdom and glory." 1Th 2:12  
  
Multitudes have staked the truth of Christianity  
on the conduct of its professors.   
  
**Inconsistent professors**, therefore, are the abettors   
of infidelity and irreligion. They are mere caricatures   
of piety, which they represent with hideous and   
distorted features, and commend to the ridicule   
and disgust of onlookers.   
  
**Inconsistent professors** are traitors in the camp, and   
betray the cause which they profess to defend. They   
are destroyers of other men's souls! No sins have so   
much power to do mischief as theirs; and none have   
been so destructive. Hell swarms with souls whom   
**inconsistent professors** have hurried on to perdition!  
  
The faith, and love, and holiness of believers, are one   
of God's ordinances for the conversion of sinners, and   
it is an ordinance that has been greatly blessed. The   
beauties of holiness displayed in all their symmetry   
and harmony, as they are embodied in the character   
of eminent Christians, have been employed by the   
Spirit of God to soften prejudice, and subdue enmity.  
Many who turned with disgust from religion as it was   
seen disfigured and deformed in some inconsistent   
professors; have, by a more pure and lovely   
manifestation of holiness, been charmed into   
admiration, affection, and imitation.

**Our influence!**  
  
The influence of one lively, ardent, active Christian,  
is a blessing to the whole church of which he is a   
member. His prayers at the meetings, and his   
conversation in the companies of Christian friends,   
tend not only to stop the spreading lukewarmness   
of many others; but to kindle a similar spirit to his   
own, in the hearts of those with whom he associates.   
He keeps up the spiritual atmosphere of the church,   
and makes it amiable, spiritual and heavenly.   
  
While on the other hand, the influence of one worldly  
minded, convivial professor, whose spiritual affections,   
if not wholly extinguished, are smouldering under a   
heap of earthly cares and tastes—depresses and chills   
the piety of all who come near him. He is . . .  
a hindrance to pious conversation,  
an interruption to the fellowship of the saints,  
an extinguisher upon the devotion of the church.   
  
However profitable the fellowship may have been  
before he entered the room, he soon contrives, by   
anecdotes, politics, or business, to turn the current   
into some low and earthly channel.   
  
It is of immense consequence that we should all   
consider the effect which our influence has upon   
others. **Our influence** is always acting upon others;  
and their influence is always acting upon us! This   
is a solemn consideration, which we should never   
forget for a single hour. This applies universally.   
We are all perpetually sending forth, and receiving   
influence.

**An incarnation of love**  
  
Jesus Christ was **an incarnation of love** in our   
world. He was love living, breathing, speaking,   
acting among men!  
  
His **birth** was the nativity of love.   
  
His **sermons** the words of love.   
  
His **miracles** the wonders of love.   
  
His **tears** the meltings of love.   
  
His **crucifixion** the agonies of love.   
  
His **resurrection** the triumph of love.

**A stronger and a holier affection**  
  
Christian! Would you be crucified to the world, and   
have the world crucified to you? Would you indeed,   
and in truth, have the spirit of the world cast out of   
you? Would you cease to be characterized as   
'minding earthly things'?   
  
Go daily by sacred meditation, to Mount Calvary,   
and while all the mysteries of redeeming love, as   
concentrated in the cross, there meet the eye of   
faith—and as the visions of celestial glory, seen   
most distinctly from that spot, attract and fix the   
transported gaze of hope—you will see the beauty   
of the earth fade away before you, amidst the   
splendor of a more excellent glory, and feel the   
love of the world die within you, under the power   
of **a stronger and a holier affection**.

**The neglect of domestic piety**  
  
There is probably scarcely any deficiency of the church   
in the present day, more apparent than **the neglect   
of domestic piety**.   
  
**Family prayer** is not performed with that constancy,   
solemnity, and fervor, which is calculated to interest   
and to edify.   
  
**Parental authority** is not maintained with that   
steadiness which is adopted to inspire respect, and   
that affection which is likely to secure obedience.  
  
As to the judicious, diligent, and engaging Biblical  
instruction, which is necessary to inform the mind, to   
enlighten the conscience, and to form the character;  
it is in some families almost entirely neglected.   
  
Far more solicitude is felt, and far more pains are taken   
by many, to educate their children for this world than for   
the future eternal world; and to fit them to act their part   
well for time, than to prepare them for the scenes of   
eternity.   
  
In many Christian homes, family piety is but the   
form of godliness—without its power.

**The religion of today** has lost something of its   
steadiness, its seriousness, and its dignity; and   
has acquired too much of the flutter and the   
vanity of a thing of fashion and excitement.   
True religion ought to be sustained, in all its   
exercises and habits, with an appropriate   
seriousness, dignity, and conscientiousness.

**A substitute for personal piety?**  
  
Zeal in Christian service cannot be **a substitute for personal piety**. The attendance at the committee cannot be an excuse for neglecting the closet. The financial support of a church can be no apology for neglecting to mortify a corruption. Yet there is a tendency in this day to forget this. There is an imminent danger of losing sight of religion as a personal, private, and individual concern. We are too much drawn away from our closets and our own hearts, as we lose the habit of silent meditation.  
  
We are so accustomed to excitement, that there is a dullness in solitude. Private prayer is neglected for that which is social; the Bible is neglected for the sermon; and the closet is neglected for the committee-room. The great system of revealed truth is not sufficiently brought before us in its grandeur, glory, and demands—as a matter for our individual contemplation, reception, and application.

**The evidence of genuine piety** is to be found in . . .  
real humility,  
self-distrust,  
hungering and thirsting after righteousness,  
sorrow for sin, and  
a continual effort to regulate your thoughts,   
feelings, and conduct by the Word of God.  
Genuine piety will not thrive and increase without   
effort—but is of so tender and delicate a nature as   
to require great, constant, and persevering concern,  
watchfulness, and care.

**He will not forget the lambs**(John Angell James, "The Christian Professor")  
  
"He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will gather  
the lambs in his arm, and carry them in his bosom."  
(Isa 40:11)  
  
Are you alarmed at the difficulties and dangers of   
the wilderness way? Consider that you enjoy the   
notice, the love, intercession, and the support of   
the Great and Good Shepherd, who gathers the   
lambs in His arms, and carries them in His bosom.   
  
**He will not forget the lambs**—their feeble bleat   
attracts His notice, their helplessness draws His   
attention, and for them he puts forth all His   
pastoral kindness and skill.

**Cunning artifices, deep devices, artful machinations**  
  
It is one of the **cunning artifices**, the **deep devices**, the **artful   
machinations** of Satan—to lead men into self-deception, when   
he can no longer hold them in careless indifference; to ruin   
their souls in the church, when he cannot effect it in the world;   
to lull them asleep by the privileges of church fellowship, when   
he cannot continue their slumber amidst the pleasures of sin.   
  
O how many is he leading captive this way? How many is he   
conducting to perdition, whom he has first blindfolded with   
the bandage of a false profession? How many are there in all   
our churches, who are in this dreadful state!

**Consider Jesus!**  
  
"Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a   
heavenly calling, **consider Jesus**, the apostle   
and high priest of our confession." Heb 3:1.   
  
Jesus was so **dead to this world**, that He renounced   
wealth, rank, ease and fame.   
  
Jesus was so **holy** that He could appeal to the most   
malignant of his foes for the sinless purity of His conduct.   
  
Jesus was so **submissive to the divine will**, that   
He drank the deepest, fullest, bitterest cup of human   
woe, without a murmur.   
  
Jesus was so **meek and lowly**, as to bear the greatest   
injuries and insults with unruffled serenity and placability.   
  
Jesus was so full of **benevolence**, as to pray for His   
foes, to die for them, and save them.   
  
Yes, we say to the world, "Look at Jesus of Nazareth in   
His holy and beneficent career, or in his ignominious and   
agonizing death—see him whose whole character was **a   
compound of purity and love**—there is our model."  
  
We confess that the salvation of immortal souls is   
the most momentous interest in the universe; and   
that our time, influence, talents and property—are   
at Christ's command.  
  
We profess that we have received Christ as the end   
of our very existence.  
  
We profess that we have ceased to live for wealth,   
ease, or reputation, as the supreme object of pursuit.   
  
We profess that we receive Christ as our pattern and   
example, and that we are determined, as God shall   
assist us—to conform ourselves to Him in our spirit,   
temper, and conduct.

**Let your light shine!**  
  
"You are to live blameless and pure lives, as children of God  
without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which  
you shine like stars in the universe." Php 2:15  
  
There is an ineffable beauty in the Christian character, as   
delineated by our Lord Jesus Christ in His personal ministry,   
and by His holy apostles.  
  
A Christian ought to be a character of universal loveliness   
and holiness. He not only seeks freedom from and abhorrence   
of greater sins, but adds a sensitiveness to lesser sins, and a   
studious effort after universal purity. Perfection should be   
our wish and our aim. A Christian is not to allow himself to   
practice any degree of any sin; and is to seek every possible   
degree of every holy virtue.   
  
"You are the light of the world. **Let your light shine** before  
men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your  
Father in heaven."

**Oh, that dreadful future!**  
  
There are three questions which every considerate man will  
propose to himself in reference to his **present** state of being.  
What am I?  
Where did I come?  
What is my purpose here on earth?  
  
And there are three more which he cannot help  
sometimes asking concerning the **future**.  
Where am I going?  
What will I be there?  
How shall I prepare for eternity?  
  
There, before us, at no great distance, is the grave—into the  
solemn and mysterious obscurity of which, neither sense nor  
reason can dart one illuminating ray; nor can they extort  
from its sullen silence one whisper of information.  
  
Oh, that dreadful future!  
  
Into what will that one first step from the 'stage of earthly  
existence' plunge us? To unaided human reason, the future  
is an unbounded, mystifying, starless, midnight darkness  
—without one luminous point through infinite space!  
  
What shall we be in eternity? Who shall reply? Think  
how profoundly this question, this mystery, concerns us  
—and in comparison with this—what are to us all questions  
of all sciences? What to us, are all the scientific researches  
into the material nature? What to us, are all the investigations  
into the history of past ages? What to us, are all the future  
career of events in the progress of states and empires? What  
to us, what shall become of this globe itself, or of all the   
systems of the universe? What, where, shall WE be ourselves,  
is the matter of surpassing, infinite interest. This an issue of  
such great magnitude and solemnity, that it transcends and  
overwhelms our utmost faculty of thought!  
  
Man is a creature capable of happiness or misery, and tastes  
much of each on earth—and is anxious to know which will be  
his lot beyond the grave! He is conscious of sin, and feels  
solicitous to be informed whether the consequences of his  
sin will pursue him into an invisible state!  
  
The world by its wisdom, knew not God, nor immortality,  
nor heaven. Unaided human reason, we repeat, never did,  
never can, assure us that there is a future state at all. If   
it could ascertain this, it could not tell us whether it is a  
limited or an endless duration. If If it could ascertain this,  
and it were certain that there is to be everlasting existence,  
it would be at a loss to tell us whether it were a state of  
unmixed bliss, or misery, or a mixture of both. If it could  
ascertain this, it would still be unable to inform us how  
eternal felicity is to be obtained, and eternal misery  
avoided. Unaided human reason fails at every step!  
  
The whole world is longing for an immortality  
to relieve them from the burden of . . .   
their sufferings,  
their cares, and  
their labors.  
  
"And now He has made all of this plain to us by the  
coming of Christ Jesus, our Savior, who broke the  
power of death and showed us the way to everlasting  
life through the Gospel!" 2Ti 1:10  
  
What are all the volumes which philosophy ever wrote,  
compared to these few golden sentences! By the cross of  
Christ, the dark screen that blocked our view, and hid the  
realms of glory from our sight, is rent asunder, and the vista  
of heaven and eternal ages is laid open to the eye of faith!  
  
Immortality, seen only as a dim object of hope, amid the  
midnight darkness of Paganism, and only as a dim object  
of faith amid the twilight of Judaism—is beheld amid the  
noontide splendor of Christianity in its magnitude and  
grandeur, as at once the object of a strong and steady  
faith and a lively and a saving hope.  
  
It is hard to conceive that I, born after the manner of the  
brute creation; and like them sustained by the earth—a  
poor, frail, feeble creature of yesterday, and crushed  
before the moth—who, after a few fleeting years at most,  
shall return to the earth from which I sprang, and seem to  
be utterly blotted out from existence—shall continue to  
exist in some mode, and in some scene of existence, for  
millions of ages! How utterly surpassing all this to reason,  
and almost incredible to faith, when it contrasts this  
wondrous eternal existence—with the present little,  
insignificant, momentary creature—who flutters out his  
tiny being in this present, temporal, earthly, little world!  
  
Everlasting felicity is something so vast, so wondrous, so  
magnificent—that unaided human reason never could have  
concluded that this gift, so rich, so splendid, so extraordinary,  
could be bestowed on a sinful child of dust!  
  
The great mass of professing Christians, do not really believe  
in eternal felicity. Their conduct is utterly at variance with  
such a belief. Is the impress of immortality upon their  
character or their conduct? Are they not infinitely more  
swayed by the present time—than a future eternity? Has not  
earth infinitely greater attractions for them than heaven?  
Is not all their labor bestowed upon the present—while the  
endless future is neglected and forgotten? Immortality is  
not really believed by the great mass of professing  
Christians! It is a mere name, an opinion, a speculation;  
anything but a deep practical conviction!

**There is a tearless world**  
  
Many are the afflictions even of the righteous. Though they   
are the children of God and the heirs of immortality, even   
they are not exempted from the common lot of humanity,   
as described by the patriarch of Uz, where he says, "Man   
is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards!'  
  
**There is a tearless world**—but it is reached by a valley   
of tears! As those who are exposed to such a variety   
and such a constant recurrence of trials, we need some   
principle to sustain us under them. We must find some   
source of consolation.  
  
We are in danger in times of trouble, of resorting to many   
things that are inimical to our peace and to our holiness.   
Afflictions are not only hurtful in themselves, but are likely   
also, if care be not taken, to produce evil. They not only   
always lead to sorrow—but often to sin. A wounded spirit  
has frequently been the occasion of a burdened conscience.   
The wormwood and the gall of sorrow have fermented into  
the poison of iniquity, by impatience under the hand of   
God, and by revengeful feelings towards the human   
instruments of our griefs. How apt are we to sink into . . .  
heartless inactivity,  
hopeless despondency,  
sinful distrust and   
overwhelming sorrow.   
  
In the dark and gloomy night of tribulation, when the sun   
of our prosperity has set; when the clouds of adversity   
have so overspread the heavens that not a star twinkles;  
and the tempest rages—how much do we need something   
to cheer us, something to keep down those unbelieving   
thoughts of God and His Providence which are then so   
apt to rise, and to relieve that intense wretchedness   
which then too often takes full possession of the soul.

**One sinner!**  
  
"I have not come to call the righteous, but **sinners**to repentance." Luk 5:32  
  
"This man welcomes **sinners** and eats with them!"   
Luk 15:2  
  
It is a sight . . .  
for heaven to wonder at,  
for angels to rejoice over,  
for devils to hate,  
for man to imitate,  
for and God to delight in;   
to see a poor creature polluted with almost every   
sin, broken-hearted yet not despairing; penitent   
and turning with loathing from his sins, and yet   
confidently relying upon the mercy of God in   
Christ, for a full, free, and cordial forgiveness!  
  
"There is rejoicing in the presence of the angels  
of God over **one sinner** who repents." Luk 15:10

**Pleased or profited?**  
  
"**The word preached did not profit them**." Heb 4:2  
  
What countless millions of sermons seem to be preached   
in vain, so far as regards any appreciable result! What a   
small amount of profiting in the way of increased holiness!   
  
To be truly profited from the hearing of sermons, is to have   
Scriptural truth deeply enstamped upon the heart and visibly   
upon character; the transformation of the whole heart and   
soul into the image of God and the mind of Christ; the   
cultivation of a godly temperament; and a fitness for glory.  
This, and this only, is profiting from the preached Word.   
  
Multitudes are **pleased** by sermons, who are not in the   
smallest degree **profited** by them!   
  
The fault is partly to be ascribed to the **preachers**. Either   
their aim is often something else than the profiting their   
hearers, or else they know not how to accomplish this.   
One would suppose it impossible to hear a great deal of   
today's evangelical preaching of this age, without asking   
the question, "Who can be profited by this? What is there   
in all this, to instruct, sanctify, and comfort believers? It   
is all very fine—there is much to please the intellect, to   
gratify the taste, to exercise the imagination; but what  
spiritual edification is there in it?" It is my sad and serious   
conviction, that **the evangelical pulpit** is losing its power,   
just because it is losing sight of its object and its aim.  
A philosophized Christianity is finding its way into our   
pulpits; which, aided by a rationalistic taste, and set off   
by an aspiring intellectuality, is **seducing the church**   
from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus!  
  
The goal of most preachers is to **please** their hearers;  
not to **profit** their souls.

**May Christian parents pray for the salvation of their children?**  
  
We must consider what these prayers for their conversion imply.   
They must proceed from a heart that really desires and longs for   
their conversion. It should be an intense yearning—a longing in   
some measure proportioned to the object itself. Their children's  
conversion must be the first object concerning them, to which   
all others must be subordinated. Their children's conversion   
must be sought by all the appropriate means of godly training   
and example. Everything must be done that would conduce to   
their conversion to God, and everything kept away that would   
hinder it. There must not only be instruction—but in the fullest   
sense of the term, godly education. The character must be   
formed; and in order to this, the parent must present a model   
of exemplary piety in himself. And with these conditions, the   
father may go and pray for his children's conversion, and expect   
their conversion. Prayers so presented and so followed up, will   
very generally be answered.   
  
It is, no doubt, a fact that very many do pray and see little result   
of their prayers—their children do not become godly. Why? I would   
by no means suggest that it is in **all** cases to be traced up to parental   
neglect. I would not pour vinegar upon the wounds of many a lacerated   
heart, bleeding under the misconduct of a prodigal son, by asserting   
that parental sins have led to this. But at the same time, there can   
be little doubt of the general principle—that godly training, carried on   
from the dawn of reason, through childhood and youth—with wisdom,   
uniformity, consistency, and affection—enforced by an eminently holy   
and consistent example—and sanctified by believing prayer—would be   
followed, in most cases, with the blessed result of their conversion   
to God.

**God has no speechless children!**  
  
Nothing seems too hard or too difficult for prayer   
to do. Prayer has a kind of omnipotence; for it   
moves the hand which moves all things!   
  
Faith and prayer are the two arms by which   
the soul hangs upon the neck of infinite Love,   
and grasps the hand of omnipotent Power!   
  
Prayer is the homage of a dependent creature   
paid to the author of its being, and the source   
of its happiness.   
  
Prayer has a moral reflex influence on the soul   
of him who presents it, making him the holier   
by his own devotions.   
  
Prayer is a relief and comfort to the troubled soul.   
  
Prayer is the communion of the regenerated   
soul with its Divine Parent.   
  
Prayer is God's own instituted means of obtaining   
blessings from Him, the Fountain of life.   
  
Prayer must be **sincere**—we must really be   
desirous to obtain the blessings we ask.   
  
Prayer must be **holy**—for if we "regard iniquity   
in our heart, the Lord will not hear us."   
  
Prayer must be **pious**—seeking to obtain blessings,   
not for our own gratification merely—but for God's glory.   
  
Prayer must be **importunate**—for it is the effectual,   
fervent prayer of a righteous man, that prevails.   
  
Prayer must be **submissive**—asking only for what  
it is God's will to bestow.   
  
Prayer must be in **love**—for if our brother has anything   
against us, we must first go and be reconciled to our brother.   
  
Prayer must be **reverent**—for our God is a consuming fire.   
  
Prayer must be **humble**—for we are base, and sinful,   
and unworthy to lift up our eyes to heaven.   
  
Prayer must be **persevering**—for men ought   
always to pray, and not to faint.   
  
Prayer must be **particular**—for generalities  
mean little or nothing.   
  
Prayer must be **universal**—entering into everything,   
all the concerns of life, all the means of grace.   
  
Prayer must be of **all kinds**—social, domestic,   
private, spontaneous.   
  
Prayer must be **grateful**—abounding in thanksgiving.   
  
Prayer must be **expectant**—waiting and   
watching for answers.   
  
Prayer must be **believing**—we must ask in faith.  
  
Prayer must be **consistent with the Word** of God  
—we may ask for everything God has promised.

**Singularly, solemnly, and perilously critical**  
  
"Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the  
victory that has overcome the world, even our faith."  
1Jn 5:4  
  
The situation and circumstances of the Christian during   
his state of discipline and probation upon earth, are   
**singularly, solemnly, and perilously critical**. His   
attention is divided between two worlds. He is placed   
amid the scenes, the duties, the possessions, the trials   
of one world, all of which are ever appealing to the   
senses, and urging their claims upon the faculties   
and instincts of his nature; claims which he cannot,   
dare not, altogether resist or neglect.   
  
And yet amid these earthly objects always present to   
him, he is supremely to value, pursue, and enjoy the   
objects of another, eternal world, of which he knows   
nothing but by report.   
  
