

# More Pearls From Philpot

by J.C. Philpot

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*J.C. Philpot's sermon explores the dangers of idolatry, the nature of pride, and the profound significance of salvation through God's grace and afflictions.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 139:23, Jeremiah 50:38, Ezekiel 21:27, Matthew 11:28, 1 John 5:21

**Topics:** "Idolatry", "Sanctification"

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## Description

J.C. Philpot preaches about the deep-rooted sin of idolatry in the human heart, emphasizing the need to keep ourselves from idols as warned in 1 John 5:21. He describes how idolatry can take various forms, from material objects to worldly desires, and even to the subtle idols of the mind and heart. Philpot highlights the constant struggle and conflict between self and Christ, where self-righteousness and pride must be overthrown for Christ to reign supreme in the soul.

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## Transcript

Some beloved idol?

"Because the whole land is filled with idols, and the people are madly in love with them." Jeremiah 50:38

Have we not all in our various ways,

set up some beloved idol . . .

something which engaged our affections,

something which occupied our thoughts,

something to which we devoted all the energies of our minds,

something for which we were willing to labor night and day?

Be it money,

be it power,

be it esteem of men,

be it respectability,  
be it worldly comfort,  
be it literary knowledge,  
there was a secret setting up of SELF in one or  
more of its various forms, and a bowing down  
to it as an idol.

The man of business makes money his god.

The man of pleasure makes the lust of the flesh his god.

The proud man makes his adored SELF his god.

The Pharisee makes self-righteousness his god.

The Arminian makes free-will his god.

The Calvinist makes dry doctrine his god.

All in one way or other, however they may differ  
in the object of their idolatrous worship, agree in  
this: that they give a preference in their esteem  
and affection to their peculiar idol, above the one  
true God.

"Idols will be utterly abolished and destroyed."

Isaiah 2:18

There is, then, a time to break down these  
idols which our fallen nature has set up.

And have not we experienced some measure of  
this breaking down, both externally and internally?

Have not our idols been in a measure smashed  
before our eyes, our prospects in life cut up and  
destroyed, our airy visions of earthly happiness  
and our romantic paradises dissolved into thin air,

our creature-hopes dashed, our youthful affections blighted, and the objects from which we had fondly hoped to reap an enduring harvest of delight removed from our eyes?

And likewise, as to our religion . . .

our good opinion of ourselves,

our piety and holiness,

our wisdom and our knowledge,

our understanding and our abilities,

our consistency and uprightness;

have they not all been broken down, and

made a heap of ruins before our eyes?

That monstrous creature within us!

"I abhor the pride of Jacob." Amos 6:8

O cursed pride, that is ever lifting up its head in our hearts! Pride would even pull down God that it might sit upon His throne. Pride would trample under foot the holiest things to exalt itself!

Pride is that monstrous creature within us, of such ravenous and indiscriminate gluttony, that the more it devours, the more it craves!

Pride is that chameleon which assumes every color; that actor which can play every part; and yet which is faithful to no one object or purpose, but to exalt and glorify self!

"I will put an end to the pride of the mighty." "God will bring down their pride." (Ezek. 7:24, Isaiah 25:11)

God means to kill man's pride! And oh, what cutting weapons the Lord will sometimes make use of to kill a man's pride!

How He will bring him sometimes into the depths of temporal poverty, that He may make a stab at his worldly pride!

How He will bring to light the iniquities of his youth, that He may mortify his self-righteous pride!

How He will allow sin to break forth, if not openly, yet so powerfully within, that piercing convictions shall kill his spiritual pride!

And what deep discoveries of internal corruption will the Lord sometimes employ, to dig down to the root, and cut off the core of that poisonous tree, pride!

The Searcher of hearts dissects and anatomizes this inbred evil, cuts down to it through the quivering and bleeding flesh, and pursues with His keen knife its multiplied windings and ramifications.

"The day is coming when your pride will be brought low and the Lord alone will be exalted." Isaiah 2:11

"The arrogance of all people will be brought low.

Their pride will lie in the dust. The Lord alone will be exalted!" Isaiah 2:17

"The Lord Almighty has done it to destroy your pride and show His contempt for all human greatness."

Isaiah 23:9

Salvation

And they were shouting with a mighty shout,  
"Salvation comes from our God on the throne  
and from the Lamb!" Revelation 7:10

The sweetest song that heaven ever proclaimed,  
the most blessed note that ever melted the soul,  
is salvation.

Saved FROM . . .

death and hell;

the worm which never dies;

the fire which is never quenched;

the sulphurous flames of the bottomless pit;

the companionship of tormenting fiends and

all the foul wretches under which earth has groaned;

blaspheming God in unutterable woe;

an eternity of misery without end or hope!