He must not omit the just and proper interests of this   
present life, to which he is related by his both various   
and tender ties; and yet he must regard, practically and   
constantly, as his highest interest, the life that is to   
come. He must, to a certain extent, attend to the things   
on earth, and yet his affections must be set on things in   
heaven. The visible must not be neglected, yet the   
invisible must be supremely regarded. The temporal   
must be attended to in due season and measure, and   
yet the eternal must predominate.

**Mortification and vivification**  
  
**Mortification of sin** is but half the work a Christian   
has to do; for there is also **vivification of graces**,   
which is the other half.   
  
No man ploughs his field, or tills his garden, merely   
to kill weeds—but to sow corn and to plant flowers.   
  
A room may be clean—and yet empty.   
  
It is not enough for our hearts to be swept of sin  
—unless they be also furnished with graces.   
  
A man may not in disposition be a tiger or a demon  
—and yet he may not be a saint or an angel.   
  
Now our religion requires not only putting away our   
pride, our malice, our covetousness, and our injustice  
—but also cultivating humility, liberality, and love.  
  
True religion is of an aspiring nature, requiring us   
to proceed from grace to grace . .   
to **faith** adding virtue,  
to **virtue** adding patience,  
to **patience** adding temperance,  
to **temperance** adding godliness,  
to **godliness** adding brotherly-kindness,  
and to **brotherly-kindness** adding **love**.  
  
Thus ascending by degrees, until at length the top  
of the lofty staircase reaches to heaven, and lands   
the soul so qualified in the mansions of glory!  
Nothing but faith can enable the soul to accomplish this;   
and this it does, by obtaining through Christ that aid of   
the Holy Spirit, by whom alone our good works can be   
accomplished.

**Earth would reflect the face of heaven!**  
  
"Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful  
or proud or rude. Love does not demand its own way.  
Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it  
has been wronged. It is never glad about injustice but  
rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives  
up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures  
through every circumstance." 1Co 13:4-7  
  
These few verses are worth incalculably more than all the  
volumes the pen of moral philosophy ever wrote! What a   
happy world, how nearly resembling heaven, we would live   
in—if this were the rule of conduct everywhere, always, in   
all things, and for all men. **Earth would reflect the face of   
heaven**, even as in the mirror of a peaceful lake, the quiet,   
noiseless, blue sky is to be seen.

**We must love all for whom Christ died**  
  
"God is love, and all who live in love, live in God,  
and God lives in them." 1Jn 4:16  
  
Realizing the love which Christ has towards His children,   
viewing them as the purchase of His blood and the   
objects of His tenderest affection—our hearts will by   
a kind of necessity, be knit to them. Every fresh view   
of the cross will endear them to our hearts.  
  
How frequently, how variously, and how earnestly   
are we enjoined both by our Lord, and by that   
disciple whom Jesus loved, and who by leaning   
on His bosom seemed to have caught most of His   
spirit—to love our brethren.   
  
Love to the brethren is **the law of Christ's kingdom**,  
"This is my commandment, that you love one another."   
  
Love to the brethren is **the badge of discipleship**,  
"Hereby shall all men know that you are my disciples,  
if you love one another."   
  
Love to the brethren is **the evidence of conversion**,  
"We know that we have passed from death unto life,   
because we love the brethren."   
  
Love to the brethren is **the grand inference from the   
cross**, "Beloved, if God so loved us—we ought also to   
love one another."   
  
Love to the brethren is . . .  
the natural yearning of the renewed heart;  
the instinctive promptings of the new nature;  
the reaching forth of the arm too feeble and too   
short to clasp the neck of the Divine Father, to   
entwine around His image in His children!  
  
Why is it that the children of God do not love one   
another more, and allow such comparatively trifling   
matters to alienate them from each other? How is it   
that sectarianism gains such an ascendancy over the   
members of the redeemed family, and introduces so   
much coldness, distance, and even hostility?   
  
**We must love all for whom Christ died.**  
  
Did we more powerfully realize the fact that . . .  
Jesus has died for us all,  
Jesus loves us all,  
Jesus claims us all,  
Jesus delights in us all;  
would not the effect of this persuasion be to   
check the progress of alienation and draw us   
closer to each other?   
  
When the full power of the cross is felt in the hearts   
of believers—when all the constraining influence of the   
love of Christ is experienced—then will we be rooted   
and grounded in love.  
  
"Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue;  
but with actions and in truth." 1Jn 3:18

**Faith overcomes the love of worldly things**  
  
"Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the  
victory that has overcome the world, even our faith."   
1Jn 5:4  
  
**Faith overcomes the love of worldly things.** That eager   
ambition after wealth and affluence, for the sake of the   
luxuries and splendors which it enables its possessor to   
command—is transmuted by faith, into a desire to give.   
  
Instead of an anxiety to obtain . . .  
noble mansions,  
elegant furniture,  
handsome equipages,   
expensive entertainments, and  
all the other luxuries of taste and fashion;  
the followers of Jesus should be distinguished   
by an obvious simplicity of habit and living.   
  
Many professors spend too much upon selfish luxuries.  
Followers of Jesus should shrink their luxuries, that   
they may enlarge their charities. Frugality of living,   
should provide resources for liberality to those in need.

**Nominalists, evangelical formalists,   
and legalistic pharisees!**  
  
"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the   
kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my   
Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day,  
'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your   
name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then   
I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me,   
you evildoers!'" Mat 7:21-23  
  
These are words solemn enough to fill the whole church   
with anxiety and alarm. How **prevalent**, according to this   
passage, is self-deception! MANY will say. How **far** it may   
be carried—even to the judgment tribunal! How **unlikely**   
are the subjects of it—professors, preachers, workers of   
miracles!   
  
I tremble as I write! I tremble for multitudes all around!  
  
Never, no never, were professors more in danger of **self  
deception** than in this age. If the standard of true religion   
is the New Testament, then a great proportion of the   
members of all our churches cannot be true Christians  
—but are merely **nominalists, evangelical formalists,   
and legalistic pharisees!**

(Choice devotional selections from   
the works of John Angell James)

**God's hatred of sin**  
  
The death of Christ, apprehended by faith, presents   
the strongest motives to holiness—by setting forth   
in the most vivid and striking manner . . .  
the holiness and justice of God;   
His determination to punish transgression;  
the immutable authority of the Divine law;  
the evil nature of sin; and   
the fearfulness of falling into the hands of the living God.   
  
Not all the judgments God ever inflicted—nor all the   
threatenings he ever denounced, give such an   
impressive warning against sin, and admonition   
to righteousness—as the death of Christ.   
  
**The torments of the bottomless pit** are not so   
dreadful a demonstration of **God's hatred of sin**,  
as **the agonies of the cross!  
  
  
  
Justification**  
  
"Therefore, since we have been **justified** through  
faith, we have peace with God through our Lord  
Jesus Christ." Rom 5:1  
  
**Justification** is the opposite to condemnation.  
  
Justification is act of God's boundless mercy in   
forgiving all the transgressions of the penitent   
believer, for the sake of atoning sacrifice of His   
beloved Son; and restoring the once guilty   
transgressor to the favor of God, and the   
hope of eternal life.  
  
The **ground** on which justification proceeds, is the  
death of Christ as an atoning sacrifice for sin.  
  
The the **source** from which justification flows,  
is the mercy of God.  
  
The **instrumental cause** or means of justification,  
is faith in Christ.  
  
"Not by works of righteousness which we have done  
—but according to His mercy He saved us." Tit 3:5 **Of little use**  
  
"Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by works,  
is dead." Jas 2:17  
  
True religion begins in right believing and goes on to   
right doing; and right believing must, through the   
whole of the Christian life, be the guide of right doing.   
  
Faith is the root, out of which grows the whole tree   
of our godliness—its trunk, its branches, its leaves,   
and its fruit. It is faith which, striking its fibers into   
the Word of God as its proper soil, draws up the   
moisture which nourishes it, and which has first   
come down from heaven. It is only as we understand   
this, that we can begin or continue in a course of   
true, practical, and experimental religion.   
  
To merely understand the grand truths of Scripture,  
is **of little use**—unless they produce . . .  
repentance,  
faith,  
love, and  
holiness.  
  
That is not right **faith** which does not lead to practice; and   
that is not a right **practice** which does not spring from faith.  
  
  
**A robust and healthful piety**  
  
There is such a thing as the spiritual life. A religious profession   
is nothing apart from it. Without life, however correct may be its   
outward form and expression, it is but a picture or a statue. It   
may be a beautiful one, but it is dead! Faith is the expression   
of spiritual life, or rather it is the principle of life itself which   
develops in all other expressions of it. The spiritual life is subject   
to all the varieties which mark the course of our physical vitality;   
and hence the reality of what is called 'experimental religion' or   
'religious experience'. There is perhaps no subject less   
understood, or more abused, than this.   
  
Man is a being possessed of the various faculties of intellect, will,   
passions, and conscience. **True religion is designed to influence   
all these**, for it takes the whole soul under its guidance, influence,   
and impulsion. **A robust and healthful piety** gives . . .  
light to the **intellect**,  
determination to the **will**,  
emotion to the **heart**,  
tenderness to the **conscience**, and  
purity to the **imagination**.   
  
True piety brings out the effect of this joint operation of the   
soul in all the beauties of a holy life. It falls from heaven   
upon the whole soul like the solar ray upon the prism, which  
divides and distributes the distinct and separate colors over   
the whole glassy substance. But men are apt to distort this   
beautiful consummation, and represent religion too much as   
consisting only, or in the predominance, of one color.   
  
In true godliness, there must be some great truths received   
in the exercise of intelligent faith upon the **mind**. These must   
be felt in their influences upon the **affections**, and carried   
out in practical and visible operation in the **life**. It is the glory   
of Christianity that it addresses itself to all our faculties; it   
meets us in all our changeful circumstances; and is adapted   
to all our conditions of existence.  
 **Preach louder than a thousand voices**  
  
There is nothing now **so much needed** by and for Christianity,   
as an earnest exhibition, demonstration and manifestation of   
Christ's own teachings in His Sermon upon the Mount, founded   
on the apostle's doctrine of justification by faith. This, exhibited   
by the church in the sight of all the world, would . . .  
**preach louder than a thousand voices**;   
be more eloquent than ten thousand **volumes**;   
carry a deeper conviction than the most conclusive **logic**;  
do more to recommend true Christian doctrine than the   
most powerful and attractive **rhetoric**.   
  
  
  
**The unbroken peace of our churches**  
  
What we need to preserve **the unbroken peace of   
our churches**, is a more distinct recognition and a   
more powerful influence of the principles of the gospel;   
more humility, more spirituality, more zeal for the   
divine glory.   
  
We often carry into the sanctuary, and into the church,   
our pride, our self-will, our personal taste. That spirit   
of mutual submission, brotherly love, and surrender of   
our own gratification to the good of others which the   
Word of God enjoins, would keep the church always   
happy and harmonious. But instead of seeking the   
good of the whole, the feeling of too many of our   
members may be thus summarily expressed, "I will   
have my way!" Such a spirit is a source of all the evils   
to which our churches are ever exposed, and of which   
it must be confessed they are but too frequently the   
miserable victims.  
  
  
**Cherishing a viper in its bosom!**  
  
To allow sin to be committed, without being noticed and   
removed, is displeasing in the sight of God. Nothing can   
be conceived of, more likely to grieve the Holy Spirit, or   
to induce Him to withdraw his gracious influence from a   
church, than a **neglect of scriptural discipline**. When   
the church neglects to discipline its sinning members . . .  
backsliders are encouraged to go farther astray;  
hypocrites are patronized in their self-delusion;  
the ruin of men's souls abetted;  
the church is corrupted; and  
the honor of Christianity is compromised.  
  
When a church neglects Scriptural discipline,   
it is **cherishing a viper in its bosom!**  
  
  
  
**He has some secret source of happiness**  
  
It is highly incumbent upon Christians, to take care   
against **a worldly spirit**. They are in extreme peril   
of losing the power of godliness from their hearts, and   
joining the number of those, of whom it is said, in the   
expressive language of Paul, that "**they mind earthly   
things!**"   
  
Such earthlings look upon the possession of wealth as "the   
one thing needful." Wealth is their chief object of pursuit,   
the chief source of happiness. Nothing modifies or mitigates   
their desire for riches. They are of the earth, earthly!   
  
Now certainly a Christian is, or ought to be, of another spirit   
than this! He should be industrious, frugal, and persevering   
in his attention to the concerns of this world. But still there   
should be in his mind, an ultimate and supreme regard for  
the possession of everlasting life. He ought not to be slothful   
in business; but then he must be fervent in spirit, serving the   
Lord. He should be seen to unite the 'diligent worker' and   
'sincere Christian'—and to be busy for both worlds.   
  
The men of this world should be constrained to say of him,   
"This man is as attentive to business, and as diligent in it   
as we are; but we can perceive in all he does, an inflexible   
regard to morality, and an invariable reference to piety. We   
can discover no lack of diligence or prudence; but it is perfectly   
evident, that **his heart and highest hope are in heaven.** He is   
neither so elated in **prosperity**, nor so depressed in **adversity**,   
as we are. **He has some secret source of happiness**, of which   
we are not possessed! His eye is upon some driving force,  
which we do not recognize."   
  
What a testimony!   
  
Who can obtain a higher one?   
  
Who should seek less?   
  
  
  
  
No prevalence of **'custom'** can make that   
right, which in itself is wrong. The standard   
of a Christian is the Bible; and whatever is   
opposed to that, he must avoid and abhor.   
  
  
  
  
**Young Christians** should be very watchful against   
the sins to which the ardor and inexperience of   
their years may expose them. They should flee   
youthful lusts, and be very cautious to abstain   
from vanity and self-conceit.  
  
  
  
**That Cain-like spirit!**  
  
**"Am I my brother's keeper?"** Gen 4:9  
  
This was an inquiry suitable enough in the lips of a   
murderer—but most unsuitable and inconsistent from   
a Christian. Love should induce us to WATCH over one   
another. We are brought into fellowship for the very  
purpose of being keepers of each other. We are to   
watch over our brethren—and admonish and reprove   
them as circumstances may require.   
  
I do not mean that we should pry into each other's   
secrets, or be busy-bodies in other men's matters—for   
that is forbidden by God and abominable in the sight   
of man. Much less are they to assume authority over   
each other, and act the part of proud and tyrannical   
inquisitors. But still we are to "exhort one another   
daily, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness   
of sin." We are not to allow sin to be committed, or   
duty to be omitted by a brother, without affectionately   
admonishing him. What can be more incumbent, more   
obligatory, than this? Can we indeed love anyone, and   
at the same time see him do that which we know will   
injure him—without entreating him to desist? "Brethren,   
if any man is overtaken in a fault, you who are spiritual   
restore such a one in the spirit of meekness."   
  
Let us then take heed against **that Cain-like spirit**   
which is too prevalent in our churches, and which leads   
many to act as if their fellow-members were no more  
to them than the stranger at the ends of the earth.   
  
I know no duty more neglected than this. It is one   
of the most prevailing defects of Christians. Many a   
backslider would have been prevented from going far   
astray, if, in the very first stages of his declension,   
some brother, who had observed his critical state, had   
faithfully and affectionately admonished and warned   
him. What shame, and anguish, and disgrace, would   
the offender himself have been spared, and what   
dishonor and scandal would have been averted   
from the church—by **this one act of faithful love!**   
  
I am aware it is **a difficult and self-denying duty**, but   
that cannot excuse its neglect. Neglect of it violates   
the law of Christ. Love will enable us to perform it.  
  
  
**The cardinal virtue**  
  
"So now I am giving you a new commandment:   
**Love each other.** Just as I have loved you, you  
should love each other. By this all men will  
know that you are My disciples, if you love  
one another." Joh 13:34-35  
  
Love is enforced by our Lord as the identifying law   
of His kingdom. By this we learn that the subjects   
of Christ are to be known and distinguished among   
men—by their mutual affection.   
  
The dispensation of Jesus Christ is a system of most   
wonderful, most mysterious grace! It is the manifestation,   
commendation, and perfection of divine love. It originated   
in the love of the Father, and is accomplished by the love   
of the Son. Jesus was an 'incarnation of love' in our world.  
He was **love living, breathing, speaking, acting,** among   
men!   
  
His **birth** was the nativity of love!   
  
His **teachings** were the words of love!   
  
His **miracles** were the wonders of love!   
  
His **tears** were the meltings of love!   
  
His **crucifixion** was the agonies of love!   
  
His **resurrection** was the triumph of love!  
  
Hence it was natural, that love should be **the   
cardinal virtue** in the character of His people,   
and that it should be the law which regulates   
their conduct towards each other.   
  
Jesus has made His love to us, not only the  **motive** of our love to each other—but the  **pattern** of our love to each other. "My command   
is this: Love each other **as I have loved you**."   
  
We bound to love one another, in spite of all   
those little infirmities of character and conduct   
which we daily discover in our fellow Christians.  
  
  
  
**Let your light shine!**  
  
"**Let your light shine** before men, that they may  
see your good deeds and praise your Father in  
heaven." Mat 5:16  
  
In order to comply with this, we must . . .  
act consistently with our profession;  
excel in the observance of social duties;  
abound in mercy;  
be most exact in performing all our promises;   
live in a most peaceable and neighborly manner;  
perform every office of kindness which can please or benefit;   
and set an example of industry, honesty, and generosity.  
  
  
  
**Frigid zone, or torrid zone?**  
  
The fact is, that some people's religion is of that   
weak, unhealthy kind.  
  
Those who have only 'head knowledge'—dwell in   
the **frigid zone** of Christianity; and those who   
have only 'feeling'—occupy the **torrid zone**. The   
former are frozen amid mere cold and heartless   
speculation; the latter are scorched amid wild   
fanaticism.  
  
How much more real enjoyment of the truth is   
possessed by him who clearly and comprehensively   
understands it! Every Christian should endeavor to   
unite the **knowledge of a good theologian** with   
the **experience of a real believer**. In order to   
accomplish this, we should set apart time not   
only for **reading**—but **studying** the Scriptures.  
  
  
  
**The most hopeless of all human undertakings**  
  
"Now the natural man doesn't receive the things of God's  
Spirit, for they are foolishness to him, and he **can't** know  
them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1Co 2:14

The hearts of men are fully set to do evil. We find   
them taken up, occupied, influenced, and governed,  
by the palpable and visible things of the present life.  
  
And our business as Christians, is to engage them in   
constant resistance to the undue influence of seen   
and temporal things, by a vigorous faith in the things   
that are unseen and eternal. Our aim and labor are,   
by the power of the unseen world to come, to deliver   
them from the spell of the present state, with whose   
pageantry they are enamored, and under whose   
fascination they are well pleased to continue. And   
all the while they are so occupied by the pursuits of   
business, so engrossed by the cares, comforts, and   
trials of life; and are in such breathless haste to   
pursue, such distracting bustle to possess, and   
such ardent hope to enjoy—the various objects   
of their earthly desires, that when we call their   
attention to serious godliness, as the one thing   
needful, we are deemed **intrusive, audacious,   
and troublesome.**Even when we have succeeded in gaining a hearing   
and arresting attention, we have to contend not only   
with an indisposition to receive the truth—but a   
determined hostility against it.   
  
To those who are naturally disposed to think well   
of themselves—we have to produce a sense of utter   
worthlessness and depravity!  
  
To those who will only admit only a few imperfections   
and infirmities—we have to displace their feeling of   
self-esteem, by one of self-condemnation and   
self-abhorrence!  
  
To these carnal minds and hearts, we offer salvation   
upon terms which leave not the smallest room for   
self-congratulation, or the operation of pride.   
  
Indeed to carry such a message as frequently excites   
disgust, calls forth the bitterest enmity of the human   
heart, and arouses all its self-love in determined   
hostility!   
  
The salvation exhibited in the gospel is not only   
opposed to the **pride** of sinful man, but also to   
the evil **passions** of fallen man. It requires the   
excision of sins dear as our right hand, the   
surrender of objects which have enamored our   
whole soul, the breaking up of habits which   
have grown and strengthened with age.  
  
Who can pluck the worldling from the whirlpool of   
earthly-mindedness, which sucks down so many?  
Who can rescue our hearers from the ruinous   
fascinations of Mammon? Who can make inroads  
upon the money-loving, money-grasping spirit of   
this ungodly age?  
  
To carry on the ministry of the gospel in this revolted   
world, with the intention and desire of recovering its   
carnal inhabitants from sin and Satan—must appear to   
every reflecting mind **the most hopeless of all human   
undertakings**—apart from the aid of the Holy Spirit.   
  
The Holy Spirit alone, can induce us to continue in   
the ministry another hour. Without His agency, we   
would retire in utter despair!

**Eternal, immutable truth!**

The God of truth Himself has placed the Bible on   
the seat of majesty in the temple of truth, and has   
called upon all systems of philosophy to fall down   
and do it homage.   
  
This is our subject—**eternal, immutable truth!**  
  
Truth given pure from its Divine Source, and bearing   
with it the evidence and impress of its own Omniscient   
Author. O what, compared with the truths of Scripture,  
are the loftiest and noblest of the sciences?   
  
Chemistry, with its beautiful combinations and affinities;   
or astronomy, with its astounding numbers, magnitudes,   
distances, and revolutions, of worlds; or geology, with its   
marvelous and incalculable dates of bygone ages? What is  
matter, inert or organized, however diversified, classified,   
or combined with its laws of necessity, compared with minds   
and souls, and the laws of moral truth by which their actions   
are regulated? What is nature, compared with the God of   
nature? What are the heavens and the earth, compared with   
the 'marvelous mind' which looks out upon them through   
the organ of vision, as from a window commanding the   
grand and boundless prospect? What is the fleeting term   
of man's existence upon earth, with its little cycles of   
care, sorrow, and labor, compared with the eternal ages   
through which the soul holds on her course of deathless   
existence? The works of **creation** are a dim and twilight   
manifestation of God's nature, compared with the grandeur   
and more perfect medium of **redemption**.

**Our teaching**  
  
"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we  
**persuade** men." 2Co 5:11  
  
Though a careful analysis of the text should form   
the basis of almost all our sermons, there must be   
something more than mere exegesis, however clear,   
correct, and instructive.   
  
We have to do not only with a **dark intellect** that   
needs to be informed—but with a **hard heart** that   
needs to be impressed, and a **torpid conscience**   
that needs to be awakened! We have to make our   
hearers feel that in the great business of godliness,   
there is much to be **done**—as well as much to be   
**known**. We must impart knowledge, for light is as   
essential to the growth of piety in the spiritual world,   
as it is to the growth of vegetation in the natural one.   
The analogy holds good in another point, we must not   
only let in light—but add great and vigorous labor to   
carry on the culture. We must therefore rise from   
exegesis into—exhortation, warning, and admonition.   
  
The apostle's manner is the right one, "Whom we   
preach, **warning** every man and teaching every man   
in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect   
in Christ Jesus." We must not only **direct**—but **impel**   
our hearers.   
  
They all know far more than they practice of the Bible;  
the head is generally far in advance of the heart; and   
our great business is to persuade, to entreat, to beseech.   
  
We have to deal with a dead, heavy, lethargic **mind!**   
Yes more, we have to overcome a stout resistance,   
and to move a reluctant **heart!** When we find every   
sinner we address, acting in opposition to the dictates   
of his judgment, and the warnings of his conscience,   
as well as to the testimony of Scripture; sacrificing the   
interests of his immortal soul to the vanities of the   
world, and the corruptions of his heart; madly bent   
upon his ruin, and rushing to the precipice from which   
he will take a fatal leap into perdition; can we, in that   
case, be satisfied with merely explaining, however   
clearly, and demonstrating, however conclusively,   
the truths of Scripture? "We **implore** you on Christ's   
behalf—Be reconciled to God."   
  
**Our teaching** should . . .  
be perspicuous and impressive,  
command the attention,   
instruct the judgment,  
engage the affections, and  
awaken the conscience.  
  
  
  
**The Christian minister**  
  
**The Christian minister** is the spiritual shepherd of  
the flock. He has to increase not their knowledge   
only—but also their holiness, love, and spirituality.   
He has to aid them in performing all the branches   
of duty, and in cultivating all the graces of   
sanctification.  
  
A lack of powerful, eloquent, yet simple and   
sincere exhortation—is among the greatest   
deficiencies of the modern pulpit.  
  
  
  
**The mainspring of all our power in the pulpit**  
  
We are weak in the pulpit, because we are weak in   
the closet. An earnest pastor will discipline his heart  
—for there, within, is the spring of energy, the seat   
of impulse, and the source of power. If the heart   
beats feebly, the whole circulation must be sluggish,   
and the frame inert. So it is with us ministers—our   
own personal godliness is **the mainspring of all our   
power in the pulpit**. We are feeble as preachers,   
because we are feeble as Christians. Whatever   
other deficiencies we have, the chief of them all   
lies in our hearts. We have too much forgotten   
that the fount of eloquence is in the heart; and   
that it is feeling which gives to words and   
thoughts their power.   
  
Lukewarmness can excite no ardor, originate no   
activity, produce no effect—it benumbs whatever   
it touches. If we enquire what were the sources   
of the energy, and the springs of the activity, of   
the most successful ministers of Christ, we shall  
find that they lay in the ardor of their devotion.   
They were men of prayer and of faith. They dwelt   
upon the mount of communion with God, and came   
down from it like Moses to the people, radiant with   
the glory on which they had themselves been   
intently gazing. They stationed themselves where   
they could look at unseen and eternal things, and   
came with the stupendous visions fresh in their   
view, and preached under the impression of what   
they had just seen and heard. They drew their   
thoughts and made their sermons from their   
minds and from their books—but they breathed   
life and power into them from their hearts, and   
in their closets!   
  
Trace Whitfield in his career, and you will see how   
beaten was the road between his pulpit and his closet  
—the grass was not allowed to grow in that path. This   
was in great part the secret of his power. He was mighty  
in public, because in his retirement he had clothed   
himself, so to speak, with Omnipotence. He reflected   
the luster he had caught in the Divine presence; and   
its attraction was irresistible.   
  
If then we would see a revival of the power of the   
pulpit, we must first of all see a revival in the piety   
of those who occupy it!   
  
  
  
**What is meant by an earnest ministry?**   
  
In the first place then, earnestness implies **the selection of some ONE object of special pursuit, and a vivid perception of its value and importance.** It is next to impossible for the mind to be intently employed, or the heart to be very deeply engaged, on a multiplicity of objects at once. We have not energy enough to be so divided and distributed. Our feelings to run with force must flow pretty much in one channel—our attention must be concentrated, our purpose settled, our energy exerted—upon one thing, or we can do nothing effectually. The earnest man is a man of one idea, and that one idea occupies, possesses, and fills his soul. To every other claimant upon his time, and interest, and labor, he says, "Stand aside! I am engaged, I cannot attend to you; something else is waiting for me." To that one thing he is committed.   
  
There may be many subordinate matters among which he divides any surplus water—but the current flows through one channel, and turns one great wheel. This "one thing I do," is his plan and resolution. Many wonder at his choice, many condemn it—no matter, he understands it, approves it, and pursues it, notwithstanding the ignorance which cannot comprehend it, and the diversity of taste which cannot admire it. He is no double-minded man, unstable in all his ways, whose preference and purpose are shaken by every cross gale of opinion. It is nothing to him what others do, or what they say as to what he does—he must do that, whatever else he leaves undone. No one can be in earnest who has not thus made up his mind; and he who has, and is resolutely bent upon an object, keeps it constantly before his mind. His attention is so strongly and tenaciously fixed upon it, that even at the greatest distance, "like the Egyptian pyramids to travelers, it appears to him with a luminous distinctness, as if it were near, and beguiles the toilsome length of labor and enterprise by which he must reach it." It is so conspicuous before him that he does not deviate a step from the right direction, he ever hears a voice calling him onward, and every movement and every day brings him nearer to the end of his journey. Break in upon him at any moment, you know where you will find him, and how he will be employed.   
  
This is the first part of the description of an earnest minister—he too has selected his object, and made up his mind concerning it, and insulating it from all others, sets it clearly and distinctly before his mind.  
  
Earnestness implies that the subject has not only been selected—but that it has taken full possession of the mind, and has kindled towards it an intense desire of the heart. It is something more than a correct theory and logical deductions; more than mere exercise of the intellect, and the play of the imagination. Earnestness means that the understanding having selected and appreciated its object, has pressed all the faculties of both mind and body to join in the pursuit of it. It urges the soul onward in its career of action at such a speed that it is set on fire by the velocity of its own motion. The object of an earnest man is never for any long period of time absent from his thoughts. He meditates on it by day, and dreams of it by night—it meets him in his solitary walks as some bright vision which he loves to contemplate, and it comes over him in company with such power that he cannot avoid making it the topic of his conversation, until he appears in the eyes of those who have no sympathy with him, as an enthusiast.   
  
His ministry is sought with the obligation of a principle, and the ardor of a passion. It is impressed upon his whole character, and is inseparable from his conduct.  
  
  
  
**The great difficulty**  
  
**The great difficulty** in the Christian ministry, is that we   
have to deal with those who are unwilling to be saved, and   
to persuade the sinful, proud, and stubborn hearts of men,   
to surrender to holiness and grace. The faithful pastor carries   
the offer of infinite and ineffable blessedness, but it is to men   
who have no taste for that species of felicity. His would be an   
easy office, did he find men everywhere predisposed to close   
with the proposals of infinite benevolence. But wherever he   
goes he meets with hearts not only indifferent, but hostile,   
to his message. The parable which represents the excuses   
made for not coming to the marriage feast, is still applicable   
to men in reference to the invitations of the gospel—men   
are as they ever were, too busy, or too well satisfied with   
their enjoyments and possessions, to care about salvation.   
They are madly set upon the objects of the present world.   
  
They are **asleep**, and need to be roused.   
They are **careless**, and need to be interested.   
They are **indolent**, and need to be stimulated.  
And it is with the greatest difficulty we can engage   
their attention to the invisible realities of eternity.   
  
No one who leaves out of view the desperate   
wickedness of the human heart, can form a true   
estimate of the nature, design, and difficulties   
of the pastoral office. And the reason why there   
is so little of hard labor, and intense earnestness,   
and beseeching entreaty, in the ministers of the   
gospel, is, that there is the lack of a deep conviction,  
or proper consideration, of the resistance to their   
endeavors in the sinner's heart, which is perpetually   
meeting them.  
  
  
  
  
**Time is ever rolling on**, and carrying us upon   
its rapid and resistless torrent towards eternity.

**This heavenly light of truth**

"All **Scripture** is inspired by God, and is **useful**for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training  
in righteousness, so that the man of God may  
be thoroughly equipped for every good work."  
2Ti 3:16-17

**The word of God** is the sword of the Spirit   
by which He slays our corruptions, and the   
fire by which He purifies our souls.

The doctrines of Scripture are facts, which involve  
corresponding emotions and principles of action,   
and must, from their very nature, if believed, be  **operative upon the heart and the life.**  
  
If the doctrines of Scripture . . .  
exert no influence,  
carry with them no practical weight,  
exert no moral power,  
they are not truly believed.   
  
The doctrines of Scripture are at once . . .  
the source of consolation, and  
the means of sanctification.   
  
The doctrines of Scripture . . .  
come into the **mind** as knowledge,   
produce peace and love in the **heart**,   
spread the beauties of holiness over   
the **character** and **conduct**.   
  
The doctrines of Scripture are light; and like the   
rays of the sun, they **sustain life** at the root of   
the vine, and **produce fruit** on its branches.  
  
**This heavenly light of truth** gives . . .  
spiritual vitality to the soul,  
and holy conduct to the life.  
  
"The Word of God is living and active!   
Sharper than any double-edged sword, it  
penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit,  
joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts  
and attitudes of the heart." Heb 4:12

**Your adversary!**  
  
"Be sober, be vigilant; because **your adversary**  
the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking  
whom he may devour." 1Pe 5:8-9  
  
What a description of **your adversary!** One who . . .  
for power is a "lion,"   
for cruelty and rage, a "roaring lion,"   
for activity, "walking about,"   
for diligence, "seeking" out his prey,   
for destructive purposes, "seeking whom he may devour."   
  
Satan's **power**, though limited and restrained, is very  
great. His **trickery** is equal to his power. His **malignity**is not inferior to either. The very idea that this cunning  
foe that may be near us at any moment, unseen, and   
therefore unnoticed, and may be preparing some new   
kind of attack, is indeed sufficient to alarm us, and to   
put us upon the best means of averting the danger.  
  
"Be vigilant!" Watchfulness is an essential duty of the   
Christian life—none is more necessary—none is more   
frequently or more solemnly enjoined. Who that is   
asleep can defend himself against a lion? How cautiously,  
would we walk, if we were in a country where wild beasts   
are common, and saw the footprints, and actually heard   
the roar of a lion! Such is our situation! See to it, then,   
that you do walk vigilantly—looking all round, watching   
every object, lest it conceal the enemy! Be vigilant over . . .  
your trials,  
your comforts,   
your occupations,  
your tastes,  
your pleasures,  
your thoughts,  
your desires,  
your besetting sins,  
and especially, watch your hearts with all diligence!  
  
An unwatchful Christian is sure to be an unsuccessful one.   
  
  
  
**One of Satan's masterpieces**  
  
"This great dragon—the ancient serpent called the Devil,   
or Satan, **the one deceiving the whole world**—was thrown  
down to the earth with all his angels." Rev 12:9  
  
It is **one of Satan's masterpieces** to induce men to take   
some one truth of Scripture, and to magnify its importance   
beyond all due bounds, and to exalt it not only above all   
other truths—but to the utter exclusion of them, thus   
founding error upon truth, and heresies upon the sacred   
Scriptures.  
  
"He was a murderer from the beginning and has always  
hated the truth. There is no truth in him. When he lies,  
it is consistent with his character; for **he is a liar** and  
the father of lies." Joh 8:44  
  
  
  
**Gratified by genius, eloquence, and oratory?**  
  
"Take heed therefore how you hear!" Luk 8:18  
  
Let us never forget that to have our souls profited,  
that is, to be spiritually improved in knowledge, faith,   
holiness, joy, and love—is the proper end of hearing   
sermons—and not merely to have our taste **gratified  
by genius, eloquence, and oratory**.  
  
A right end and object in hearing the Word of God   
is necessary, for our souls to be in a healthful state.  
  
We live in an age when talent is idolized, and genius   
adored. With too many it is not the truth of God that   
is thought of, valued, and delighted in—but the talent   
of man with which it is set forth. **To constitute a man a Christian**  
  
"Let this mind be in you, which was also in  
Christ Jesus." Php 2:5  
  
Jesus Christ is the only Teacher who ever made   
a 'similarity of disposition to Himself'—a test and   
badge of discipleship. He is not only the teacher,  
but the pattern of His own religion. His example   
is an essential part of His system.   
  
**To constitute a man a Christian**, he must not only   
receive the doctrines of our Lord—but must imbibe   
His very spirit. He must not only believe all He   
taught—but he must **live** as He lived, **think** as He   
thought, and **feel** as He felt. Christ's mind must   
be in his mind, as far as he can contain it, and   
Christ's heart must be in his heart.  
  
To be a Christian, it is not only necessary we should   
adopt Christ's doctrines,  
comply with His ordinances,  
observe His sacraments,  
associate with His church,  
espouse His cause,  
conform outwardly to His conduct;  
but we must have His very mind in us! The prevailing   
spirit and disposition of His mind, must be ours also.   
Unless the eye of man sees the image of Christ upon   
our character, and the eye of God sees the mind of   
Christ in our soul, we are not acknowledged as   
true Christians.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in  
Christ Jesus." Php 2:5  
  
And what was the mind of Christ?   
  
How holy was his **mind!** Not the shadow of sin, nor   
the least taint of moral evil ever passed over it, to   
becloud or pollute its immaculate purity. His mind   
was the seat of the most ineffable benevolence.   
  
His **heart** was the very temple of love—nothing   
malevolent, vindictive, or cruel, ever found a   
place there.   
  
All His **actions**, **words**, and **feelings** were the   
workings of incomparable love.   
  
His **humility** was equal to His purity and benevolence.  
  
Where and in whom, is to be seen the union of   
holiness, benevolence, and condescension, which   
formed the character of the Savior?   
  
Is His **holiness** to be found in those professors who,   
though they are free from external vice and immorality  
—allow the corruptions of their heart to go unmortified;   
and who indulge, instead of crucifying—the passions   
and lusts of the flesh?   
  
Is His **benevolence** to be found in those who are so   
fond of the world, so grasping, and so hoarding, that   
little or nothing can be extorted from their reluctant   
hands for the salvation of sinners, and the glory of God?   
  
And then where is His **humility** to be seen in His followers?  
Is it to be found in those who will have their rights, and   
all their rights, at whatever cost of principle or peace; who   
will not tolerate the least offense, without all the boilings   
of wounded pride, and mortified vanity?   
  
Oh, is this the mind that was in Christ?   
  
"Let this mind be in you, which was also in  
Christ Jesus." Php 2:5  
  
  
  
**The most difficult lesson**  
  
"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in  
humility consider others better than yourselves." Php 2:3  
  
The design of this passage is to enforce the injunctions to   
repress all selfish considerations of our own rights, interests,   
and dignity—and in the exercise of a kind and condescending   
regard to the welfare of others—to forego for their advantage   
what we might claim for our own.   
  
The disposition which the apostle enjoins is that particular   
species of Christian virtue which which consists of a meek   
humility, and benevolent condescension for the sake of   
promoting the comfort and interests of our fellow Christians.   
And because this is **the most difficult lesson for our proud   
and selfish hearts to learn in the school of Christ**, he   
enforces it by the power of the most cogent and splendid   
example which the universe contains—that of our Lord   
Jesus—in His striking condescension, and profound humility.   
  
  
  
**The most sublime doctrines**  
  
The seat of all true religion is in the soul. The  **soul** forms the **character** and guides the **conduct**   
by the power of an inward principle of spiritual life.   
  
There is an intimate connection between Christian   
truth and Christian practice. The truth is employed   
by the sacred writers to enforce Christian practice.  **The most sublime doctrines** of our holy Christian   
religion, are **all practical in their design and   
tendency**. They are not mere theory or academics,  
but are "the truth which is according to godliness."  
  
  
  
**The religion which God demands**  
  
Never forget, my dear friends, that **the religion which   
God demands** of you, and delights in and will accept,   
is a religion of the heart—a religion of . . .  
penitence and faith in Christ,  
love to God,  
hope of heaven,  
hatred of sin,  
charity to man;  
all existing in the soul as so many godly affections,   
called forth in the actions of a holy life, and rendered   
vocal in words of prayer and praise.   
  
  
  
**The palm tree!**  
  
"The godly will flourish like **palm trees.**" Psa 92:12  
  
**The palm tree** is indigenous to tropical and other   
warm climates. It grows to a considerable height and   
size, and presents a beautiful appearance. Its fruits   
are much valued and are eaten both fresh and   
preserved, and are also pressed for syrup and wine.   
  
But it is not for its fruit alone that the palm tree is so   
valuable. From the boughs, which are yearly lopped   
off from the lower parts of the stem, are made baskets,  
cages, ropes, and sacks; from the leaves are made   
mattresses, sandals, etc. It is an evergreen, and   
lives to an extreme old age—the wood is durable   
and much used.   
  
How striking an emblem of a godly man. He shall   
flourish like **the palm tree!  
  
  
  
Not how many tears we can shed**  
  
The emotional part of true godliness may be, and is   
by many, overestimated. The question is not merely   
what we can feel—but what we can do, for Christ;   
**not how many tears we can shed**—but how many   
sins we can mortify; not what raptures we can   
experience—but what self-denial we can practice;   
not what happy frames we can enjoy—but what   
holy duties we can perform; not simply how much   
we are pleased at the sermon—but how much we   
can exhibit of the mind of Jesus in our communion   
with our fellow-men; not only how far above earth   
we can rise to the bliss of heaven—but how much   
of the love and purity of heaven we can bring down   
to earth. In short, not how much of rapt feeling we   
can indulge—but how much of godly principle we   
can bring to bear on our whole conduct.  
  
  
**The Scriptures should not be read**  
  
Some prescribe to themselves the task of reading   
so many chapters of the Bible every day. But **the   
Scriptures should not be read**, merely for the   
sake of being read.   
  
It is not the **quantity** of Scripture read, but the   
**quantity** studied, understood, and applied, that   
does us good. One verse pondered upon, felt,   
and applied, is better than a whole chapter or   
book, read negligently, thoughtlessly, and   
without self-application.  
  
A real, devout, and intelligent study of the Scriptures,   
is essential to great progress in godliness. SEARCH the   
Scriptures daily. Meditate on the Word of God day and   
night—and put it into practice. Study the Word of God   
with prayer for divine teaching. Take up David's petition,   
"Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in Your law."   
  
There is much corruption in your heart generating a false   
bias, and beclouding your judgment—and likely therefore   
to lead you to misconception and error. Beseech of God   
to send forth His Spirit into your heart to purify it from   
depravity, that you may be better preserved from error.   
We must give up all preconceived ideas, all prejudices,   
all pride of intellect, and go in humility to the Scriptures   
as learners.  
  
  
**Guard your heart!**  
  
"Above all else, **guard your heart**; for out of it  
are the issues of life." Pro 4:23  
  
The heart is . .  
the great vital spring of the soul,  
the fountain of actions,  
the center of principle,  
the seat of motives  
  
The heart is the center of the thoughts and  
feelings—out of which conduct comes.   
  
The heart must be the first, chief, constant object   
of solicitude to the Christian. It is this which God   
sees, and because God principally looks at it, the  
heart must be ever uppermost in our concern.   
  