Saved INTO . . .

heaven;

the sight of Jesus as He is;

perfect holiness and happiness;

the blissful company of holy angels and glorified saints;

and all this during the countless ages of a blessed eternity!

What tongue of men or angels can describe the  
millionth part of what is contained in the word  
salvation?

The soul's natural element

Before the soul can know anything about salvation,  
it must learn deeply and experimentally the nature

of sin, and of itself, as stained and polluted by sin.

It is proud, and needs to be humbled.

It is careless, and needs to be awakened.

It is alive, and needs to be killed.

It is full, and requires to be emptied.

It is whole, and needs to be wounded.

It is clothed, and requires to be stripped.

The soul is, by nature . . .

self-righteous;

self-seeking;

buried deep in worldliness and carnality;

utterly blind and ignorant;

filled with . . .

presumption,

arrogance,

conceit

and enmity;

hateful to all that is heavenly and spiritual.

Sin, in all its various forms, is

the soul's natural element.

Some of the features of the unregenerate

nature of man are . . .

covetousness,

lust,

worldly pleasure,

desire of the praise of men,

an insatiable thirst after self-advancement,

a complete abandonment to all that can please  
and gratify every new desire of the heart,  
an utter contempt and abhorrence of everything that  
restrains or defeats its mad pursuit of what it loves.

Education,  
moral restraints,  
or the force of habit,  
may restrain the outbreaking of inward corruption,  
and dam back the mighty stream of indwelling sin,  
so that it shall not burst all its bounds, and desolate  
the land. But no moral check can alter human nature.

A chained tiger is a tiger still.

"The Ethiopian cannot change his  
skin, nor the leopard his spots."

To make man the direct contrary of what  
he originally is; to make him . . .  
love God instead of hating Him;  
fear God, instead of mocking Him;  
obey God, instead of rebelling against Him;  
to do this mighty work, and to effect this wonderful  
change, requires the implantation of a new nature  
by the immediate hand of God Himself.

Natural light,  
natural love,  
natural faith,  
natural obedience,  
in a word, all natural religion,

is here useless and ineffectual.

Godly sorrow

Godly sorrow springs from a view of a suffering

Savior, and manifests itself by . . .

hatred of self,

abhorrence of sin,

groaning over our backslidings,

grief of soul for being so often entangled by our lusts and passions,

and is accompanied by . . .

softness,

meltings of heart,

flowings of love to the Redeemer,

indignation against ourselves,

and earnest desires never to sin more.

But our coward flesh shrinks from them!

"I have refined you but not in the way silver

is refined. Rather, I have refined you in the

furnace of suffering." Isaiah 48:10

What benefit is there in afflictions?

Does God send them without an object in view?

Do they come merely, as the men of the world think,

by chance? No! There is benefit intended by them.

The branch cannot bear fruit unless it be pruned.

The love of sin cannot be cast out; the soul cannot

be meekened, humbled, softened, and made contrite;

the world cannot be embittered; the things of time

and sense cannot be stripped of their false hue and

their magic appearance--except through affliction.

Our greatest blessings usually spring from our greatest afflictions--they prepare the heart to receive them; they empty the vessel of the poisonous ingredients which have filled it, and fit it to receive gospel wine and milk.

To be without . . .

these afflictions,

these griefs,

these trials,

these temptations,

is to write ourselves destitute of grace.

But our coward flesh shrinks from them!

We are willing to walk to heaven; but not to walk there in God's way. Though we see in the Scripture that the path to glory is a rough and rugged way; yet when our feet are planted in that painful and trying path, we shrink back; our coward flesh refuses to walk in that road.

God therefore, as a sovereign, brings those afflictions upon us which He sees most fit for our profit and His glory, without ever consulting us, without ever allowing us a choice in the matter.

And He will generally cause our afflictions to come from the most unexpected source, and in a way most cutting to our feelings--in the way that of all others we would least have chosen--and yet in a way which of all others, is most for our profit.

God deals with us like a surgeon dealing with a diseased organ. How painful the operation!  
How deep the knife cuts!  
How long it may be before the wound is healed!  
Yet every stroke of the knife is indispensable!  
A skillful and faithful surgeon would not do his duty if he did not dissect it to the very bottom.  
As pain before healing is necessary, and must be produced by the knife; so spiritually, we must be wounded and cut in our souls, as long, and as deeply as God sees needful, that in His own time we may receive the consolation.

Do the afflictions we pass through humble us?  
Do they deaden the love of the world in our hearts?  
Do they purge out hypocrisy?  
Do they bring us more earnestly to the throne of grace?  
Do they discover to us sins that we have not before seen?  
Do they penetrate into our very hearts?  
Do they lay bare the corrupt fountain that we carry within us?  
Do they search and test us before a heart-searching God?  
Do they meeken and soften our spirit?