To keep the heart must mean exerting ourselves   
with great earnestness, in dependence upon Divine   
grace, to preserve it in a good state; laboring to   
preserve its vitality, vigor, and purity.   
  
The heart is the citadel of the soul. If this is  
neglected, the enemy at the gates will soon be  
in and take possession. Set a watch, therefore,   
upon the heart. Let the sentinel be never off   
duty, nor sleeping at his post.   
  
Keep out evil thoughts, and unholy affections, and   
vile imaginations. Without great vigilance they will   
elude observation. As soon as an enemy of this kind   
is detected, he must be seized and made captive,   
until every thought is brought into subjection to   
Christ.   
  
As the state of the heart is, so is the man in   
reality—and before God. **Guard your heart!**Christians should have a clear understanding, a deep   
conviction, and a very powerful impression, that they   
are called not only to holiness and happiness—but   
also to usefulness. Yet they are sometimes so much   
taken up with the enjoyment of their own personal   
religion and Christian privileges, as to sit down in   
luxurious ease and indolently enjoy the happiness   
to which they are brought. But let them know and   
remember, that **one of the strongest evidences   
of our own salvation, is a deep concern and a   
vigorous activity for the salvation of others.  
  
  
The concentrated nutriment of the divine life!**

In Scripture, there is no knowledge which is purely   
academic—**all, all is practical**. Every part is "a doctrine   
according to godliness." The design of the Bible, is   
"that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly   
furnished unto all good works."   
  
Truth is but a means to an end, and that end is holiness.   
  
Everyone of us ought to study our Bibles with that prayer   
upon our lips, "Sanctify me by Your truth; Your word is   
truth." We should grow in our understanding of the   
example of Jesus—that we might be more like Him.   
  
A desire to know merely to know, is curiosity.  
A desire to know in order to **do**, is godliness.  
  
Never was there an age when Bibles were more widely   
circulated, and never an age when they were less read!   
  
Magazines, periodicals, and books of all kinds have   
come in upon us like a flood, which in many cases has   
almost swept away the Bible. It is Bible truth from its   
own source, which is **the 'concentrated nutriment' of   
the divine life!** It will be found that they are usually the   
strongest, healthiest, and most rapidly growing of the   
children of God, who live most upon the sincere, that is,   
the pure and "unadulterated" milk of the Word of God.   
  
The writings of men are very useful in their place when   
they lead us to the Word of God. But too many people   
allow themselves to be kept away by these writings,   
from the fountains of pure truth—the sacred Scriptures!

**Scriptural joy**  
  
**Scriptural joy** makes . . .  
duty cheerful,   
trials light,   
temptations powerless, and   
worldly amusements insipid.  
  
"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and  
peace as you trust in Him." Rom 15:13  
  
  
  
**Faith**  
  
"We live by faith, not by sight." 2Co 5:7  
  
**Faith** is the root of all true piety. Christians need faith  
for sanctification, consolation, and perseverance. Every   
act of the spiritual life is an act of faith; every step in   
the spiritual walk is a step of faith. The Christian's   
course is not one of doing merely, but of believing.  
  
His **prayers** are the breathings of faith;   
his **works** are the actings of faith;   
his **penitence** is the tear of faith;   
his **joy** is the smile of faith;   
his **hopes** are the anticipations of faith;  
his **fears** are the tremblings of faith;   
his **strength** is the confidence of faith;   
his **submission** is the acquiescence of faith.   
  
**Faith** is . . .  
the **eye** that looks at Christ;  
the **foot** that moves to Him;  
the **hand** that receives Him;  
the **mouth** that feeds upon Him.  
  
It is not only by the activity of obedience, but by   
the silent and passive power of dependence, that   
the Christian is strong and victorious.   
  
Here is the reason why so many professors are so   
worldly and so weak; why they make such little   
progress, and such small attainments—they are   
so much under the dominion of sense, are so   
almost wholly given up to **a life of sight**, that   
they have neither time nor inclination to look   
at the things that are unseen and eternal.   
  
There is in them no habitual looking to Christ, no   
abiding in Him, no vivid consciousness that all their   
springs are in Him, and that it is from His fullness   
they are to receive necessary grace.   
  
We must prefer **the invisible realities of eternity**,   
to the visible things of time; and amid all that is . . .  
dazzling to sense,  
gratifying to appetite,  
and dear to passion,  
**by faith, spend a life of . . .**  
self-denial,  
mortification of sin, and  
separation from the world.  
  
Be this then your sincere and earnest prayer, my dear   
friends, "**Lord, increase our faith!**" Be willing to have the   
world displaced from your soul, to make room for the   
objects of faith! Be ever ready to come from **the dazzling   
glare of earthly scenes**, to dwell in the calm and holy light   
of faith. Study the Scriptures, and meditate much upon their   
contents. Frequent and devout converse with the objects of   
faith, is the best way to have it increased.   
  
Watch diligently against the influence of those objects   
which have a fatal tendency to eclipse faith's light, to   
obstruct its operation, and enfeeble its life—namely  
sensual pleasure; eager pursuit of the world; and a too   
intimate converse with those who mind earthly things.  
  
  
  
**An active, powerful, and craving principle**  
  
"We live by faith, not by sight." 2Co 5:7  
  
Do not the great bulk of those who call themselves  
Christians appear to be living far too much by sight  
—and not by faith in eternal realities?  
  
Not indeed that they are immersed in vice or amusing  
gaieties; but how deeply sunk in worldly care, how taken  
up with worldly comforts! No matter how pure, and how  
innocent the things may be in themselves, if they hide   
scriptural objects from the eye of faith—they are   
unlawful, as to their influence, when they do this.   
  
Our profession implies a disposition, and a habit of seeking   
our highest objects of interest and delight, in things unseen  
and eternal—a daily converse of the soul with God and Christ;   
with heaven and eternity. He who is thus walking will not   
allow himself to be long out of sight of the cross. He will not   
wander far from God in quest of happiness. He will not shut   
himself up amid terrestrial pleasures, however rational or   
innocent. He has a new principle in his nature, beside sense   
and reason—for he has faith. And faith is **an active, powerful,   
and craving principle**, which aspires after something higher,   
and better, and more enduring—than anything he can see, or   
touch, or taste!  
  
He is the subject of wants and woes, which only faith can   
relieve and mitigate. Neither sense nor reason can assist   
him to throw off his load of guilt, or give satisfaction to   
desires, which the world is too poor to gratify.   
  
Here, therefore, on this terrestrial globe, he finds himself   
a prisoner, sighing for escape from the dark and limited   
region which he inhabits—and it is only faith that can open   
for him the doors, and make way for his excursion into **the   
invisible realities of eternity!**Alas! how small are our attainments in this divine life of   
faith! How much are we occupied and engrossed by things   
of time and sense.   
  
What do **you** know of this life of faith?   
  
You are all living by faith or sight; either upon   
heavenly things—or earthly things.   
  
On what is **your soul** living?   
  
What is it that supplies **your comfort**?   
  
Where does your spirit go daily to quench her thirst   
after **happiness**—to the breaking cisterns of 'earthly   
good'—or to the fountains of living waters?   
  
Sooner or later, the fullest store of the joys of earthly   
delights will be exhausted. **Pleasures, profits, honors**  
—what are they? The whole form only a kind of 'imaginary   
world', a sort of 'splendid show', like that in a dream,   
which when you awake—**all is gone!**   
  
To grasp it—is to grasp a shadow!   
  
To feed upon it—is to feed upon the wind!  
  
Christ and His salvation—heaven and eternity—are **the   
only substantial realities!** And these are the objects for   
which faith lives, and toward which it is perpetually walking.  
  
  
  
**How precious is the privilege of prayer!**  
  
**How precious is the privilege of prayer!** We   
are at freedom to pour out the utmost secrets of   
our hearts, whether of sin, sorrow, or anxiety.   
  
Some of your happiest, holiest seasons on earth   
have been spent in prayer. There you have   
communed with God! In prayer . . .  
your cares have been lightened,  
your sorrows alleviated,  
your fears dissipated,   
your souls invigorated.   
  
In prayer you have . . .  
conquered the world,  
subdued your foes,  
mortified your corruptions.   
O what hours you have spent,   
what discoveries you have made,   
what joys you have experienced!   
  
  
  
**Stumbling blocks**  
  
"We put no **stumbling block** in anyone's path."   
2Co 6:3  
  
Be very careful not to throw **stumbling blocks** in a   
Christian's path, even in little things. I do not now   
allude to immoralities and vice. But I refer to the   
lesser violations of Christian propriety; such as . . .  
the indulgence of bad dispositions;  
offences against love, gratitude, and humility;  
the practice of dishonorable business artifices;  
covetousness;  
hard-heartedness;  
indifference to the cause of Christ;  
conformity to the world in . . .  
spirit,   
entertainments,   
dress, and   
amusements.   
  
I beseech you to abstain from such things!   
  
Do not give the 'sanction of your example', or the   
'aid of your influence' to the spread of a diseased   
religious profession, in which such leprous spots   
as these are continually breaking out! "Abstain   
from all appearance of evil."  
  
You should be the first to set the example, and   
to give out a pattern of self-denial! You should   
be the leaders of the cross-bearing company!   
You should be advanced in the virtues of . . .   
forbearance,  
temperance, and  
separation from the world!  
  
You should lend your example and aid in training the   
new converts to that hardy, enduring, self-denying   
religion, which is implied in the Christian profession.  
  
"Make up your mind not to put any **stumbling block** or  
obstacle in another Christian's path." Rom 14:13  
 **Real happiness**  
  
There is more **real happiness** in the believer's mind,   
when in the very midst of poverty and trouble, he   
exercises a lively confidence in God—than the richest   
worldling on earth enjoys, when surrounded by all his   
untold wealth, and incalculable possessions.   
  
To feel our own poverty, emptiness, nothingness—and   
yet at the same time to feel in all the confidence of   
faith, our fullness in Christ and our title to that priceless   
inheritance, which God has reserved for His children,   
which is kept in heaven for them—pure and undefiled,   
beyond the reach of change and decay—is one of the   
most felicitous states of mind we can attain to in this   
world! It unites the deepest humility—with the most   
exalted and triumphant anticipations!  
  
  
  
**The life of faith**  
  
"**We live by faith**, not by sight." 2Co 5:7  
  
**The life of faith** means to be habitually influenced in the   
state of our minds and conduct, not by visible objects, but   
by the invisible realities which are revealed in the Word of   
God. It is said of Moses, "He persevered because he saw   
Him who is invisible." This is the life and walk of faith with   
respect to God—a realizing sense of His invisible presence  
—such a persuasion as leads us to all that conduct which   
He requires. This then is the life of faith—to believe that   
we are ever surrounded by an all-seeing, holy, and merciful   
God—and to conduct ourselves toward Him accordingly.

"The life I live in the body, **I live by faith** in the Son of  
God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Gal 2:20

**No exclusive time, or place, or sphere**  
  
Many professing Christians are far too limited in   
their ideas of the nature, design, and extent of   
practical religion. They act as if religion had   
nothing to do either with business, with temper,   
or with our domestic and social relations! They   
act as if religion were a mere matter of opinion  
or ceremony—a thing of the cloister, the closet,   
or the sanctuary, which is to be confined to its   
own retreats, and never to be allowed to   
approach the scenes of worldly business,   
and secular pursuits!  
  
They act as if religion were a mere rule to direct   
us how we are to behave ourselves in the house   
of God, and to regulate our worship; and which,   
having done this, has accomplished its object!   
  
Is not this, I say, the view which if we may   
judge by their behavior, many take of religion?   
But can anything be more inaccurate?   
  
True religion is a permanent, all-pervading,  
unchanging principle, possessing a kind of   
universality of nature! It must go with us,   
not only into the sanctuary of God, or into   
the closet of private devotion, but into all   
places! It must regulate our conduct, not   
only toward the church, but toward the world!   
It must operate upon us and influence us,   
not only on Sundays, but at all times! It   
must dictate, not only how we pray, and  
read the Bible—but how we buy, and sell,   
and get gain.   
  
True religion has **no exclusive time, or place,   
or sphere**, of its own—but is a matter of all   
times, places, and scenes. Though heavenly   
in her origin, her nature, and her destiny—she   
is not so thoroughly ethereal as to turn away   
from the scenes of this mundane sphere, as   
beneath her notice and unworthy of her control.   
  
Practical religion must be seen in everything!  
  
  
  
**If we are unamiable at home**  
  
The influence of religion must be seen, and its power   
felt, in making a happy home. Religion ought to give   
strength, tenderness, and sanctity—to all the   
relationships of life. It should make . . .  
husbands and wives more affectionate and devoted,  
parents more kind, judicious, and vigilant,  
children more dutiful, respectful, and attentive.  
  
**If we are unamiable at home**, there must be   
something essentially defective in our profession.   
 **Fearful instances of self-deception**  
  
The man who assured he is saved, while he is   
habitually living in the habitual neglect of known   
duty, or in the indulgence of actual sin—is one of   
the most **fearful instances of self-deception** in   
our world.   
  
The great design of the gospel, is to establish a   
God-like frame and disposition of spirit, which   
consists in righteousness and true holiness in   
the hearts of men.  
  
He who has the most confident persuasion of   
his being a Christian now, and of his going on   
to heaven hereafter, and whose confidence   
rests on good ground, will be the holiest man.  
  
  
**A heavenly-minded man**  
  
Heavenly-mindedness means the spontaneous,   
frequent, delightful, practical bent of our reflections   
toward eternal life. **A heavenly-minded man** is one   
who considers himself as a pilgrim and stranger upon   
earth. He regards heaven as his native country, and   
as instinctively turns his thoughts to it. Scarcely a day   
passes during which no thought of his mind, no glance   
of the eye of faith, turns to the glory to be revealed.   
  
Precious to him are those parts of Scripture which   
speak of the life to come, and exhibit to him, amid   
the darkness of his way—the distant lights of his   
father's house. Sermons that represent the holiness   
and happiness of heaven are delightful to his heart;   
books that describe it are congenial with his taste;   
and the songs of Zion, which sounds like the echo   
of its divine harmonies, excite all his hallowed   
sensibilities, and elevate his spirit to catch some   
of the falling rays of the excellent glory.   
  
The beautiful symbols of heavenly bliss, seize and   
fix his imagination; while his enlightened judgment   
and his holy heart, repose upon . . .  
the presence of God,  
the vision of the Lamb,  
the sinless purity,  
the eternal rest,  
the communion of the blessed,  
the fellowship of angels.  
  
**A heavenly-minded man** not only employs his   
thoughts, but sets his **affections** on things above.   
  
**A heavenly-minded man** goes farther than this, and   
**prepares** for future glory. Grace is the preparation for   
glory, and he who has most grace, is most fitted for glory.   
  
The man who is going to occupy a place in the palace,   
endeavors to acquire courtly manners, and to provide   
himself with a court dress. So the eminently spiritual   
Christian considers himself as going in to dwell in the   
palace of the King of kings, and his great business   
upon earth is to prepare himself with the qualifications   
and dress of the celestial court. And as he clearly   
perceives that the prevailing dispositions of heaven   
are purity and love, he labors to grow in holiness and   
charity. If asked, in any situation or circumstance, or   
at any period, what are you engaged in or employed   
about? his answer is, "I am dressing for heaven;   
making myself ready to go in and dwell with Christ!  
Having a post to fill in the divine palace, I am   
preparing for it by the mortification of sin, and   
a growth in grace."   
  
Such is heavenly-mindedness—but, alas! where is it   
to be found? I know where it ought to be found—in   
every professing Christian. His principles demand it,   
his profession requires it, his prospects justify it.   
  
But alas, how disgusting it is to witness the earthly  
mindedness, and to hear the worldly conversation   
of the great bulk of professing Christians—as if   
heaven were nothing more than a splendid painting   
to adorn their temples of religion, and to be looked  
at once a week; but not a glorious reality to be   
ever before their eyes . . .  
to form their character,  
to regulate their conduct,  
support them in trouble, and  
furnish their chief happiness!   
  
  
**Men's hopes always affect their conduct**  
  
"Everyone who has this hope in him purifies  
himself, just as He is pure." 1Jn 3:3  
  
A heavenly-minded man is a holy man.   
  
Heaven, being a holy state, yes, the very perfection   
of holiness; does, by a natural process, render those   
holy, who meditate upon it, believe it, hope for it, and   
long for it. **Men's hopes always affect their conduct**,   
and transform their characters into a likeness to the   
nature of the objects of their desires and expectations.   
  
How effectually guarded from temptation to lust, worldly  
mindedness, and malice—is he whose affections are strongly   
fixed upon a state of purity, spirituality, and love! Who that   
is drinking happiness from the crystal river that flows from   
the throne of God and the Lamb, can take up with the filthy   
puddle of worldly amusements?   
  
What mortification of sin,   
what conquest of besetting corruption,   
what eradication of evil tempers,   
what suppression of unholy disposition goes on,   
when the soul fixes the 'eye of faith' on unseen and   
eternal realities! Yes, what discoveries of hidden and   
unsuspected sins are made, when the light of heavenly   
glory is let into the soul!

**A sublime fiction**  
  
"Their mind is on earthly things." Php 3:19  
  
This is the description given by the apostle, of the   
predominant taste and pursuits of the men of the   
world  
  
Sadly, this also describes a large proportion of those  
who have 'professed' to come out from the world, and   
to be a people separated unto God. How engrossed are   
they, not only in the business, but in the cares, the love,   
and the enjoyment of earthly vanities. Who would imagine,   
to see their conduct, to hear their conversation, to observe   
their spirit—so undevout, and so worldly—that these were   
the men, who have heaven in their eye, their heart, their   
hope? Even to them, we would be inclined to think, that   
heaven is nothing more than . . .  
a mere name,  
**a sublime fiction**,  
a sacred vision,   
which, with all its splendor, has scarcely power   
enough to engage their thoughts and fix their   
regards. How little effect has heaven . . .  
to elevate them above a predominant earthly-mindedness,  
to comfort them in trouble,  
to minister to their happiness,  
to mortify their corruptions.  
  
Can it be that they are seeking for, and going to glory,   
honor, and immortality—who think so little about it, and   
derive so small a portion of their enjoyment from the   
expectation of it?  
  
"Their destiny is destruction,  
their god is their stomach, and  
their glory is in their shame.  
**Their mind is on earthly things**." Php 3:19

**Spirituality of mind**  
  
"For to be **carnally-minded** is death; but to be   
**spiritually-minded** is life and peace." Rom 8:6  
  
True spirituality is a living principle in the soul;   
yes, a divine life, a holy taste—whose seat and   
center is in the mind.  
  
**Spirituality of mind** is the beginning of heaven upon   
earth. What is heaven, but the absence of all that is   
carnal, and the presence and perfection of all that is   
spiritual? It is by the habitual recurrence of holy   
thoughts that the lineaments of a heavenly character   
are impressed upon the soul, and by the ardor of holy   
affections, that they acquire an unfading beauty and   
an enduring form!  
  
**Spirituality of mind** is a most blessed condition   
of the soul, much spoken of in conversation and   
in sermons; often discussed in books; frequently   
prayed for—yet little understood, and too rarely,   
at least in any high degree, possessed.  
  
The Christian loves to think on divine things;   
they suit his taste, are congenial with his   
desires, and are productive of his happiness.  
  
**Spirituality of mind** means the habitual and godly   
employment of the thoughts and affections on divine   
subjects. It is something more than . . .  
morality of conduct, however pure and exemplary;  
attendance on the means of grace, however punctual;   
liberality, however diffusive;   
zeal, however active.  
  
**Spirituality of mind** means, in addition to all this, a   
habitual devotional state of mind. It is such a minding   
of spiritual things as arises from interest and delight in   
them; such a proneness to meditate upon them as is   
produced by a strong attachment to them. The true   
indication of this state of mind, then, is to be found in   
the prevailing character and complexion of the thoughts.  
  
Thoughts are the springs of feeling, the elements of   
action, and of character. The object of our thoughts in   
this state of mind is not merely future glory, it is not   
a mere looking up into heaven, a longing and craving,   
amid the sorrows of life, after immortality and eternal   
repose; but a devout and habitual reflection on the   
whole range of divine truth . . .  
the glorious character of God;  
the person and offices of Christ;  
the wise and gracious care of a superintending Providence;  
the covenant of grace;  
the exceeding great and precious promises of the word;  
the second coming of Christ,  
with all the other varieties of spiritual subjects.  
  
Among all the objects to which the thoughts and   
affections of the spiritually-minded are directed,   
the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ stand   
preeminent . . .  
His divinity,   
His atonement,   
His intercession,   
His perfect righteousness for justification,   
His spotless example as the rule of their sanctification,   
His offices of prophet, priest and king  
—are all themes which have irresistible   
attractions for their thoughts.   
  
Nothing more decidedly indicates spirituality, than   
this habitual tendency of the thoughts to Christ!  
The degree to which our thoughts and feelings are   
drawn to the Redeemer, is the precise amount we   
possess of true spirituality of mind. To those who   
believe, Christ is precious! Jesus is the specific   
object and center of their devotional reflections.   
  
The **thoughts** of the truly spiritually-minded always   
kindle religious **affections** and lead to corresponding   
**actions**. Spirituality of mind is not mere silent   
contemplation, inactive sentimentality, passionless   
quietism. No! it is habitual and delightful **thinking**,   
producing habitual and delightful **feeling**, and   
ending in habitual holy **actions**!  
  
How would such **spirituality of mind** . . .  
lighten your cares,  
alleviate your sorrows,  
sweeten your comforts,  
sanctify your trials,  
elevate your devotions,   
anticipate heaven!   
  
How many otherwise cheerless scenes would it   
enliven—and how many gloomy seasons would it   
irradiate! What a source of perennial delight would   
it open, where all else besides, is a desert of the   
soul. Blessed state, day and night to be conversant   
with holy, heavenly, peaceful thoughts!  
  
It is a 'spurious spirituality', and one of the artifices   
by which Satan deceives and destroys unwary souls—to   
indulge in godly thoughts, and luxuriate in devotional   
feeling, while the temper is unsubdued, the corruptions   
of the heart unmortified, and the actions of the life are  
in little conformity with the word of God.  
  
When there is no disposition or tendency to indulge in   
holy thoughts, but the whole character and complexion   
of the mind are worldly; when the domestic and private   
duties of devotion are little better than heartless forms;  
when the taste in regard to sermons is rather for talent   
and elegance, than for sound evangelical truth; when the   
society of worldly men is preferred to the company of the   
godly, and their discourse is more relished than that of   
the eminently godly; when cheerfulness degenerates into   
levity, and there is no pleasure in spiritual conversation  
—in all these cases there is a sad indication of a lack of   
true spirituality of mind.  
  
"For to be **carnally-minded** is death; but to be   
**spiritually-minded** is life and peace." Rom 8:6  
  
  
 **Mortification of sin**  
"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified   
the flesh with its passions and desires." Gal 5:24  
  
We are too apt to be satisfied if the life is free   
from visible sins—forgetting that God sees and   
searches the heart.  
  
As to **mortification of sin**, we must carry   
on a more determined crucifixion of . . .  
all heart-sins,  
all evil thoughts,  
all evil feelings.  
  
  
  
**Besetting sins**  
  
"Let us throw off everything that hinders and **the  
sin which so easily besets us**." Heb 12:1  
  
Direct your attention more fixedly, and your aim   
more constantly, to the destruction of **besetting   
sins**. You know what they are, whether . . .  
lusts of the flesh, or  
lusts of the mind, or  
bad tempers toward man, or  
sinful dispositions toward God, or  
violations of piety.   
  
Let us be distinguished by a great mortification of   
**besetting sins**, which, more than anything else . . .  
distress us,   
disgrace us, and   
hindered us in our progress heavenward.   
  
No sins require . . .  
such severe mortification,  
such incessant labor,  
such earnest prayer,  
such strong faith   
for their destruction as **besetting sins**. But all   
this is necessary, for if they are not destroyed,   
they will probably destroy us.  
  
  
  
**The kind hand which smote so deeply!**  
  
(Letter to a friend who had lost a near relative)  
  
Our hearts have bled. The wound inflicted has been   
deep. We have felt that the stroke was full of anguish,   
that it went to our very souls. We will not deny that   
this is all true. We will not please ourselves with the   
delusion that the deep, deep wound which the hand   
of God has inflicted, can ever cease to bleed. But, O   
my friend! 'is there not balm in Gilead? Is there not   
a physician there?' Is not that physician our Savior;   
wise to discern, prudent to manage, strong to save?   
Has not **the kind hand which smote so deeply**,   
accompanied the stroke with many softening,   
mitigating circumstances?  
  
Oh yes! I trust we both feel that it is so. **It is God who   
has afflicted us**, the infinitely wise, compassionate, and   
faithful Jehovah, the Lord our God. And does it not argue   
great lack of confidence in Him—if we sink into despondency   
when He chastises us? Does it not show, either that we   
think we could manage things better than he can, or that   
there is something which we have not cordially submitted   
to His disposal?  
  
"And now, O God, You are the potter—and we the clay!"  
O how this thought . . .  
quells the murmurings of self-will;   
settles the restlessness of the troubled spirit;   
plucks the sting from the rod of affliction!   
  
**God knows best!**Precious truth! It is an anchor to the soul, sure and   
steadfast, which keeps it from shipwreck, amid all   
the storms and tempests of the troubled sea of life.   
  
Oh, for a firm, unwavering faith! This is all that is   
needed. By faith, we may rejoice when our beloved   
Christian friends are taken . . .  
from the **stormy ocean**—to the peaceful haven;  
from the **weary wilderness**—to the happy home;  
from the **field of battle**—to the crown of victory;   
and trace with holy courage, our way through the   
same difficulties, to the same glorious reward.  
  
But, ah! this, a firm unwavering faith, is too often   
lacking. We miss our dear friend. The **heart** which   
sympathized in all our pleasures and pains, has   
ceased to beat; the **ear** which was always open to   
listen to our afflictions and wishes, is closed; the   
kind **voice** of affection and unselfish love, is hushed;   
the **arm** which supported us, is withdrawn. It is a   
chilling thought. Cherished alone, we feel its freezing,   
benumbing influence fastening upon all the springs   
of comfort and hope, and turning every stream of joy   
into one wilderness of cold and motionless despair!  
  
But, my dear friend, we must not view our trials thus.  
We must think much and often of the blessedness of   
those whose removal we lament, of the perfection of   
the divine government, of the certainty of the promise,   
that 'all things shall work together for good to those   
who love God,' of the rapid approach of that hour which   
will unite us eternally to those in Christ whom we love,  
of the danger of creature-comforts, and of the suffering   
life on earth of our glorious High-priest and head, and   
his assurance that it is through much tribulation we must   
enter the kingdom. Oh, my dear friend, if we are Christians,   
there is a glorious prospect before us—as much of the good   
things of this life as an infinitely wise and kind Father sees   
to be best for us—and hereafter an eternity of unmingled   
and ineffable bliss!   
  
  
  
  
**God loves His children too well** to keep them one   
moment longer from His house and home above—  
than is best for His glory—and their happiness!  
  
  
  
**You are the one who has done this!**  
"Be still, and know that I am God." Such is the admonition   
which comes to you—and which comes from heaven. **It is God   
Himself who has bereaved you**—through whatever second   
causes he has inflicted the blow. Not even a sparrow falls to   
the ground without His knowledge—much less a rational and   
immortal creature. He has the keys of death, and never for a   
moment entrusts them out of His hand—the door of the   
sepulcher is never unlocked but by Himself.   
  
Though men die and drop as unheeded by many, as the fall   
of the autumnal leaf in the pathless desert—**they die not by   
chance!** Every instance of mortality, which has reduced you   
to your present sorrowful condition, is **an individual decision   
of infinite wisdom**. Whether therefore **the death of your   
husband** was slow or sudden; at home or abroad; by accident  
or disease—it was appointed, and all its circumstances arranged   
by God. Be still, therefore, and know that He is God, who does   
His will among the armies of heaven, and the inhabitants of   
earth, nor allows anyone to question Him.  
  
Bow down before Him with unqualified submission—and find   
relief in acquiescence to His wise and sovereign will.   
  
Submission forbids all passionate invective; all rebellious   
language; all bitter reflections on second causes; and all   
questionings about the wisdom, goodness, or equity of   
the God of Providence. You should not only suppress all   
murmuring, and complaining **language**—but all **thoughts**and **feelings** of this kind. Submission is that state of the   
soul under afflictive dispensations of Providence, which   
produces an acquiescence in the will of God—as just, and   
wise, and good. It expresses itself in some such manner   
as the following; "I feel and deeply feel the heavy loss I   
have sustained, and my nature mourns and weeps; but as   
I am persuaded it is the Lord's doing, who has a **right** to   
do as He pleases, and who is at the same time too **wise**to mistake, and too **benevolent** to put me to unnecessary   
pain—I endeavor to bow down to His will."   
  
"I was silent; I would not open my mouth, for **You  
are the one who has done this!**" Psa 39:9  
  
  
  
**A humble and self-abased creature**  
  
The act of humbling and abasing ourselves before God,   
is a duty of believers through every successive stage of   
their Christian career. As long as we are the subjects of   
sin—we ought also to be the subjects of contrition. Sin,   
and not merely punishment, is the ground of humiliation.   
It is the most detestable selfishness to imagine that   
because we are freed from the penal consequences of   
sin, we are under no obligation to lie low in the dust.   
  
**A pardoned sinner**—and no believer is anything   
more—should ever be **a humble and self-abased   
creature** in the sight of God.  
  
  
 **Who can contemplate it without horror?**   
  
"They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped   
and served created things rather than the Creator—who is   
forever praised. Because of this, God gave them over to   
shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations   
for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned   
natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for   
one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men,   
and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.   
Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the   
knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to   
do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with   
every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are   
full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips,   
slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they   
invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are   
senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless." Rom 1:25-31  
 **What a picture!! Who can contemplate it without horror?**Yet such is the state of society—such the aspect of the moral   
world—such are the crimes that deform, and pollute, and torment   
the human race under the reign of Paganism, which, wherever it   
exists, converts earth into the vestibule of hell, a den of wild   
beasts, a range of malignant demons—which educates men for   
fiends amid the worst of excesses of depravity—and tortures its   
victims in this world, preparatory to their execution in the next.   
  
Who that pretends to carry in his bosom the heart of a man,   
much more who that professes to have the spirit of a Christian,   
which is the mind of Christ—but must mourn in bitterness of   
soul over this frightful wilderness, and long to bring these   
habitations of cruelty under the reign of Christian love?   
  
  
  
**Easy is the descent to hell.**  
  
The Scriptures everywhere represent true piety by   
terms, allusions, and figures which imply the greatest   
**effort**, and the most persevering **labor**. Hence we   
are commanded to . . .  
"**strive** to enter in at the strait gate,"   
"**run** with perseverance the race which is set before us,"   
"**labor** for the food which endures unto eternal life,"   
"**fight** the good fight of faith,"   
"**mortify** the deeds of the body,"   
"**crucify** the flesh."   
  
What terms! what ideas! what metaphors! Can   
anything that is easily accomplished require   
or justify the use of such language? If it were   
an easy thing to be a Christian, could the sacred   
writers with any propriety have employed such   
strong and very expressive figures?   
  
Nothing, surely, can more impressively teach   
us the absolute and indispensable necessity   
of **incessant as well as vigorous effort**.   
  
The course of a sinner is down-hill.   
  
**Easy is the descent to hell.**  
  
A transgressor has nothing to do but to give   
himself up to the indulgence of his corruptions,   
and he will slide to perdition without effort !   
  
Not so the true Christian. Heaven is represented   
as on a high eminence, which cannot be reached   
without constant and laborious climbing. We are   
speaking of the Christian temper, of practical religion,   
of sanctification, of going on through all the trials   
and temptations of life, to the possession of that   
crown of glory which Christ has merited for us; and   
if this is easy work, there is nothing difficult!

**Sinking daily in crowds!**

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate  
and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and  
**many** enter through it. But small is the gate and  
narrow the road that leads to life, and only a **few**find it." Mat 7:13-14  
  
**This alarming statement** was given by the Lord Jesus!   
It is indeed a melancholy and a painful reflection; for it   
is saying in other words, there are but few who are saved.   
  
Alarming, and truly dreadful is the idea—that the greatest   
part of mankind are moving towards the bottomless pit, and   
**sinking daily in crowds** to the miseries of eternal perdition!  
  
**Such a sentiment ought not to be uttered**, except with   
a view to lessen the havoc which it describes, by disturbing   
the delusion which is the cause of this extensive ruin!  
  
There are many more who perish—than are saved!  
  
Dreadful, alarming idea!   
  
I tremble as I write!  
  
Reader! Let the dreadful announcement startle you like   
thunder, from your slumbers, and lead you to institute   
the most serious, and solemn, and impartial examination   
of your heart! Do not rest satisfied with a mere general,   
careless assumption that you are a Christian. Without   
true religion, you must perish eternally!   
  
You have, perhaps, been a professor of religion, and   
have approved a gospel ministry, and have enjoyed the   
light and advantages of gospel ordinances; but this will   
only aggravate your guilt, and condemnation, and misery!   
  
If you are not living under the influence of Christian love,   
you are living without true religion, and must have your   
doom with those of whom it is said, "The wicked shall   
be turned into hell!"  
  
  
  
We are struck with the singularity of the fact, that the   
Bible resolves **the whole** of devotional piety into love   
to God; and **the whole** of morality into love to man.

(Choice devotional selections from   
the works of John Angell James)

**One gracious purpose of mercy!**  
  
"And we know that **God causes everything to work  
together for the good of those who love Him**, and are  
called according to His purpose for them." Rom 8:28  
  
**Providence** is God's government of the universe.  
  
Providence is that mighty scheme . . .  
which commenced before time was born;  
which embraces the annals of other worlds besides ours;  
which includes the history of angels, men, and devils.   
  
Providence comprises the whole range of events which   
have taken place from the formation of the first creature,   
to the last moment of time—with all the tendencies,   
reasons, connections, and results of things.  
  
Providence encompasses the separate existence of   
each individual, with the continuation and influence   
of the whole, in one harmonious scheme.  
  
We are puzzled at almost every step, at the deep,   
unfathomable mysteries of Providence!  
  
How often is Jehovah, in His dealings with us, a God   
who hides Himself! How often does He wrap Himself in   
clouds, and pursue His path upon the waters, where we   
can neither see His goings, nor trace His footsteps!   
How many of His dispensations are inexplicable, and   
of His judgments how many are unfathomable by the   
short line of our reason!   
  
But whatever we don't know now, we shall know hereafter.  
The crooked will be made straight, the clouds of darkness   
will be scattered, and all His conduct towards us placed in   
the broad day-light of eternity.   
  
We shall see how all the varying, and numerous, and   
seemingly opposite events of our history, were combined   
into **one gracious purpose of mercy**, which was most   
perfectly wise in all its combinations.   
  
Delightful, most delightful, will it be to retrace our winding   
and often gloomy course, and discern at each change and   
turning, the reason of the occurrence and the wisdom of God.  
Delightful will it be to discern the influence which all our   
temporal circumstances, all our disappointments, losses,   
and perplexities, had upon our permanent and celestial   
happiness. How much of divine wisdom, power, goodness,   
and faithfulness, will our short and simple history present,  
and what rapturous fervor will the discovery give to the   
song of praise which we shall utter before the throne of   
God and the Lamb!  
  
  
**All the misery**  
  
Sin is, in itself, an evil of enormous magnitude.   
As committed against a Being whom we are under   
infinite obligation to love, and serve, and glorify,   
it must partake of infinite degrees of demerit.  
Sin introduces the reign of confusion and misery.   
  
**All the misery** which either is or ever will be   
on earth, or in hell—is the result of sin.   
  
Sin is the greatest evil—the only evil in the universe.   
  
Sin is the opposite, and the enemy to God. Sin is   
the contrast of all that is pure and glorious in His   
divine attributes and ineffably beautiful perfections;   
and as such it is that which he cannot but hate with   
a perfect hatred.   
  
Sin is the contrary of holiness, and thus the enemy   
of happiness.   
  
  
**The secret of happiness**  
  
"I have learned to be **content** whatever the  
circumstances. I know what it is to be in need,  
and I know what it is to have plenty. I have  
learned the secret of being content in any and  
every situation, whether well fed or hungry,  
whether living in plenty or in need." Php 4:11-12  
  
We should labor to be content with such things as   
we have. **Contentment is the secret of happiness**,   
whether we have much or little. The man who makes   
up his mind to enjoy what he has, is quite as happy   
as he who is possessed of twice as much.   
  
  
**Our evil temper**  
  
If we are as angry and revengeful, as proud and envious,   
as selfish and unkind—as we were before **our supposed   
conversion**—we may be assured that it is but a supposed   
conversion.   
  
It does not matter that we go regularly to worship. It   
does not matter that we strongly feel under sermons.  
It does not matter that we have happy frames and   
feelings—for a heart under the predominant influence   
of petulant passions can no more have undergone the   
change of the new birth, than one that is filled with a   
prevailing lecherousness.   
  
And where the heart is renewed, and the badness of   
the temper is not constant, but only occasional—is not   
prevailing, but only prominent—it is, in so far as it   
prevails, a sad blot on real piety.   
  
We must bring our mind under the influence of redeeming   
grace—we must ascend the hill of Calvary, and **gaze upon   
that scene of love**, until our cold hearts melt, our hard   
hearts soften, and all the cruel selfishness of our nature   
relaxes into gentleness. The example of the meek and   
lowly Jesus must be contemplated, admired, and copied.   
And especially after all, must we breathe forth internal   
longings for the influence of the Holy Spirit, who alone   
can subdue **our evil temper**.   
  
  
**A cold, heartless and uninfluential religion!**  
  
"If I have the gift of **prophecy** and can fathom  
all **mysteries** and all **knowledge**, and if I have  
a faith that can move mountains, **but have not  
love**, I am nothing." 1Co 13:2  
  
Many conclude that they are true Christians, because   
of the clearness of their views, and their attainments   
in biblical knowledge. They have a singular zeal for the   
truth, and are great sticklers for the doctrines of grace.  
They look upon all, besides a few of their own class,   
as mere babes in knowledge. They themselves are the   
**eagles** who soar to the sun, and bask in its beams!  
While the rest of mankind are the **moles** that burrow,   
and the **bats** that flutter in the dark!  
  
Doctrine is everything to them! Clear views of the gospel   
are their great desire. **Puffed up with pride,** **selfish,   
unkind, irritable, censorious, malicious**—they manifest   
a total lack of that humility and kindness which are the   
prominent features of true Christianity.   
  
Let it be known, however, that clear views of Scripture are   
of themselves no evidence of true religion. A professor of   
religion be an enemy to God in his soul—with an evangelical   
creed upon his tongue!  
  
Their religion begins and ends in . . .  
adopting a form of sound words for their creed,  
approving an evangelical ministry,  
admiring the popular champions of the truth,   
and joining in the criticism of error.   
  
As to any spirituality of mind; any heavenliness of affection;   
any Christian love; any vital, elevating influence of those   
very doctrines to which they profess to be attached—they   
are as destitute as the greatest worldling! And like him, they   
are perhaps as selfish, revengeful, implacable, and unkind!   
  
This is the religion but too common in our churches—**a cold,   
heartless and uninfluential religion**—a sort of lunar light,   
which reflects the **beams** of the sun, but not its **warmth!**  
  
"If I have the gift of **prophecy** and can fathom  
all **mysteries** and all **knowledge**, and if I have  
a **faith** that can move mountains—**but have  
not love**, I am nothing!" 1Co 13:2

"Whoever does not love does not know God,  
because God is love." 1Jn 4:8

**The most crowded avenue to the bottomless pit!**  
  
**Many** will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we   
not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name drive   
out demons and perform many miracles?" Then I will   
tell them plainly, "I never knew you! Depart from   
Me, you evildoers!" Mat 7:22-23  
  
**Delusion** on the nature of true piety prevails to   
a truly appalling extent! Millions are in error as   
to the real condition of their souls, and think   
that they are journeying to celestial bliss; when   
in reality they are **traveling to perdition!**  
  
**Oh fearful mistake!**   
  
**Oh fatal delusion!**   
  
What terrible disappointment awaits them!   
  
**What horror, and anguish, and despair**, will take   
eternal possession of their souls, in that moment of   
truth, when instead of awaking from the sleep of   
death amid the glories of the heavenly city—they   
shall lift up their eyes, "being in torment!"   
  
No pen can describe the overwhelming anguish of   
such a disappointment! The imagination shrinks with   
amazement and horror, from the contemplation of her   
own faint sketch of the unendurable scene!  
  
Millions of souls are irrecoverably lost by self-deception!  
  
Delusion is **the most crowded avenue to the bottomless pit!**  
  
Self-delusion is the 'common infatuation', the 'epidemic   
blindness', which has fallen upon multitudes!  
  
  
**We are to pity them**  
  
The most perfect benevolence to men, is that which,   
instead of looking with complacency on their errors,   
warns them of their danger, and admonishes them   
to escape. It is no matter that they think they are   
right—this only makes their case the more alarming;   
and to act towards them as if we thought their   
mistaken views of no consequence, is only to   
confirm their delusion, and to aid their destruction!   
  
It is true we are neither to despise them nor persecute   
them—we are neither to oppress nor ridicule them—we   
are neither to look upon them with haughty scorn, nor   
with callous indifference. But while we set ourselves   
against their errors, **we are to pity them** with sincere   
compassion, and to labor for their conversion with   
unselfish kindness. We are to bear with unruffled   
meekness all their provoking sarcasms; and to sustain,   
with deep humility, the consciousness of our clearer   
perceptions; and to convince them, that with the   
steadiest resistance of their principles, we unite   
the tenderest concern for their welfare.  
  