"I have refined you but not in the way silver is refined. Rather, I have refined you in the furnace of suffering." Isaiah 48:10

The filthy holes and puddles in which it grovels  
"The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" Jerem. 17:9

The sin of our fallen nature is a very mysterious thing.  
We read of "the mystery of iniquity". Sin has depths  
which no human plumbline ever fathomed, and lengths  
which no mortal measuring line ever yet measured out.  
Thus the way in which sin sometimes seems to sleep;  
and at other times to awake with renewed strength;  
its active, irritable, impatient, restless nature;  
the many shapes and colors it wears;  
the filthy holes and puddles in which it grovels;  
the corners into which it creeps;  
its deceitfulness;  
its hypocrisy;  
its craftiness;  
its persuasiveness;  
its intense selfishness;  
its utter recklessness;  
its desperate madness;  
its insatiable greediness;  
are secrets, painful secrets,  
only learned by bitter experience.

"The human heart is most deceitful and desperately  
wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" Jerem. 17:9

The Lord's secret power in our souls?

"He gives power to those who are tired and worn  
out; and increases strength to the weak." Is. 40:29

The Lord's people are often in the state that they have  
no might. All their power seems exhausted, and their

strength completely drained away; sin appears to have gotten the mastery over them; and they feel as if they had neither will nor ability to run the race set before them, or persevere in the way of the Lord.

Now what has kept us to this day? Some of you have made a profession ten, twenty, thirty, or forty years.

What has kept us?

When powerful temptations were spread for our feet, what preserved us from falling headlong into them?

When we felt the workings of strong lusts, what kept us from being altogether carried captive by them?

When we look at the difficulties of the way, the perplexities which our souls have had to grapple with, the persecutions and hard blows from sinners and saints that we have had to encounter--what has still kept in us a desire to fear God, and a heart in some measure tender before Him?

When we view the . . .

infidelity,

unbelief,

carnality,

worldly-mindedness,

hypocrisy,

pride, and

presumption of our fallen nature,

what has kept us still . . .

believing,

hoping,  
loving,  
longing,  
and looking to the Lord?  
When we think of our . . .  
deadness,  
coldness,  
torpidity,  
rebelliousness,  
perverseness,  
love to evil,  
aversion to good, and  
all the abounding corruptions of our nature,  
what has kept us from giving up the very profession  
of religion, and swimming down the powerful current  
that has so long and so often threatened to sweep  
us utterly from the Lord? Is it not the putting forth  
of the Lord's secret power in our souls?  
Can we not look back, and recall to mind our first  
religious companions; those with whom we started  
in the race; those whom we perhaps envied for their  
greater piety, zeal, holiness, and earnestness; and  
with which we painfully contrasted our own sluggishness  
and carnality; admiring them, and condemning ourselves?  
Where are they all, or the greater part of them?  
Some have embraced soul-destroying errors; others  
are buried in a worldly religious system; and others

are wrapped up in delusion and fleshly confidence.

Thus, while most have fallen into the snares of the devil; God, by putting forth His secret power in the hearts of His fainting ones, keeps His fear alive in their souls; holds up their goings in His paths that their footsteps slip not; brings them out of all their temptations and troubles; delivers them from every evil work; and preserves them unto His heavenly kingdom. He thus secures the salvation of His people by His own free grace.

How sweet and precious it is . . .

to have our strength renewed;

to have fresh grace brought into the heart;

to feel the mysterious sensations of renovated life;

to feel the everlasting arms supporting the soul . . .

fighting our battles for us,

subduing our enemies,

overcoming our lusts,

breaking our snares, and

delivering us out of our temptations!

God's house?

In the New Testament Scriptures, we find mention made in several places of "the house of the God."

The New Testament never, in any one instance, means, by "the house of God," any material building.

It has come to pass, through the traditions

received from the fathers, that . . .

buildings erected by man,

collections of bricks and mortar,  
piles of squared and cemented stones,  
are often called "the house of God."

In ancient Popish times they invested a consecrated building with the title of "God's house", thus endeavoring to make it appear as though it were a holy place in which God specially dwelt. They thus drew off the minds of the people from any internal communion with God, and possessed them with the idea that He was only to be found in some holy spot, consecrated and sanctified by rites and ceremonies.

The same leaven of the Pharisees has infected the Church of England; and thus she calls her consecrated buildings, her piles of stone and cement, "churches," and "houses of God."

And even those who profess a purer faith, who dissent from her unscriptural forms, have learned to adopt the same carnal language, and even they, through a misunderstanding of what "the house of God" really is, will call such a building as we are assembled in this morning, "the house of God."

How frequently does the expression drop from the pulpit, and how continually is it heard at the prayer meeting, "coming up to the house of God," as though any building now erected by human hands could be called the house of the living God.