  
**Why is the life of the church so feeble?**  
  
Why are spirituality of mind, and heavenliness   
of affection so low? Why have we such a race   
of worldly-minded professors? Why?   
  
The private reading and study of the Scriptures are  
sadly neglected! Men are strangers to their Bibles!  
The Bible was never more widely circulated—but at   
the same time, never less devoutly read. Where are   
the men and the women to whom the Bible is a book   
of daily study and delight in the closet—to whom its   
words are "sweeter than honey or the honeycomb,   
and more desired than their necessary food?" The   
magazine, the review, and the newspaper, and the   
last new novel or tale, have so far pushed out the   
Bible!   
  
  
**Floating to perdition on the stream of delusion!**   
  
"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the   
kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My  
Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day,  
'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in  
Your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?'  
Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from  
Me, you evildoers!'" Mat 7:21-23.   
  
This is really one of the most alarming passages of Holy Writ,  
as showing how far people may go in self-deception, and how  
perseveringly they may continue in it—even to death, and  
through it, up to the very judgment seat of Christ!   
  
I am truly alarmed and terrified at the thought of this state   
of things, when multitudes are going down to the pit with a   
lie in their right hand—**floating to perdition on the stream   
of delusion!**   
  
There are many paths to perdition in the broad way, some   
of which are more cleanly and some more foul, yet they all   
lead to the same end. And they shall as certainly arrive at   
hell, who tread the cleanlier paths of a "refined hypocrisy",   
as those who track through the mire and dirt of the   
grossest abominations.  
  
Under the most searching ministry, and the most alarming   
sermons—a fatal delusion sends multitudes to perdition!  
  
How dreadful will be the disappointment and remorse of the  
hypocrite, when death, which closes his eyes to all the scenes   
of earth, shall open them to those of the bottomless pit!  
  
What horror, and surprise, and overwhelming disappointment   
seize him who, when he expects to arise from the bed of death,   
to the felicities of heaven—sinks from it to the miseries of hell!  
  
Oh, the indescribable, overwhelming astonishment, consternation,   
and horror of the hypocrite, who wakes up amid the scenes of the   
bottomless pit! It is not for language to set forth nor imagination   
to conceive the torment that will in a moment come over the   
miserable soul, whose first words in eternity will be, "I am lost,   
lost, lost, forever! I am in hell." The wretched spirit will look   
through the vista of millions of ages, and see no glimmering   
spark of this to relieve its present sense of unutterable woe!  
  
"The hope of the hypocrite shall perish!" Job 8:13  
  
  
**Because He first loved us**  
  
"We love Him, **because He first loved us**." 1Jn 4:19  
  
The work of the Holy Spirit is not only to reveal God's   
love to us—but to produce in us love to God in return.   
  
Wherever the Holy Spirit really gives a clear view and   
deep sense of God's love to us, He, by the same operation   
of His grace, subdues the enmity of the carnal mind, and   
produces a genuine and supreme love to God.  
  
  
**Heavenly!**  
  
"Nothing **impure** will ever enter it." Rev 21:27  
  
**What is heaven?**   
  
Heaven is a state where we shall see Christ as He  
is, and be like Him. It is the region of moral purity.  
  
Its **inhabitants** are holy—  
the holy Father,  
the holy Savior,  
the holy Spirit,   
holy angels,   
holy men.   
  
Its **occupations** are holy—the service of God—the   
song of cherubim and seraphim, crying "Holy, Holy,   
Holy, Lord God Almighty!"—and all other things in   
harmony with this sacred employment and felicity.  
  
Every contemplation of this holy heavenly state,  
tends to **assimilate the soul to its likeness**. While . . .  
gazing upon it,   
delighting in it,   
longing for it,  
**we grow in resemblance to it!** The soul of the   
believer turned heavenwards, becomes **heavenly!**  
  
"Everyone who has this hope in him **purifies  
himself**, just as Christ is pure." 1Jn 3:3  
  
  
**The model of Christian holiness**  
  
**The model of Christian holiness** is Christ.   
  
Christ . . .  
as the man of sorrows,  
as exposed to temptation,  
as subject to affliction,  
as the servant of God,  
as the Son learning obedience   
by the things which He suffered,  
as separate from sin and sinners,   
though dwelling in the midst of them.   
  
Here is our model—the infinite, eternal, almighty   
God, exhibited in the form of the perfect man,   
presented in dimensions the eye can comprehend.   
  
Christ, the divine man, the model man, must be   
before us, and our eye must be ever upon our copy   
and our page.  
  
  
**The ultimate object of redeeming mercy**  
  
"All who believe this will keep themselves  
**pure**, just as Christ is **pure**." 1Jn 3:3.   
  
Every view we can take of the work of redemption,   
shows its connection with **holiness**.   
  
The **Father** has "chosen us before the foundation   
of the world, that we might be holy."   
  
The **Son** did not die merely to save us from hell,   
and bring us to heaven—but to "redeem us from   
all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar   
people, zealous for good works."   
  
The **Spirit** is given to "create us anew unto good works."   
  
If we are **called**, it is "with a holy calling."   
  
If we are **afflicted**, it is that we might   
"be partakers of God's holiness."   
  
If we possess the **Scriptures**, it is "that   
we might be sanctified by the truth."  
  
Holiness is the image of God, stamped upon man's   
soul at his creation—which Satan marred, when his   
malignity could not reach the divine original.   
  
And to restore us to holiness, is **the ultimate object   
of redeeming mercy**.   
  
What would **justification** be without holiness—but   
like throwing a vestment of purple and gold over a   
leprous body?   
  
What is **heaven**—but the region, the home, the   
very center of holiness?   
  
Take away holiness from an angel, and he becomes   
a devil. Add holiness to the nature of a devil, and he   
becomes an angel.   
  
Were a man without holiness to enter heaven, its   
blessed inhabitants would run from him with horror   
and alarm—as we would run from a person with the   
plague!   
  
Without holiness, a soul in heaven would be like a   
nauseated man at a feast. He would desire nothing,   
taste nothing, relish nothing.   
  
  
**How insignificant, trivial, and paltry!**  
  
"This world is fading away, along with everything  
it craves. But if you do the will of God, you will  
live forever." 1Jn 2:17  
  
**How insignificant, trivial, and paltry**, are the   
objects of worldly desire and expectation!   
  
What are wealth, rank, fame, pleasure—compared   
with the glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life,   
which the believer looks for beyond the grave?   
  
They are all of the earth, earthly—this is heavenly.  
  
They are human—this divine.  
  
They are transient—this everlasting.  
  
They are unsatisfying, leaving the soul a void   
unfilled—this replenishing its vast capacity.  
  
They are fleeting, shadowy, and precarious  
—this absolutely certain.  
  
They are but the children's toys which leave   
the poor, craving soul, exclaiming, "Who will   
show us any good?"

**Why are Christians so worldly?**  
  
This soft, extravagant, luxurious slothfulness—this   
ease-loving disposition—is the bane of the present   
generation of professing Christians!  
  
The robustness of spiritual strength,   
the hardihood of Christian courage,   
the self-sacrificing disposition of ardent love,   
the cross-bearing temper of ever-enduring self-denial   
**—where are they?**   
  
The church is reposing too much in the lap of   
the world—or drowsily reclining on her bosom!  
  
**Why are Christians so worldly?** Why have the scenes and  
circumstances of earth, so powerful an influence over us?   
  
**Why?** Just because our desires and expectations of the   
eternal realities and infinite possessions of heaven are   
so little thought of—and so little cherished! Were the mind   
kept in contemplation of these realities, and the soul more   
frequently regaled with foretastes of the heavenly food and   
feast—it could not be content to feed on the ashes and   
husks of this world!  
  
Did we but consider **what heaven is**—and how near; did we   
but really let our contemplation more steadily fix upon it;   
did we but redeem a little more time from secular pursuits   
and domestic or social pleasures, to meditate upon it; did   
we really and firmly believe all that is told us of it; did we   
but inflame our desires after it, and enlarge our expectations   
of it; did we but get a foresight and foretaste of its vast, rich,   
and imperishable delights—how much would our regard to this   
present world be diminished! How would the 'lights of earth'   
twinkle and pale, and all but go out—before the beams of the   
more excellent glory! What we have to do, then, is to get a   
more lively hope of our eternal home! "For God has reserved   
a priceless inheritance for His children! It is kept in heaven   
for you—pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change   
and decay!" 1Pe 1:4  
  
  
**We can't even imagine!**  
  
"For God has reserved a priceless inheritance  
for His children! It is kept in heaven for you—  
pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of  
change and decay!" 1Pe 1:4  
  
There is in that one word "heaven," **a balm   
for every wound, a cordial for every fear!**  
  
To know that there is a heaven to come, and   
that it is **mine**, is a consolation to be felt—  
though not capable of being fully described.  
  
"Yes, dear friends, we are already God's children,  
and **we can't even imagine** what we will be like  
when Christ returns. But we do know that when   
He comes we will be like Him, for we will see   
Him as He really is!" 1Jn 3:2

To lift the soul above the predominant influence   
of things seen and temporal, and bring it within   
the attraction of things unseen and eternal, is   
**the work of Omnipotence alone!**

**With this hope**  
  
What privations may we not endure, what   
afflictions may we not bear, when we can say,   
"God is my Father,   
Christ is my Savior,   
salvation is my portion,   
heaven is my home!"   
  
This Christian hope has carried consolation into   
the darkest recesses of human woe, the lowest   
depths of poverty and need.  
  
**With this hope**, we may live in happiness and die   
in peace. It is a jewel worth infinitely more than   
all the gems which have ever blazed on beauty   
or royalty. The man who can rejoice in saying he   
is a Christian in reality, need not sigh over   
anything else that he is not.   
  
  
**A mighty power and impulse**  
"No, dear friends, I am still not all I should be, but **I am  
focusing all my energies on this one thing**—Forgetting  
the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain  
to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which  
God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us up to heaven."  
Php 3:13-14  
  
**The Christian's mind** must be made up to this. His thinking   
must be somewhat as the following—"My purpose is fixed,   
and nothing on earth shall shake it, to reach heaven at last.   
My plan is laid, and nothing shall alter it. I see that all the   
richest possessions on earth—everything that can gratify   
taste, ambition, avarice, or appetite—is but the small dust   
of the balance to me. I am for heaven! God helping me, no   
sacrifice, no self-denial, no hardship, no suffering, shall hold   
me back. I am resolutely surrendered, irrevocably committed,   
indissolubly bound to that object. **Ridicule** shall not turn me   
aside; **persecution** shall not terrify me; **wealth** shall not   
seduce me; **pleasure** shall not allure me. I am for heaven,   
and none of these things attract or move me! I will forego   
everything, and sacrifice everything that stands in the way   
of everlasting glory!"   
  
Ah! This is what is needed in the great bulk of Christian   
professors—this absolute determination to reach heaven at   
last! But how few of them have deliberately, determinedly   
brought their minds to this intelligent, ever-operative   
purpose! How comparatively rare, is the sight of a man,   
who seems to have **heaven** in his eye, his heart, his hope,   
as the great object of desire, pursuit, and expectation!  
  
Look at the conduct of professing Christians, and see how   
different it is from this. They have **resolutions**—but these   
are of the earth, earthly! They have their fixed **purposes**  
—but how far below the skies do they reach! They have   
their **plans**—but they appertain to the present world!  
  
Let no man deceive himself here! None will reach heaven  
—but as the result of fixed, deliberate, practical and   
persevering determination. It is the view of heaven's   
glories, the expectation of eternal life alone—which will   
lead to such a heroic resolution. **It must, indeed, be a   
mighty power and impulse, which will induce a man   
to surrender his whole life, and all that it contains,   
for the possession of its object!**

There is **nothing so beautiful** as a humble Christian!

**How soon** may we, from the highest pinnacle   
of earthly comfort, be plunged into the lowest   
extremity of woe and distress!  
  
  
  
I did **many things** which I see now to be wrong—  
and left undone **many things** I now see to be right.

**Little events** form our future destinies!

Reason will lead us to take care, that the objects of   
our hope are worth the pains we take to possess them.   
It is for a lamentation to see on what worthless objects,  
multitudes are exhausting their energies. **What miserable   
trifles** inflame their desires and raise their expectations!

**Money, money, money**  
  
"What is the great end of my existence? I find myself in   
a world where innumerable objects present themselves   
to my notice, each soliciting my heart, and each claiming   
to be most worthy of its supreme regard. I have faculties   
of mind capable of high pursuits. I perceive, by universal   
experience, that my stay in this world will be very short,  
for I am only a stranger and a sojourner here upon earth,   
as all my fathers were; and as I am anxious not to go out   
of the world without answering the end for which I came   
into it, I would wish to know the chief purpose for which   
I exist!"  
  
Such a reflection is what every person should make—but   
which very few do make. **Would they fritter away their   
lives as they do, on the most contemptible trifles**—if they  
seriously inquired for what purpose their lives were given?   
  
RICHES, with peculiar boldness, assert their claims to be   
"the one thing needful," and multitudes practically confess   
the justice of the demand. Hence, there is no deity whose   
worshipers are more numerous than Mammon. We see many   
all round us who are obviously making this world the exclusive   
object of their solicitude. Wealth is with them the main chance.   
For this they rise early, and sit up late, eat the bread of anxiety,   
and drink the water of affliction. This is their language, "I care   
for nothing if I may but succeed in business, and acquire property.   
I will endure any fatigue, make any sacrifice, suffer any privation,   
so that I at last may realize a fortune!" It is perfectly evident   
that beyond this they have neither a wish nor an object. **Money,   
money, money**, is their chief good, and the highest end of their   
existence. God, the soul, salvation, heaven, hell, are as much   
forgotten as if they were mere fables, and all the energies and   
anxieties of their soul are concentrated in wealth.   
  
Can riches then substantiate their claims to be the chief end   
of man? What, when it is so doubtful whether, after all our   
endeavors, we shall possess them? When the possession   
of them contributes so little to our real felicity? When their   
continuance is so uncertain? When their duration so short?   
When their influence upon our eternal destiny worse than   
nothing?   
  
Will any reasonable creature have the folly to assert that   
the chief end for which God sent him into this world is . . .  
to amass property,  
to build a splendid house, and  
to store it with furniture equally splendid,  
to wear costly clothes,  
to feed on rich food,  
to live in affluence, and  
to die rich?  
  
  
**What a sad parting will that be!**  
  
Do riches bring all the pleasures which they promise?   
  
It is a very true remark, that a man's happiness is not   
in proportion to his wealth.  
  
"Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed;  
for **a man's life does not consist in the abundance of  
his possessions**." Luk 12:15  
  
Many act as if they denied the truth of the sentiment. Do   
you think that all rich men are happy, and that all poor men   
are miserable? As to mere animal enjoyment, does the   
affluent man receive a larger share than his poor neighbor?   
Whose **head** aches less, for the costly plume that waves on   
the brow? Whose **body** enjoys the glow of health more for   
the rich velvet which enwraps it, or the lace which adorns it?   
Whose **sleep** is sounder because it is enjoyed on a softer bed?   
Whose **palate** is more pleased because it is fed with many   
dishes instead of one, and in silver settings? Whose **heart**is more free from pain because of the diamond which sparkles   
there? Do riches insure **health**, keep off disease? Nothing of   
the kind! Numerous servants, splendid clothes, rich furniture,   
luxurious living, add very little to a man's happiness! We may   
say of these things as Pliny did of the pyramids of Egypt,   
"They are only proud proclamations of that wealth and   
abundance—which their possessor knew not how to use!"   
  
Great wealth certainly gives a man many anxieties. 'What   
shall I do?' is a question often asked by affluence, as well   
as by poverty. There is nothing in earthly things suited as   
a portion to the desires of the human mind. The soul of man   
needs something better for its provision than wealth. It is   
on this account, partly, that our Lord brands the rich man in   
the gospel for a fool, who, when he surveyed his treasures,   
said to his soul, "You have goods laid up for many years in   
store; eat, drink, and be merry."   
  
When the rich man he leaves the present world, his riches   
do not go with him beyond the grave. **What a sad parting   
will that be**, when he leaves all his treasures behind in this   
world, and enter upon another state of existence, where he  
cannot take a penny, and where it would be useless if he  
could take all of his wealth. Then the miserable spirit, like   
a shipwrecked merchant, thrown on some strange coast after  
the loss of all his property, shall be cast on the shore of   
eternity, without one single comfort to relieve its pressing   
and everlasting necessities.   
  
  
  
**Vile thieves!**  
  
"Be very careful, then, how you live—**not as fools**  
but as wise, **redeeming the time**, because the  
days are evil." Eph 5:15-16  
  
Unprofitable reading is another consumer of time which   
must be avoided. Worldly amusements, and parties of   
pleasure, are also injurious. I do not by this mean to   
condemn the occasional communion of friends in the   
social circle, where the civilities of life are given and   
received, the ties of friendship strengthened, and the   
mind recreated, without any injury being done to the   
spiritual or moral interests.   
  
But the theater, the card-table, the billiard-room,   
are all to be avoided as **vile thieves, which steal   
our time and hurt our souls!  
  
  
  
Rivaling the butterfly and the peacock!**  
  
"Be very careful, then, how you live—**not as fools**  
but as wise, **redeeming the time**, because the  
days are evil." Eph 5:15-16  
  
Redeem time from the vain pursuits of personal   
adornment and dress! It is shocking to think how   
much precious time is wasted at the mirror, in the   
silly ambition of **rivaling the butterfly and the   
peacock!** What a reproach to a rational creature,   
is it to neglect the improvement of the soul—for   
the adornings of the body! This is like painting the   
outside of a house, while the interior is left to be   
dark, damp, disheveled, and filthy!

**A bubble that rises, and shines, and bursts!**  
  
"Be very careful, then, how you live—**not as fools**  
but as wise, **redeeming the time**, because the  
days are evil." Eph 5:15-16  
  
Paul implies that a man can give no greater proof   
of folly, nor more effectually act the part of a fool,  
than to waste his time. While on the other hand,   
a just appreciation and right improvement of time   
are among the brightest displays of true wisdom.   
  
We must value time correctly, and improve it diligently.  
  
**Time is the most precious thing in the world.** God   
distributes time miserly—by the moment—and He  
never promises us another moment! We are to highly   
**value**, and diligently to **improve** the present moment,  
by the consideration that for anything we know—it   
may be the last.   
  
Time, when once gone, never returns. **Where is   
yesterday?** A moment once lost—is lost forever!   
  
We should never forget that our time is among the talents   
for which we must give account at the judgment of God.   
Time will be required with a strictness proportionate to   
its value. Let us tremble at this idea, as well we may.   
We must be tried not only for what we have done—but   
for what we neglected to do. Not only for the hours spent   
in sin—but for those wasted in idleness. Let us beware   
of wasting time.  
  
It might stir us up to diligence in the improvement of our   
time, to think how much of it has been already misspent.   
What days, and weeks, and months, and years, have   
already been utterly wasted, or exhausted upon trifles   
totally unworthy of them. They are gone, and nothing  
remains of them but the guilt of having wasted them.   
We cannot call them back if we would. Let us learn to   
value more highly, and to use more kindly, those days   
which remain.   
  
How **much** of our time is already gone—and how **little**   
may be yet to come? The sands of our hour-glass may   
be almost out! **Death may be at the door!**   
  
When you begin a day, you don't know that you shall end it!   
When you lie down, you don't know that you shall rise up!   
When you leave your house, you don't know that you shall   
ever return!   
  
For what is your life? it is even as a vapor that appears for   
a little while and then vanishes! Life is **a bubble that rises,   
and shines, and bursts!** We know not in any one period of   
our existence—but that it may be the last. Surely, surely,   
we should then improve our time, when we may be holding,   
for anything we know, the last portion of it in our hands!  
  
You are immortal creatures, and must live forever in torment   
or in bliss! And certainly you cannot be forming a right   
estimate of the value of time, nor be rightly employing it,  
if the soul be forgotten, salvation neglected, and eternity   
left out of consideration! **How like an angel does she appear!**  
  
When a young lady, instead of   
frittering away her time in . . .   
frivolous pursuits,  
parties of pleasure,  
personal decorations,  
or scenes of vanity,   
employs her hours in . . .  
visiting the cottages of the poor,  
alleviating the sorrows of the wretched,  
reading Scripture to the sick,   
**how like an angel does she appear!**Be frugal in your personal expenditure—that you   
may have the more to do good with. Waste not   
that upon unnecessary luxuries of dress or living  
—which thousands and millions need for necessities   
and pious instruction.   
  
The noblest transformation of property is not   
into personal jewels, or splendid household   
furniture, or costly equipages—but into . . .  
clothing for the naked,  
food for the hungry,  
medicine for the sick,  
knowledge for the ignorant,  
holiness for the wicked,  
salvation for the lost!  
  
I exhort, therefore, that you do all the good you   
can, both to the souls and bodies of your fellow  
creatures—for this end you were born into the world!  
  