It arises from a misunderstanding of the Scriptures,

and is much fostered by that priestcraft which is in the human heart, inciting us to believe that God is to be found only in certain buildings set apart for His service.

When the Holy Spirit preaches the gospel  
We often know the theory of the gospel,  
before we know the experience of the gospel.

We often receive the doctrines of grace into our judgment, before we receive the grace of the doctrines into our soul.

We therefore need to be . . .

brought down,

humbled,

tried,

stripped of every prop;

that the gospel may be to us . . .

more than a sound,

more than a name,

more than a theory,

more than a doctrine,

more than a system,

more than a creed;

that it may be . . .

soul enjoyment,

soul blessing,

and soul salvation.

When the Holy Spirit preaches the gospel

to the poor in spirit, the humbled, stripped,  
and tried--it is a gospel of glad tidings indeed  
to the sinner's broken heart.

We get entangled with some idol

Wherever the grace of God is, it constrains its  
partaker to desire to live to His honor and glory.

But he soon finds the difficulty of so doing.

Such is . . .

the weakness of the flesh,

the power of sin,

the subtlety of Satan,

the strength of temptation, and

the snares spread on every side for our feet,

that we can neither do what we want, nor be

what we want. Before we are well aware, we

get entangled with some idol, or drawn aside

into some indulgence of the flesh, which brings

darkness into the mind, and may cut us out

some bitter work for the rest of our days.

But we thus learn not only the weakness of the

flesh, but where and in whom all our strength lies.

And as the grace of the Lord Jesus, in its suitability,

in its sufficiency and its super-aboundings, becomes

manifested in and by the weakness of the flesh; a

sense of His wondrous love and care in so bearing

with us, in so pitying our case, and manifesting mercy

where we might justly expect wrath, constrains us

with a holy obligation to walk in His fear and to live  
to His praise.

The sins and slips of the saints?

The Scriptures faithfully record

the falls of believers . . .

the drunkenness of Noah,

the incest of Lot,

the unbelief of Abraham,

the peevishness of Moses,

the adultery of David,

the idolatry of Solomon,

the pride of Hezekiah,

the cowardice of Mark and

the cursing and swearing of Peter.

But why has the Holy Spirit left on record

the sins and slips of the saints?

First, that it might teach us that they were

saved by grace as poor, lost, and ruined sinners;

in the same way as we hope to be saved.

Secondly, that their slips and falls might be

so many beacons and warnings, to guard the

people of God against being overtaken by

the same sins; as the apostle speaks, "All

these events happened to them as examples

for us. They were written down to warn us."

And thirdly, that the people of God, should

they be overtaken by sin, might not be cast

into despair; but that from seeing recorded in the Scripture the slips and failings of the saints of old, they might be lifted up from their despondency, and brought once more to hope in the Lord.

Cain, Esau, Saul, Ahab, Judas

"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death."

2 Cor. 7:10

These two kinds of repentance are to be carefully distinguished from each other; though they are often sadly confounded. Cain, Esau, Saul, Ahab, Judas, all repented. But their repentance was the remorse of natural conscience, not the godly sorrow of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. They trembled before God as an angry Judge, but were not melted into contrition before Him as a forgiving Father.

They neither hated their sins nor forsook them.

They neither loved holiness nor sought it.

Cain went out from the presence of the Lord.

Esau plotted Jacob's death.

Saul consulted the witch of Endor.

Ahab put honest Micaiah into prison.

Judas hanged himself.

How different from this forced and false repentance of a reprobate, is the repentance of a child of God;

that true repentance for sin, that godly sorrow, that holy mourning which flows from the Spirit's gracious operations!

Godly sorrow does not spring from a sense of the wrath of God in a broken law, but from His mercy in a blessed gospel; from a view by faith of the sufferings of Christ in the garden and on the cross; from a manifestation of pardoning love; and is always attended with self-loathing and self-abhorrence; with deep and unreserved confession of sin and forsaking it; with most hearty, sincere and earnest petitions to be kept from all evil; and a holy longing to live to the praise and glory of God.

Here, and here alone

Standing then at the cross of our adorable Lord,

we may see . . .

the law thoroughly fulfilled,

its curse fully endured,

its penalties wholly removed,

sin eternally put away,

the justice of God amply satisfied,

all His perfections gloriously harmonized,

reconciliation completely effected,

redemption graciously accomplished,

and the church everlastingly saved.

Here, and here alone, we see sin in its blackest colors, and holiness in its most attractive beauties.

Here, and here alone, we see the love of God  
in its tenderest form, and the anger of God in  
its deepest expression.

Here, and here alone, we see the eternal and  
unalterable displeasure of the Almighty against sin,  
and the rigid demands of His inflexible justice, and  
yet the tender compassion and boundless love of  
His heart to the election of grace.

Here, and here alone, are obtained pardon and peace.

Here, and here alone, penitential grief and  
godly sorrow flow from heart and eyes.

Here, and here alone, is . . .

sin subdued and mortified,

holiness communicated,

death vanquished,

Satan put to flight, and

happiness and heaven begun in the soul.

What a holy meeting-place for repenting sinners  
and a sin-pardoning God! What a healing-place  
for guilty, yet repenting and returning backsliders!

What a door of hope in the valley of Achor for the  
self-condemned and self-abhorred! What a safe  
spot for seeking souls! And what a blessed  
resorting-place for the whole family of grace  
in this valley of grief and sorrow.

Experimental knowledge

"Now this is eternal life: that they may know

You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ,  
whom You have sent." John 17:3

An experimental knowledge of Christ in  
the soul, is the only relief for sin's . . .

poverty,

guilt,

leprosy,

bankruptcy,

and damnation.

This is the true way of preaching Christ crucified;  
not the mere doctrine of the Cross, but a crucified  
Jesus experimentally known to the soul.

I am deeply conscious of my own . . .

baseness,

ignorance,

blindness

and folly.

But my malady is too deeply rooted to be healed by  
dry doctrines and speculative theological opinions.

The blood of the Lamb, spiritually and supernaturally  
sprinkled and applied, is the only healing balm for a  
sin-sick soul.

Friend, can you understand my riddle?

I find that sin has such power over me, that  
though I call on the Lord again and again for  
deliverance, I seem to be as weak as ever  
when temptation comes.

If a window were placed in my bosom,  
what filth and vileness would be seen by all.  
"O you hideous monster sin,  
What a curse, have you brought in!"  
I love it; I hate it.  
I want to be delivered from the power of it;  
and yet am not satisfied without drinking  
down its poisoned sweets.  
Sin is my hourly companion; and my daily curse.  
Sin is the breath of my mouth; and the cause of my groans.  
Sin is my incentive to prayer; and my hinderer of it.  
Sin made my Savior suffer; and makes my Savior precious.  
Sin spoils every pleasure; and adds a sting to every pain.  
Sin fits a soul for heaven; and ripens a soul for hell.  
Friend, can you understand my riddle?  
Is your heart, as my heart?  
Alas! Alas! We feel sin's power daily and hourly.  
We sigh and groan at times, to be delivered from  
the giant strength of our corruptions, which seem  
to carry us captive at their will. Though sin is a  
sweet morsel to our carnal mind, it grieves our soul.  
I am sure I must be a monument of grace and mercy,  
if saved from the guilt, curse, and power of sin!  
My greatest enemy?  
I have ever found myself to be my greatest  
enemy. I never had a foe that troubled me so  
much as my own heart; nor has any one ever

wrought me half the mischief or given me half  
the plague that I have felt and known within.  
And it is a daily sense of this which makes me  
dread myself more than anybody that walks  
upon the face of the earth!

Keep a watchful eye upon every inward foe;  
and if you fight, fight against the enemy that  
lurks and works in your own breast!

There are many devices in a man's heart

"There are many devices in a man's heart;  
nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that  
shall stand." Proverbs 19:21.

The devices of our heart are generally to find some  
easy, smooth, flowery path. Whatever benefits we  
have derived from affliction, whatever mercies we  
have experienced in tribulation, the flesh hates and  
shrinks from such a path with complete abhorrence.

And, therefore, there is always a secret

devising in a man's heart . . .

to escape the cross,

to avoid affliction, and

to walk in some flowery meadow,

away from the rough road which cuts

his feet, and wearies his limbs.

Another "device in a man's heart" is, that he shall  
have worldly prosperity; that his children shall grow  
up around him, and when they grow up, he shall be

able to provide for them in a way which shall be best suited to their station in life; that they shall enjoy health and strength and success; and that there shall not be any cutting affliction in his family, or fiery trial to pass through.

Now these devices the Lord frustrates. What grief, what affliction, what trouble, is the Lord continually bringing into some families! Their dearest objects of affection removed from them, at the very moment when they seemed clasped nearest around their hearts! And those who are spared, perhaps, growing up in such a searedness of conscience and hardness of heart, and, perhaps, profligacy of life, that even their very presence is often a burden to their parents instead of a blessing; and the very children who should be their comfort, become thorns and briars in their sides!

Oh, how the Lord overturns and brings to nothing the "devices of a man's heart" to make a paradise here upon earth.

When a man is brought to the right spot, and is in a right mind to trace out the Lord's dealings with him from the first, he sees it was a kind hand which "blasted his gourds, and laid them low;" it was a kind hand that swept away his worldly prospects; which reduced him to natural as well as to spiritual poverty; which led him into exercises, trials, sorrows, griefs, and tribulations; because, in those trials he has found the Lord, more or less, experimentally

precious.

"There are many devices in a man's heart."