  
**Amusements**  
**Amusements**, in the usual acceptance of the word, are   
but the miserable expedients resorted to by the ignorant   
and unsanctified mind of man for happiness; the ineffectual   
efforts to restore that peace which man lost by the fall,   
and which nothing but true piety can bring back to the   
human bosom. In departing from God, the soul of man   
strayed from the pasture to the wilderness, and now is   
ever sorrowfully exclaiming, as she wanders on—'who   
will show us any good?' To relieve her sense of need,   
and satisfy her cravings, she is directed to amusements.   
But they prove only to be like the flowers of the desert,   
which, with all their beauty, do not satisfy.  
 **Amusements** are but expedients to make men happy   
without piety. The mere husks, which those who are   
destitute of the bread which comes down from heaven,   
crave after, and feed upon—and which are rejected by   
those who have their appetite satisfied with this   
celestial manna.   
  
Do no go to the polluting sources of worldly amusement  
for consolation.   
  
It is the return of the soul to God through faith in Jesus   
Christ which can alone give true and satisfying delight.   
  
But there are some who will reply, "I have no taste for   
true piety—what amusements do you recommend to me?"   
  
None at all. What! that man talk of amusement, who,   
by his own confession, is under the curse of heaven's   
eternal law, and the wrath of heaven's incensed King?   
  
AMUSEMENT! What! for the poor wretch who is on the  
brink of perdition, the verge of hell, and may the next   
hour be lifting up his eyes in torment, and calling for   
a drop of water to cool his parched tongue!   
  
Diversion! What! for him who is every moment exposed   
to that sentence, "Depart from me, accursed one, into   
everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!"   
  
What! going on to that place where the worm dies not,   
and the fire is never quenched; where there is weeping   
and wailing, and gnashing of teeth—**and calling for   
amusements!** Oh monstrous absurdity!   
  
We have heard of prisoners dancing in their chains. But   
who ever heard of a poor creature asking for amusements   
on his way to the place of execution? This is your case.   
While you have no taste for true piety, you are certainly   
under sentence of eternal wrath. You are every day   
traveling to execution. Yet you are asking for amusements!   
  
And what will be your reflections in the world of despair,   
to recollect that the season of hope was employed by you,   
not in seeking the salvation of the soul, and everlasting   
happiness—but in mere idle diversions, which were   
destroying you at the very time they amused you!   
  
Then will you learn that you voluntarily relinquished the   
fullness of joy which God's presence affords, and the   
eternal pleasures which are to be found at his right   
hand—for the joy of fools, which as Solomon truly says,   
is but as "the crackling of thorns beneath the pot."   
  
Before you think of amusement—seek for true piety!   
Nothing is more bewitching than the love of gambling.   
The **winner** having tasted the sweets of gain, is led   
forward by the hope of still greater gain. While the   
**loser** plunges deeper and deeper into ruin, with the   
delusive expectation of retrieving his lost fortune.   
How many have ruined themselves and their families   
forever by this mad passion! How many have thrown   
down the cards or dice, only to take up the pistol or   
the poison—and have rushed, with all their crimes   
about them, **from the gambling-table to the fiery   
lake of hell!**  
Time is precious. Its fragments, like those of diamonds,   
are **too valuable to be lost**.

How many parents are accessory to **the murder of   
their children's souls!** Blood-guiltiness rests upon   
their conscience, and the curses of their own offspring   
will be upon them through eternity!

**A spring of comfort whose waters never fail**  
  
Genuine piety comforts the mind, with the assurance of   
an all-wise, all-pervading Providence—so **minute** in its   
superintendence and control, that not a sparrow falls   
to the ground without the knowledge of our heavenly   
Father; a superintendence which is excluded from no   
point of **space**, no moment of **time**, and overlooks not   
the lowest creature in existence.   
  
"And we know that God causes everything to work  
together for the good of those who love God and  
are called according to His purpose." Rom 8:28  
  
Nothing that imagination could conceive is more truly   
consolatory than this—to be assured that all things,   
however painful at the time, not excepting . . .  
the failure of our favorite **plans**,  
the disappointment of our fondest **hopes**,  
the loss of our dearest **comforts**,   
shall be overruled by infinite wisdom, for the   
promotion of our ultimate good. This is **a   
spring of comfort whose waters never fail**.   
  
  
**A balm for every wound, a cordial for every care**  
  
**Some of the benefits of affliction**, are that it . . .  
crucifies the world,  
mortifies sin,  
quickens prayer,  
extracts the balmy sweets of the promises,  
endears the Savior.  
  
And to crown all, affliction directs the mind to that   
glorious state where the days of our mourning shall   
be ended—that happy country where God shall wipe   
every tear from our eyes, and there shall be no   
more sorrow or crying.   
  
Nothing so composes the mind, and helps it to   
bear the load of trouble which God may lay upon   
it—as the near prospect of its termination.  
  
In that one word, HEAVEN, genuine piety provides   
**a balm for every wound, a cordial for every care**.   
In the prospect of eternity, with **heaven** spreading out   
its ineffable glories, and **hell** uncovering its dreadful   
horrors—**the only question** which a rational creature   
should allow himself to ask is, "What is necessary to   
avoid the torments of the one—and secure the   
felicities of the other?"  
  
  
  
  
**Splendid baubles!**  
A desire after happiness is inseparable from the human mind.  
It is the natural and healthy craving of our spirit; an appetite   
which we have neither the will nor the power to destroy, and   
for which all mankind are busily employed in making provision.   
This is as natural, as for birds to fly, or fish to swim.   
  
For this the **scholar** and the **philosopher**, who think happiness   
consists in knowledge, pore over their books—light the midnight   
lamp, and keep frequent vigils, when the world around them is   
asleep. The **worldling**, with whom happiness and wealth are   
kindred terms—worships daily at the shrine of Mammon, and   
offers earnest prayers for the golden shower. The **voluptuary**   
gratifies every craving sense, rejoices in the midnight revel,   
renders himself vile—and yet tells you he is in the chase of   
happiness. The **ambitious** man, conceiving that the 'great   
essential' hangs in rich clusters from the throne, consumes   
one half of his life, and embitters the other half—in climbing   
the giddy elevation of royalty.   
  
All these, however, have confessed their disappointment;   
and have retired from the stage exclaiming, in reference to   
happiness, as Brutus, just before he stabbed himself, did   
in reference to virtue, "I have pursued you everywhere,   
and found you nothing but a name."   
  
This, however, is a mistake; for both virtue and happiness   
are glorious realities—and if they are not found, it is merely   
because they are not sought from the right sources.   
  
Crowns are **splendid baubles**, gold is sordid dust, and all   
the gratifications of sense but vanity and vexation of spirit,   
when weighed against the splendid blessings of true piety!  
  
  
 **The greatest deceiver in the world!**  
  
The detection of deceit, if not a pleasant employment,   
is certainly a profitable one. My object is to expose **the   
greatest deceiver in the world**, whose design is to cheat   
you, my dear children, not of your property, nor of your   
liberty, nor of your life—but of what is infinitely dearer   
than all these—the salvation of your immortal soul!   
  
His success has been frightful, beyond description! Earth   
is full of his wiles! Hell is full of his spoils. Millions of lost   
souls bewail his success in the bottomless pit, as the   
smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever!  
  
**Who is this impostor, and what is his name?**  
  
Is it the false prophet of Mecca? No!   
  
Is it the spirit of paganism? No!  
  
Is it the ploys of infidelity? No!   
  
**It is the human heart**—in its deep devices and   
endless machinations!  
  
"The human heart is deceitful above all things, and   
desperately wicked! Who really knows how bad it is?"   
Jer 17:9  
  
This self-deception prevails to a most alarming extent in   
the business of personal piety. The 'road to destruction'  
is crowded with travelers, who vainly suppose that they   
are walking in the path of life, and whose 'dreams of   
happiness' nothing will disturb—but the dreadful reality   
of eternal misery!

**The narrow gate**  
  
"Enter through **the narrow gate**. For wide is the gate and  
broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many  
enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the  
road that leads to life, and only a few find it." Mat 7:13-14  
  
Our Lord has most explicitly taught us, that the entrance   
to the path of life is attended with difficulty—and is not to   
be accomplished without effort. Into that road, we are not  
borne by the pressure of the thronging multitude, nor the   
force of natural inclination. No broad and flowery avenue   
attracts the eye; no siren songs of worldly pleasure allure   
the ear.  
  
"Strive to enter in at the narrow gate—for many will seek   
to enter in, and shall not be able." This implies that there   
are obstructions to be removed, and difficulties to be   
surmounted.   
  
The fundamental and universal obstruction with which   
everyone has to contend, is the darkness and depravity   
brought upon human nature by the fall; and the indulged   
sensuality, prejudice and enmity of the carnal mind.  
  
  
  
**He will strive to be like Him**  
  
The true believer has a willingness to obey God in all   
things. There must be . . .  
a distinct acknowledgment of God's right to govern us;   
an unreserved surrender of our heart and life to His authority;  
a habitual desire to do what He has enjoined,   
a habitual desire to avoid what He has forbidden.   
  
Where there is this desire to please God, this reluctance to   
offend God—he will read with constancy and attention the   
sacred volume, which is written for the express purpose of   
teaching us how to obey and please the Lord. Finding there   
innumerable injunctions against all kinds of immorality and   
sin, and as many commands to practice every personal,   
relative, and social duty—the true Christian will be   
zealous for all good works.   
  
Remembering that Jesus Christ his example,   
**he will strive to be like Him** . . .  
in purity,   
in spirituality,   
in submission to the will of God,   
in devotedness to the divine glory.   
  
Nor will he forget to imitate the beautiful meekness,   
humility, and kindness of Jesus.   
  
Saving faith never fails to produce love to Jesus,   
which transforms the believer into His image.

The moral condition of the world is too bad for description.   
If it is ever to be improved—it must be done by Christians.   
Genuine piety is **the only real reformer of mankind**.

**Alas! alas!**  
  
"Godliness has value for all things, holding promise for  
both the present life and the life to come." 1Ti 4:8  
  
My children, true godliness will save you from much   
present danger and trouble, promote your temporal   
interests, prepare you for the darkest scenes of   
adversity, comfort you on a dying bed, and finally   
conduct you to everlasting glory!  
  
The lack of true piety will ensure misery on earth,   
and be followed with eternal torments in hell!  
  
What then, my children, are all worldly acquirements   
and possessions, without true piety? What are the   
accomplishments of taste, the elegancies of wealth,   
the wreaths of fame? Authentic genius, a vigorous   
understanding, a well-stored mind, and all this   
adorned by the most amiable temper and most   
pleasing demeanor, will neither comfort under the   
trials of life, nor save their lovely possessor from the   
worm which never dies and the fire which is never   
quenched! **Alas! alas!** that such estimable qualities   
should all perish for lack of that piety which alone   
can give immortality and perfection to the   
excellences of the human character!   
  
  
**No wonder that their children go astray!**  
  
It is a melancholy fact, that there are many families with   
professing Christian parents, where scarcely the semblance   
of domestic piety or instruction is to be found, where . . .  
no family altar is seen,  
no family prayer is heard,  
no parental admonition is delivered!   
  
What! this cruel, wicked, ruinous neglect of their children's   
immortal interests in the families of professors! **Monstrous   
inconsistency!** Shocking dereliction of principle! **No wonder   
that their children go astray!** Some of the most profligate   
young people that I know, have issued from such households.   
Their prejudices against true religion are greater than those   
of the children of avowed worldlings!  
  
Inconsistent, hypocritical, negligent professors of religion,  
frequently excite in their children, an unconquerable aversion  
and disgust against true piety—which seems to produce in  
them a determination to place themselves at the furthest  
possible remove from its influence. **Oh! this is a cold and selfish world!  
  
  
Scattering the seeds of poison and death!**  
  
"One sinner destroys much good." Ecc 9:18  
  
To do good is God-like. To do evil is devil-like. And   
we are all imitating God or Satan—accordingly as we   
are leading a holy or a sinful life.   
  
"One sinner destroys much good." He not only does  
not do good **himself**—but he destroys good in **others!**  
Instead of doing good, he does only evil. He not only   
leaves unassisted all the great means and instruments   
for improving and blessing the world, and has no share   
in all that is being done for the spiritual and eternal   
welfare of mankind; but he opposes it, and seeks to   
perpetuate and extend the reign of sin, and the   
kingdom of Satan! He . . .  
corrupts by his principles,  
seduces by his example, and   
leads others astray by his persuasions!  **He is ever scattering the seeds of poison and   
death in his path!**  
  
**Who can imagine**, I again say, how many miserable   
specters await his arrival in hell—or follow him there   
to be his tormentors—in revenge for his having been   
their tempter!   
  
True religion happily saves all who possess it from this   
mischief—it makes a man an instrument of good, and not   
of evil—to his fellow creatures. True religion renders him . . .  
a blessing—and not a curse;  
a savior—and not a destroyer;  
a physician to heal—and not a murderer to destroy!   
  
He lives to do good . . .  
good of the noblest and most lasting kind,  
good to the soul,  
good to distant nations,  
good to the world,  
good to unborn generations,  
good for eternity!   
  
He is a benefactor to his race—a philanthropist of the   
noblest order! By a godly example, he adorns true   
religion, and recommends it to others, who, attracted   
by the beauties of holiness as they are reflected from   
his character—are led to imitate his conduct.   
  
  
**God's eye!**  
  
"By **the fear of the Lord**, men depart from evil."   
Pro 16:6  
  
True religion will implant in your hearts a regard to   
the authority and presence of God. This veneration   
for God comes in to aid the exercise of love for holiness.   
  
By **the fear of God**, I do not mean a slavish and tormenting   
dread of the Divine Being, which haunts the mind like an   
ever-present spectre—that is superstition, not true religion.   
  
But I mean a fear springing out of affection, the fear of   
a child dreading to offend the father whom he loves. What   
a restraint from sin is there in that child's mind! He may   
be absent from his father; but love keeps him from doing   
what his father disapproves.   
  
So it is with true religion; it is love to God, and love   
originates fear. He who is thus blessed with the love   
and fear of God is armed as with a shield of triple brass,   
against sin. The temptation comes with all its seductive   
force—but it is repelled with the indignant question—  
"How shall I do this wickedness, and sin against God?"   
  
And this awesome Being is felt to be everywhere!   
  
Yes, God is in every place. Heaven and the earth are   
full of his presence. A person once dreamed that **the   
sky was one vast eye of God**, ever looking down   
upon him. He could never get out of the sight of **this   
tremendous eye**, he could never look up but this   
solemn eye was gazing upon him. The moral of this   
fearful dream is a fact. **God's eye** is always, and   
everywhere, upon us!   
  
Who could sin, if he saw God in a bodily form looking   
upon him? Young man, could you go to the theater, or   
to still worse places, if you saw **this vast and searching   
eye**, with piercing looks, fixed upon you? Impossible! "No!"   
you would say, "I must wait until that eye is gone, or   
closed, or averted." But it is never gone, never closed,   
never averted! This the pious man knows, and therefore   
says, "O God, You see me!"   
  
Would you sin, if your father were present? Would you   
enter the haunt of vice if he stood at the door, looking   
in your face, and saying, "My son, if sinners entice you,   
consent not; my son, do not walk in the way with them  
—turn your foot from their path!" You could not so insult   
and grieve your good father's heart. But though your earthly   
father is not there—your heavenly Father is. Your father's   
eye does not see you—but **God's eye** does! This the pious   
person believes and feels—and turns away from sin!  
  
"O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything   
about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know   
my every thought when far away. You chart the path ahead   
of me and tell me where to stop and rest. Every moment you   
know where I am. You know what I am going to say even   
before I say it, Lord. You both precede and follow me. You   
place your hand of blessing on my head. Such knowledge is   
too wonderful for me, too great for me to know! I can never   
escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your   
presence! If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down   
to the place of the dead, you are there. If I ride the wings   
of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, even there   
your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me.   
I could ask the darkness to hide me and the light around me   
to become night—but even in darkness I cannot hide from you.   
To you the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light  
are both alike to you. You watched me as I was being formed   
in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the   
womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life   
was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before   
a single day had passed. How precious are your thoughts   
about me, O God! They are innumerable!" Psalm 139.  
  
  
  
**Bias against the gospel**  
  
"I will destroy the **wisdom** of the wise; the intelligence  
of the intelligent I will frustrate." 1Co 1:19  
  
Man has an **intellectual bias against the gospel**, because   
it humbles the arrogance of his pride of intellect. He also   
has a **moral bias against the gospel**, because it would   
check the indulgence of his sinful passions.  
  
"Light has come into the world, but **men loved darkness**  
instead of light because their deeds were evil." Joh 3:19  
  
  
  
**While looking on his breathless corpse!**  
  
To a godly parent, the **profligate conduct** of a child   
is the bitterest disappointment of all. To see a young   
man who has been piously educated, and brought up   
in the fear of God—so far forgetting the instructions,   
prayers and examples of his father, and the tears and   
affectionate entreaties of his mother—as to "walk in   
the counsel of the ungodly, to stand in the way of   
sinners, and sit in the seat of the scornful"—to see  
him forming bad associations, indulging his evil   
propensities, wandering off, like the prodigal, into  **the paths of vice and profligacy, the slave of lust   
and wine**—how distressfully disappointing is all this!   
  
**Unhappy parents!** who have been called to endure   
this trial!  
  
"Oh," says the Christian parent, "has it come to this  
—that all my solicitude, my prayers, my tears for my   
son—end in his profligacy! That all my desires and   
expectations that he would become a child of God,  
terminate in his being a prodigal! All my hopes of   
his being a servant of Christ—disappointed in my   
seeing him **a slave of Satan!** How carefully have I   
watched him, how diligently have I instructed him,   
how earnestly have I prayed for him! And are all my   
prayers and tears as water spilt upon the ground? I   
have been laboring in vain, and spending my strength   
for nothing, yes, worse than in vain! My every instruction,  
correction, and reproof, has aggravated his guilt here—  
and will increase his misery hereafter! So that while,   
in intention I was acting the most kind and tender   
part, I was, in the result, only treasuring up for my   
son, wrath against the day of wrath. **Alas, alas!   
Woe is me! O my son, my son!**"  
  
How tenfold more dreadful are these reflections if the   
son has died in his sins—a case by no means uncommon.   
How painful are the father's tears that his child has fallen   
into a state of everlasting ruin! "Oh," will the afflicted   
parent say, "how comparatively light would be my sorrows,   
if, **while looking on his breathless corpse**, and mourning   
the disappointment of my hopes as to the present life, I   
could look forward to the world of glory, and see the branch   
of my family, which is cut off from earth, transplanted there   
and flourishing there. Joy would then mingle with my paternal   
sorrows, and praises with my tears. **But alas! I have reason   
to fear that it was cut down**—**that it might be cast into   
everlasting burnings!  
  
  
  
Your journey to eternity!**  
  
"They confessed that they were **strangers  
and pilgrims here on earth**." Heb 11:13  
  
Christian! Your earthly sojourn is **a pilgrimage to heaven!**  
  
Look up to that better country which is above and   
beyond the boundaries of earth and time—the home   
of the holy, the good, and the blessed . . .  
where there shall be no more death, or sorrow, or crying;   
where there shall be no more pain;   
where fears, anxieties and labors have no place;  
where the turmoils and the strifes of life are unknown;   
where the wicked cease from troubling;  
where the weary are at rest;   
where temptation will be over;  
where the conflict will cease.   
  
Blessed country! May it be your chief concern to   
travel to that joyful and glorious land.   
  
From this present world you must depart. No   
choice is left you. The hour of departure draws   
on—but whether it will be in youth, in manhood,   
or in old age, is known only to God.   
  
Shall there be no preparation for your eternal home?   
Shall there be no thoughtfulness or concern given to **your journey to eternity?**   
  
There are but two places of abode beyond the   
grave—heaven and hell. To one or the other you   
must soon depart! Which? Which?  
  
  
**Lifestyle evangelism**  
  
Let your piety be neither ostentatiously displayed,  
nor timidly concealed. At first it would be well to   
say little about the gospel to others—until you have   
gained their confidence and affection. Let there be   
no bustling and meddlesome zeal, nothing like   
parading your piety, and proclaiming your   
intention to convert everyone.   
  
Your light must shine before others—by your good   
works! Your piety must be **seen** in all its loveliness   
and consistency—before it is **heard!** Be known as the   
humble, meek, and gentle follower of the Lamb—the   
friend of everyone—the enemy of none.   
  
Take especial care that your **conduct** be uniformly   
consistent. When it is known—and known it ought to   
be—that you are a Christian, **you will be watched by   
the malignant eyes** of those who wait for your failing,   
and whose ingenuity will be taxed to lay snares for your   
feet. **One wrong step will destroy all your influence!**   
By defacing the beauty and impairing the strength of   
your example, you will subject not only yourself—but   
Christianity, to the suspicion of hypocrisy.  
  
  
  
**On the high road to poverty!**  
  
"He who loves pleasure will become poor; whoever  
loves wine and oil will never be rich." Pro 21:17  
  
Never were truer words uttered. The man who is bent   
upon what is called "enjoying himself," who will have  
his mirthful companions, his amusements, and his   
frequent seasons of recreation. The man who is fond   
of parties, entertainments, the gaming table, the ball   
room, the concert, and the theater—is **on the high   
road to poverty** in this world—and to hell in the next!   
  