Now you have all your devices; that busy workshop is continually putting out some new pattern; some new fashion is continually starting forth from the depths of that ingenious manufactory which you carry about with you; and you are wanting this, and expecting that, and building up airy castles, and looking for that which shall never come to pass; for "there are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."

And so far as you are children of God, that counsel is a counsel of wisdom and mercy. The purposes of God's heart are purposes of love and affection toward you, and therefore you may bless and praise God, that whatever be the devices of your hearts against God's counsel, they shall be frustrated, that He may do His will and fulfill all His good pleasure.

All are more or less deeply infected with it

"Are you seeking great things for yourself?"

Don't do it!" Jeremiah 45:5

As we are led aside by the powerful workings of our corrupt nature, we are often seeking great things for ourselves.

Riches,

worldly comforts,

respectability,

to be honored, admired, and esteemed by men,  
are the objects most passionately sought after  
by the world. And so far as the children of God  
are under the influence of a worldly principle,  
do they secretly desire similar things.

Nor does this ambition depend upon station in life.

All are more or less deeply infected with it, until  
delivered by the grace of God. The poorest man  
in these towns has a secret desire in his soul after  
"great things," and a secret plotting in his mind  
how he may obtain them.

But the Lord is determined that His people shall  
not have great things. He has purposed to pour  
contempt upon all the pride of man. He therefore  
nips all their hopes in the bud, crushes their  
flattering prospects, and makes them for the most  
part, poor, needy, and despised in this world.

Whatever schemes or projects the Lord's people may  
devise that they may prosper and get on in the world,  
He rarely allows their plans to thrive. He knows well  
to what consequences it would lead; that this ivy  
creeping round the stem would, as it were, suffocate  
and strangle the tree.

The more that worldly goods increase . . .  
the more the heart is fixed upon them,  
the more the affections are set upon idols,  
the more is the heart drawn away from the Lord.

He will not allow His people to have their portion here below. He has in store for them a better city, that is a heavenly one, and therefore will not allow them to build and plant below the skies.

A child of God may be secretly aiming at great things, such as respectability, bettering his condition in life, rising step by step in the scale of society. But the Lord will usually . . .

disappoint these plans,  
defeat these projects,  
wither these gourds,  
and blight these prospects.

He may reduce him to poverty, as He did Job; smite him with sickness, as He did Lazarus and Hezekiah; take away wife and children, as in the case of Ezekiel and Jacob; or He may bring trouble and distress into his mind by shooting an arrow out of His unerring bow into the conscience.

God has a certain purpose to effect by bringing this trouble, and that is to pull him down from "seeking great things." For what is the secret root of this ambition? Is it not the pride of the heart? When the Lord, then, would lay this ambition low, He makes a blow at the root. He strips away fancied hopes, and breaks down rotten props, the great things (so through ignorance esteemed) sought for previously, and perhaps obtained, fall to pieces.

"Are you seeking great things for yourself?

Don't do it!" Jeremiah 45:5

Ministers are often desirous of . . .

"Are you seeking great things for yourself?

Don't do it!" Jeremiah 45:5

Ministers are often desirous of . . .

a greater gift in preaching,

a readier utterance,

a more abundant variety,

a more striking delivery than they possess.

And this, not for the glory of God, but for the

glory of the creature. Not that praise may be

given God, but that pride, cursed pride, may

be gratified; that they may be admired by men.

My desire and aim is . . .

not to deceive souls by flattery;

not to please any party;

not to minister to any man's pride or presumption;

but simply and sincerely, with an eye to God's glory,

with His fear working in my heart, to speak to the

edification of His people.

A minister who stands up with any other motives,

and aiming at any other ends than the glory of God,

and the edification of His people, bears no scriptural

marks that he has been sent into the vineyard by

God Himself.

Have we nothing to give to Christ?

Have we nothing to give to Christ?

Yes!

Our sins,

our sorrows,

our burdens,

our trials, and above all

the salvation and sanctification of our souls.

And what has He to give us? What? Why . . .

everything worth having!

everything worth a moment's anxious thought!

everything for time and eternity!

O self! Self!

Oh, to be kept from myself; my . . .

vile,

proud,

lustful,

hypocritical,

worldly,

covetous,

presumptuous,

obscene self.

O self! Self!

Your desperate wickedness,

your depravity,

your love of sin,

your abominable pollutions,

your monstrous heart wickedness,

your wretched deadness, hardness,  
blindness, and indifference.

You are a treacherous villain,  
and, I fear, always will be such!

Continual salvation?

"I cried unto You; save me, and I shall  
keep Your testimonies." Psalm 119:146

If you know anything for yourself,  
inwardly and experimentally of . . .

the evils of your heart,

the power of sin,

the strength of temptation,

the subtlety of your unwearied foe,

and that daily conflict between nature and

grace, the flesh and the spirit, which is the

peculiar mark of the living family of heaven;

you will find and feel your need of salvation

as a daily reality. There is present salvation:

an inward, experimental, and continual salvation

communicated out of the fullness of Christ as

a risen Mediator.

You need to be daily and almost

hourly saved from the . . .

guilt,

filth,

power,

love, and

practice

of indwelling sin.

"I cried unto You; save me, and I shall

keep Your testimonies." Psalm 119:146

Have we not leaned upon a thousand things?

"Who is this that comes up from the wilderness,

leaning upon her Beloved?" Song 8:5

Have we not leaned upon a thousand things?

And what have they proved? Broken reeds that

have run into our hands, and pierced us!

Our own strength and resolutions; the world and

the church; sinners and saints; friends and enemies;

have they not all proved, more or less, broken reeds?

The more we have leaned upon them, like a man

leaning upon a sword, the more have they pierced

our souls!

The Lord Himself has to wean us . . .

from leaning on the world,

from leaning on friends,

from leaning on enemies,

from leaning on self,

in order to bring us to lean upon Himself.

And every prop He will remove, sooner or later,

that we may lean wholly and solely upon Him.

Superabounding grace

"But where sin abounded, grace did much

more abound." Romans 5:20

What are all the gilded toys of time compared  
with the solemn, weighty realities of eternity!  
But, alas! what wretches are we when left to  
sin, self, and Satan! How unable to withstand  
the faintest breath of temptation! How bent  
upon backsliding!

Who can fathom the depths of the human heart?

Oh, what but grace, superabounding grace,  
can either suit or save such wretches?

"But where sin abounded, grace did much  
more abound." Romans 5:20

Job's religion

"Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" Job 23:3

What a mere shallow pretense to vital godliness  
satisfies most ministers, most hearers, and most  
congregations!

But there was a reality in Job's religion.

It was not of a flimsy, notional, superficial nature.

It was not merely a sound Calvinistic creed, and  
nothing more. It was not a religion of theory and  
speculation, nor a well-compacted system of  
doctrines and duties. There was something deeper,  
something more divine in Job's religion than any  
such mere pretense, delusion, imitation, or hypocrisy.

And if our religion be of the right kind, there will be  
something deeper in it, something more powerful,  
spiritual, and supernatural, than notions and doctrines,

theories and speculations, merely passing to and fro  
in our minds, however scriptural and correct.

There will be a divine reality in it, if God the Spirit be  
the author of it. And there will be no trifling with the  
solemn things of God, and with our own immortal souls.

The heart of God's child

There is much . . .

presumption,

pride,

hypocrisy,

deceit,

delusion,

formality,

superstition and

self-righteousness

to be purged out of the heart of God's child.

But all these things . . .

keep him low,

mar his pride,

crush his self-righteousness,

cut the locks of his presumption,

stain his self conceit,

stop his boasting,

preserve him from despising others,

make him take the lowest room,

teach him to esteem others better than himself,

drive him to earnest prayer,

fit him as an object of mercy,  
break to pieces his free will, and  
lay him low at the feet of the Redeemer, as  
one to be saved by sovereign grace alone!

The way in which the Spirit of God works  
As pride rises, it must be broken down.

As self-righteousness starts up, it must be brought low.

As the wisdom of the creature exalts itself against  
the wisdom of God, it must be laid prostrate.

The way in which the Spirit of God works is to lay  
the creature low, by bringing it into nothingness,  
and crushing it into self-abasement and self-loathing,  
so as to press out of it everything on which the  
creature can depend.

Like a surgeon, who will run his lancet into the abscess,  
and let out the gory matter, in order to effect a thorough  
cure; so the Spirit of the Lord thrusting His sharp sword  
into the heart, lets out the inward corruption, and never  
heals the wound until He has thoroughly probed it.

And when He has laid bare the heart, He heals it by  
pouring in the balmy blood of Jesus, as that which,  
by its application, cleanses from all sin.

The world passes away, and the lust thereof  
"The world passes away, and the lust thereof."

1 John 2:17

The world and all that is in it comes to an end.

Where are the great bulk of the men and women

who fifty, sixty, or seventy years ago trod London streets? Where are they who rode about in their gay carriages, gave their splendid entertainments, decked themselves with feathers and jewels, and enjoyed all the pleasures of life?

Where are they?

The grave holds their bodies, and hell holds their souls.

"The world passes away." It is like a pageant, or a gay and splendid procession, which passes before the eye for a few minutes, then turns the corner of the street, and is lost to view. It is now to you who had looked upon it just as if it were not, and is gone to amuse other eyes.