Let the lover of pleasure read the history of **Sampson**in the Old Testament—and of the **Prodigal** in the New  
Testament.

**Beauty** is the production of God, and, as one of His   
gifts, is, like every other, to be considered good in   
itself, and to be received with thankfulness. But how   
often does it prove a snare to its possessor—and a  
temptation to others!

**How could I ever do such a wicked thing?**  
  
"Godliness has value for all things, holding promise  
for both the present life and the life to come." 1Ti 4:8  
  
True piety is the parent of every virtue which is   
either useful to man, or pleasing to God.  
  
Sincere, heartfelt and very decided piety is necessary   
to prepare for those sudden, violent, and unexpected   
temptations which often beset the young traveler on   
life's eventful journey.  
  
There are temptations so strong, so violent, so   
fascinating to our corrupt natures—that all other   
restraints but those of true piety will be swept   
away before them, like cobwebs or chaff by the   
force of a tempest.   
  
"**How could I ever do such a wicked thing?** It  
would be a great sin against God." Gen 39:9

**Instructive, entertaining, and interesting**  
The Bible is the most **instructive, entertaining,   
and interesting** volume in the world—uniting, as   
it does, every species of writing, every variety of   
subject, and every style of composition. Much of   
the Bible is historical and biographical. It is a   
gallery of portraits, both of good and bad men;   
some merely sketched in outline; some showing   
part of the figure only, and some drawn at full   
length. This makes the Scriptures at once   
interesting and instructive.   
  
We see SIN in living shapes—depraved, leprous,   
beastly, diabolical—and learn to hate it.   
  
We see HOLINESS, fair and beautiful, though by   
no means perfectly angelical and heavenly—and   
we are by such examples taught to love it, and   
helped to acquire it.

**Piety and morality**  
Saving faith is intended to produce two results—love to   
God and love to man. In other words **piety and morality**.   
  
Remember this, for it is of vast importance that you should   
remember it. Penitence, faith, inward holiness, devoutness,   
heavenliness, are all parts of saving faith, without which   
the fairest morality, and most beautiful amiability, are, in   
the sight of God, worth nothing, and will be found totally   
unavailing to salvation.   
  
There may be much general amiability and morality,   
without an atom of genuine piety! **The amiable profligate!**  
  
Of all the characters on earth that are dangerous   
to you, and should be shunned by you, **the amiable   
profligate** is the one most to be dreaded. The man   
of kind disposition, insinuating address, polished   
manners, sparkling wit, and keen humor—but of   
bad principles or bad conduct—is the most seductive   
agent of the Wicked One for the ruin of youth!  
  
He has the fascination of the eye of the basilisk (a   
legendary reptile with fatal breath and glance); he   
has the glossy and beautifully variegated skin of the   
serpent, concealing the fang and the venom; he is the   
golden chalice that contains the poisonous draught;   
or, to reach the climax, **he is Satan transformed**   
into a personification of **polished and attractive  
vice!** Of such men beware!  
  
  
**Incurable propensity to idolatry**  
  
"Ephraim is joined to idols!" Hos 4:17  
  
A strange and almost **incurable propensity to idolatry**   
had ever been evinced by the Israelitish race, obviously   
springing from that depravity of their nature which made   
them long for deities congenial to their own corrupted   
taste. The spirituality and purity of the true God offended   
them. They could not be content with a religion of which   
faith was the great principle of action—but coveted objects   
of worship which could be presented to the senses, and   
which would be tolerant of their vices.   
  
Such is the power of example, especially when it agrees  
with our corrupt inclinations, that the Jews, notwithstanding   
the revelation they had received from God, and the care He   
took to preserve them from the abominations of the   
surrounding nations, often forsook the worship of Jehovah   
for idols, or attempted to incorporate idolatry with Judaism.   
Ahab, one of the wickedest of their monarchs, had married   
Jezebel, the daughter of the king of the Zidonians, by whom   
Baal was worshiped. **Through the influence of this wicked   
woman**, the worship of Baal was diffused to an enormous   
extent in the kingdom of Israel.  
  
  
  
**The virtuous woman**  
  
"She will do him good and not harm, all the  
days of her life." Pro 31:12  
  
**The virtuous woman** will will be inventive,   
ingenious, and laborious to promote his   
comfort, his health, and his interest.  
  
She will smooth by her sweet words his brow,   
when wrinkled with care.  
  
She will hush the sigh that misfortune extorts  
from his bosom.  
  
She will answer with gentleness the sharp words   
that in moments of irritation drop from his lips,   
and will do all this, not by fits and starts when   
in congenial moods, but continually.  
  
  
  
**To sum up all**  
And now, **to sum up all**, consider—  
  
A mother's **charge**—an immortal creature.  
  
A mother's **duty**—to train him up for God,   
heaven and eternity.  
  
A mother's **dignity**—to educate the family   
of the Almighty Creator of the universe.  
  
A mother's **difficulty**—to raise a fallen sinful  
creature to holiness and virtue.  
  
A mother's **encouragement**—the promise of Divine  
grace to assist her in her momentous duties.  
  
A mother's **relief**—to bear the burden of her  
cares to God in prayer.  
  
A mother's **hope**—to meet her child in glory  
everlasting, and spend eternal ages of delight  
with him before the throne of God and the Lamb!  
  
  
  
**This inward spring of grace in the soul**  
  
"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty  
again, but whoever drinks the water I give him  
will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him  
will become in him a spring of water, welling  
up to eternal life!" Joh 4:13-14  
  
True religion is a **new**, a **spiritual**, a **divine**, a  **heavenly life**—the life of God in the soul of man!  
  
While the pleasures of the world—the lust of the   
flesh, the pride of life, and the lust of the eyes,  
are but as drops which inflame rather than allay   
the thirst of the natural man after true happiness,   
or at best leave him unsatisfied; the grace of Christ   
in renewing and sanctifying the soul, leads it to the   
true fountain of bliss, and compels it in the fullness   
of satisfaction, to exclaim, "I have found it; I have   
found it!"   
  
And this source of happiness is not far off, for it is   
within and not outside its possessor. It will become   
in him a spring of water! He carries the spring about   
with him as an abundant, an unfailing source, a   
constant supply—a well ever accessible and never   
dry—a spring whose sparkling and gushing ebullitions   
shall be ever bubbling up, and forming an ever-living   
fountain that flows at all seasons of the year, in heat   
or cold, and in all the circumstances of the weather,   
whether foul or fair, wet or dry. True religion always   
lives, always shows its beauties—and amid all   
changes of external circumstances.   
  
**This inward spring of grace in the soul** is represented   
as rising higher and higher, and never stopping until it   
reaches eternal life; swelling into a stream which refreshes   
others in its course to eternity, making all around it fruitful   
and pleasant; just like a river flowing through a country   
which irrigates the land and covers it on every hand with   
fertility and beauty!  
 **Is this descriptive of your religion?**   
  
Do you know anything of this . . .  
indwelling of the Spirit of God?   
inward supply from a divine source of sanctity and bliss?   
holy ebullition of sanctified feeling?   
rising up of an inward principle to a divine source?  
  
Do you know anything of this something . . .  
**godlike**, which aspires to God,  
**heavenly**, which aspires to heaven,  
**eternal**, which rests not until it has reached the eternal?  
  
The Christian life is a state of . . .  
self-denial,  
intense desire,  
deep solicitude,  
of strenuous, unwearied action,  
of constant progress.

**The most attractive of all female graces**  
  
"And I want women to be **modest** in their appearance.  
They should wear decent and appropriate clothing and  
not draw attention to themselves by the way they fix  
their hair or by wearing gold or pearls or expensive  
clothes." 1Ti 2:9  
  
**Modesty** is **the most attractive of all female graces**.   
What is **intelligence** without it, but bolder impudence;   
or **beauty** but a more seductive snare?  
  
Modesty is a woman's ornament, investing all her   
other excellences with additional charms—the blush   
of purity upon the cheek of beauty. It is her power,   
by which she subdues every heart that is worth   
the conquest.  
  
**Chastity** is the robe which every woman should   
wear, and **modesty** is the golden clasp that keeps   
it upon her, and the fringe that adorns it.  
  
  
**A bad disposition**   
  
"Be kind and compassionate to one another,  
forgiving each other." Eph 4:32  
  
There is a saying, that "disposition is everything."   
This is going too far, since it is not to be doubted   
good disposition is sometimes associated with bad   
principle. While on the other hand, there are many   
high-principled and noble-minded individuals, who   
are troubled, equally to their own annoyance and   
that of their friends, with infirmities of disposition.   
  
Still, though not everything, good disposition is a   
great thing. Reason and religion may do much, and   
in myriads of instances have done much, to correct   
and improve a naturally bad disposition.   
  
**A bad disposition** will torment you through life. With   
this you will carry your own curse with you everywhere.   
  
**A bad disposition** will multiply your enemies, and  
alienate your friends.  
  
**A bad disposition** will becloud your reason and   
benumb your religion.  
  
**A bad disposition** will embitter your comforts   
and envenom your trials.  
  
**A bad disposition** will make you unhappy at home,   
and secure you distress when away from home.  
  
**A bad disposition** will give you wretchedness at the time,   
and conscious guilt and painful reflections afterwards.  
  
**A bad disposition** will deprive your days of peace   
and your nights of sleep.   
  
In short, **a bad disposition** will be to the soul what a   
chronic and painful disease is to the body—a constant   
source of uneasiness and distress, with this difference,  
that whereas the one brings its own consolation with   
it to the Christian, the other brings nothing but   
punishment and shame.

**How is a mother's heart grieved** to see her daughters,   
after all the pains she has taken to form their pious   
character, more taken up with fashion, company, and  
gaiety—than with eternal realities! And their father, how   
is he distressed to see his counsels unheeded, his prayers   
unanswered, and they whom he had hoped to lead to God,   
far more fond of the fleeting mirthful vanities of the world!

**Young women!**  
  
**Young women!** Deeply ponder, that character for life   
is usually formed in youth. It is the golden season of   
life, and to none more truly and eminently so than to   
the young woman. Her leisure, her freedom from care,   
and her protected situation, give her the opportunity   
for this, which it is her wisdom and her duty to consider,   
embrace, and improve.   
  
Set out in life with a deep conviction of the momentous   
consequence of self-discipline. Let your mind, your heart,   
your conscience, be the chief object of your solicitude.   
  
Lay the basis of all your excellences in true religion . . .  
the religion of the heart,  
the religion of penitence,  
faith in Christ,  
love to God,  
a holy and heavenly mind.   
No character can be well-constructed, safe,   
complete, beautiful, or useful, without this.   
  
Cultivate a thoughtful, reflective turn of mind. Look   
beneath the surface of things; beyond their present   
aspect to their future consequences. Be somewhat   
meditative, and learn to restrain your words and   
feelings, by a rigid self-control. Pay most anxious   
attention to your temper, and acquire as much as   
possible its perfect command. More women are   
rendered miserable, and render others miserable,  
by neglect of this, than perhaps from any other   
cause whatever. Let meekness of disposition   
and gentleness of manner be a constant study.   
  
These are woman's amiabilities, which fit her   
for her future situation far better than the bold,   
imposing, and obtrusive airs of those who   
mistake the secret of woman's influence.   
  
Contentment and patience;   
self-denial and submission;   
humility and subordination;   
prudence and discretion,   
are all virtues, the seeds of which should be   
sown by you in early youth, that their rich ripe   
fruits might be gathered in future life.   
  
Benevolence of heart, and kindness of disposition,   
must be among your foremost studies, the most   
prominent objects of your pursuit and most laborious   
endeavors; for they are the virtues which in their   
maturity are to form excellence in Christian character,   
and constitute you the fit companion for a husband.   
  
Make worldly accomplishments subordinate to more   
substantial excellences. And as matters of mental   
taste are to be less thought of, than the state of   
the heart and the formation of moral character,   
so let especially bodily adornments be in low   
estimation compared with those of the mind.   
  
To prepare you to carry out the duties of your future   
mission with ease to yourself, with satisfaction to a   
husband, and comfort to a household, pay attention   
to the minor virtues—punctuality, love of order, and   
efficiency. These are all of immense importance, the   
lack of them in the female head of a family, must   
necessarily fill the home with confusion, and the   
hearts of its inhabitants with sadness. Set out in life   
with a deep conviction of the importance of habits, and   
a constant recollection that habits for life are formed in   
youth and that these habits, if not acquired then, are   
likely never to be.   
  
Aim at universal excellence. Do little things well. Avoid   
with extreme dread a loose, slovenly, and careless way   
of doing anything proper to be done.   
  
Young women, your whole future life will illustrate and   
confirm the truth and propriety of this advice, either by   
the comfort and usefulness which will result from your   
attending to it—or by the miseries which you will endure   
yourself and inflict on others, if you allow it to sink into   
oblivion.  
  
  
  
**Home, sweet home**  
  
HOME is the proper sphere of woman's action and influence!  
  
There are few terms in the language around which cluster so   
many blissful associations as that delight of every English   
heart—the word HOME.   
  
The paradise of love.  
  
The nursery of virtue.  
  
The garden of enjoyment.  
  
The temple of harmony.  
  
The circle of all tender relationships.  
  
The playground of childhood.  
  
The dwelling of adulthood.  
  
The retreat of old age.  
  
HOME is where health loves to enjoy its pleasures,   
wealth to revel in its luxuries, and poverty bears its   
rigors—where best sickness can endure its pains, and   
dissolving nature expire—which throws its spell over   
those who are within its charmed circle, and even   
sends its attractions across oceans and continents,   
drawing to itself the thoughts and wishes of the man   
who wanders from it, to the opposite end on the globe  
—this, **home, sweet home**—is the sphere of wedded   
woman's mission!  
  
Is it any hardship upon woman, any depreciation of her   
importance, to place her sphere of action and influence   
there? Is it to assign her a circle of influence unworthy  
of herself, to call her to preside over that little home?   
  
Shall we estimate the importance of such a scene of action?   
Shall we tell of the varied and momentous interests which   
are included in that circle? Shall we speak of the happiness   
of a **husband**, whose bliss, to so considerable an extent, is   
created by herself—and which involves **her own** happiness;   
or the character and future well-being for both worlds of her  
**children**?   
  
It is the privilege of the woman . . .  
to make one such home a seat of holiness and happiness;   
to fill one such sphere with an influence so sweet and sacred;   
to throw the fascination of wedded delight and of maternal   
influence over one such home; to irradiate so many faces   
with delight; to fill so many hearts with contentment, and   
to prepare so many characters for their future part in life!   
  
One of the most hallowed, lovely, and beautiful sights in our  
world—is a woman at home discharging in all the **meekness**of **wisdom**, the various duties of wife and mother, with an   
**order** that nothing is allowed to disturb; a **patience** which   
nothing can exhaust; an **affection** which is never ruffled;   
and a **perseverance** that no difficulties can interrupt, nor   
any disappointments arrest!  
  
  
  
**Satan's baits!**  
  
Bring up your children with low notions of the   
importance of **riches** and **worldly show**, and   
of the power which these things have either   
to give respectability to the character, or to   
procure happiness.  
  
Do not let them hear you magnify the value of   
wealth by your words—nor see you do it by your   
actions. Avoid a servile attention to the rich and   
great—do not point to them as the individuals   
most to be admired and envied. Do not have an  
undue solicitude about grandeur of abode, or   
furniture. From the time that they are capable   
of receiving an idea, or an impression, teach   
them it is godly character that constitutes true  
respectability.  
  
Remind them of the danger of **riches**, and that   
they are **Satan's baits** to tempt men to love the   
world—and lose their souls!  
  
Not that you should produce a cynical disposition   
towards either riches or the rich; much less repress   
industry, and foster indolence. No—but encourage   
them to consider and seek wealth, rather as a   
means of usefulness, than a source of personal   
gratification.  
  
  
  
**It is indeed a fearsome thing to be a parent**  
On parents it depends in a great measure   
what their children are to be . . .  
miserable or happy in themselves,  
a comfort or a curse to their relationships,  
an ornament or a deformity to society,  
a fiend or a seraph in eternity!   
  
**It is indeed a fearsome thing to be a parent**,   
and is enough to awaken the anxious, trembling   
enquiry in every heart, "Lord, who is sufficient   
for these things?"

**Conducting their children to the bottomless pit!**  
  
A graceless parent is a most dreadful character! Oh!   
to see the father and mother of a expanding family,   
with a crowd of young immortals growing up around   
them, and teaching worldliness to their offspring,   
and leading them to perdition, by the power of their   
own example!   
  
A sheep leading her twin lambs into the den   
of a hungry tiger would be a shocking sight!   
But to see parents **conducting their children   
to the bottomless pit, is most horrible!!  
  
  
  
He who has most piety**  
A good Christian cannot be a bad husband,   
or father. **He who has most piety**, will shine   
most in all the relationships of life.   
  
A bible placed between man and wife as . . .   
the basis of their union,  
the rule of their conduct,  
and the model of their temper, will . . .  
make up many a difference,   
comfort them under many a cross,   
guide them in many a strait,   
support them in their last sad parting from each other,   
and reunite them in eternal glory! **To make her holy**  
  
"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the   
church and gave Himself up for her **to make her holy**."  
Eph 5:25-26  
  
**In a Christian marriage**, there should be the exercise of   
a constant reciprocal solicitude, watchfulness, and care,   
in reference to their **spiritual and eternal welfare**. One   
of the ends which every true believer should propose to   
himself, on entering the marriage state, is to secure one   
faithful friend, at least, who will be a helpmate for him   
in reference to the eternal world, assist him in the great   
business of his soul's salvation, and that will pray for him   
and with him; one that will affectionately tell him of his   
sins and his defects; one that will stimulate and draw him   
by the power of a holy example, and the sweet force of   
persuasive words; one that will warn him in temptation,   
comfort him in dejection, and in every way assist him in   
his pilgrimage to the skies. The highest end of the marital   
state is lost, if it be not rendered helpful to our piety.  
  
Do we converse with each other as we ought on the high   
themes of redemption by Christ, and eternal salvation?   
Do we study each other's dispositions, snares, troubles,   
decays in piety—that we may apply suitable remedies? Do   
we exhort one another daily, lest we should be hardened   
through the deceitfulness of sin? Do we practice faithfulness   
without censoriousness; and administer praise without flattery?   
  
Do we encourage one another to the most quickening and   
edifying means of grace, and recommend the perusal of   
such instructive and improving books as we have found   
beneficial to ourselves? Do we mutually lay open the state   
of our minds on the subject of personal piety, and state   
our perplexities, our joys, our fears, our sorrows?   
  
Alas, alas! who must not blush at their neglects in these   
particulars? And yet such neglect is as criminal as it is   
common. Fleeing from the wrath to come—and yet not   
doing all we can to aid each other's escape! Contending   
side by side for the crown of glory, honor, immortality,   
and eternal life—and yet not doing all we can to ensure   
each other's success!   
  
Is this love?   
  
Is this the tenderness of marital affection? **Love is patient and kind.**  
  
"**Love is patient and kind.**" 1Co 13:4  
  
For this love there is both need and room in every relation   
of life. Wherever sin or imperfection exists, there is scope   
for the patience of love. There is no perfection upon earth.   
Lovers, it is true, often fancy they have found it; but the   
more sober judgment of husbands and wives generally   
corrects the mistake; and first impressions of this kind,   
usually pass away with first love.   
  
We should all enter the married state, remembering that   
we are about to be united to a sinful person—and it is not   
two 'angels' that have met together, but two 'sinful people',   
from whom must be expected much weakness and selfishness.  
  
We must expect some imperfection in our spouse. Remembering   
that we ourselves have no small share of sinfulness, which calls   
for the forbearance of the other party—we should exercise the   
patience that we ask from them. Where both have infirmities,   
and they are so constantly together, innumerable occasions   
will be furbished, which, if they do not produce a permanent   
suppression of love, lead to its temporary interruption. Many   
things we should overlook, others we should pass by with   
an unprovoked mind, and in all things most carefully avoid   
even what at first may seem to be an innocent disputation.   
  
Love does not forbid, but actually demands that we should   
mutually point out the faults of our spouses; but this should   
be done in all the meekness of wisdom united with all the   
tenderness of love, lest we only increase the evil we intend   
to remove, or substitute a greater one in its place. Justice,   
as well as wisdom, requires that in every case, we set the   
good qualities against the bad ones, and in most cases we   
shall find some redeeming excellencies, which, if they do not   
reconcile us to the failings we deplore, should at least teach   
us to bear them with patience. And the more we contemplate   
these better aspects of the character, the brighter will they   
appear—for it is an indubitable fact, that while faults diminish,   
virtues magnify in proportion as they are steadily contemplated.  
  
As to bitterness of speech, and harshness of conduct—this   
is so utterly disgraceful, that it scarcely needs be mentioned   
even by way of cautioning against it.