So, could you go on for years . . .

enjoying all your natural heart could wish;

lay up money by thousands;

ride in your carriage;

deck your body with jewelry;

fill your house with splendid furniture;

enjoy everything that earth can give;

then there would come, some day or other, sickness

to lay you upon a dying bed. To you the world has

now passed away with all its lusts; with you all is

now come to an end; and now you have, with a

guilty soul, to face a holy God.

"The world passes away, and the lust thereof."

All these lusts for which men have sold body and soul,

half ruined their families, and stained their own name;  
all these lusts for which they were so mad that they  
would have them at any price, snatch them even from  
hell's mouth; all these lusts are passed away, and what  
have they left? A gnawing worm; a worm that can never  
die, and the wrath of God as an unquenchable fire.

That is all which the love of the world can do for you,  
with all your toil and anxiety, or all your amusement  
and pleasure.

You have not gained much perhaps of this world's goods,  
with all your striving after them. But could the world fill  
your heart with enjoyment, and your money bags with  
gold, as the dust of the grave will one day fill your mouth,  
it would be much to the same purpose. If you had got all  
the world, you would have got nothing after your coffin  
was screwed down, but gravedust in your mouth.

Such is the end of the world.

"The world passes away, and the lust thereof."

DEATH is the great and final extinguisher of all human  
hopes and pleasures. Look and see how man sickens  
and dies, and is tumbled into the cemetery, where his  
body is left to the worms, and his soul to face an angry  
God, on the great judgment day.

"The world passes away, and the lust thereof."

Weary?

"Then Jesus said, "Come to Me, all of you  
who are weary and carry heavy burdens,

and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

The Lord's purpose in laying burdens upon us is to weary us out. We cannot learn our religion in any other way. We cannot learn it from the Bible, nor from the experience of others. It must be a personal work, wrought in the heart of each; and we must be brought, all of us, if ever we are to find rest in Christ, to be absolutely wearied out of sin and self, and to have no righteousness, goodness, or holiness of our own.

The effect, then, of all spiritual labor is to bring us to this point: to be weary of the world, for we feel it, for the most part, to be a valley of tears; to be weary of self, for it is our greatest plague; weary of professors, for we cannot see in them the grace of God, which alone we prize and value; weary of the profane, for their ungodly conversation only hurts our minds; weary of our bodies, for they are often full of sickness and pain, and always clogs to our soul; and weary of life, for we see the emptiness of those things which to most people make life so agreeable.

By this painful experience we come to this point: to be worn out and wearied; and there we must come, before we can rest entirely on Christ.

As long as we can rest in the world, we shall

rest in it. As long as the things of time and sense can gratify us, we shall be gratified in them. As long as we can find anything pleasing in self, we shall be pleased with it. As long as anything visible and tangible can satisfy us, we shall be satisfied with them.

But when we get weary of all things visible, tangible, and sensible--weary of ourselves, and of all things here below--then we want to rest upon Christ, and Christ alone.

"Then Jesus said, "Come to Me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

Oh, how religious he once used to be!

"And I, the Son of Man, have come to seek and save those who are LOST." Luke 19:10

Oh, how religious he once used to be!

How comfortably he could walk to church with his Bible under his arm, and look as devout and holy as possible! How regularly also, he could read the Scriptures, and pray in his manner, and think himself pretty well, with one foot in heaven.

But a ray of heavenly light has beamed into his soul, and shown him who and what God is; what sin and a sinful heart is; and who and what he himself as a sinner is. The keen dissecting knife of God has come into his heart, laid it all bare, and let the gory matter

flow out. When his conscience is bleeding under the scalpel, and is streaming all over with the gore and filth thus let out, where is the clean heart once boasted of?

Where is his religion now?

All buried beneath a load of filth!

Where is all his holiness gone? His . . .

holy looks,

holy expressions,

holy manners,

holy gestures,

holy garb;

where are they all gone?

All are flooded and buried. The sewer has broken out, and the filthy stream has discharged itself over his holy looks, holy manners, holy words and holy gestures; and he is, as Job says, 'in the ditch.'

We never find the right religion, until we have lost the wrong one. We never find Christ, until we have lost SELF. We never find grace, until we have lost our own pitiful self-holiness.

"And I, the Son of Man, have come to seek and save those who are LOST." Luke 19:10

It is a creature of many lives!

Man is a strange compound. A sinner, and the worst of sinners, and yet a Pharisee!

A wretch, and the vilest of wretches, and

yet pluming himself on his good works!

Did not experience convince us to the contrary,  
we would scarcely believe that a monster like man,  
a creature, as someone has justly said, "half beast  
and half devil," should dream of pleasing God by his  
obedience, or of climbing up to heaven by a ladder  
of his own righteousness.

Pharisaism is firmly fixed in the human heart.

Deep is the root,  
broad the stem,  
wide the branches,  
but poisonous the fruit,  
of this gigantic tree, planted by pride  
and unbelief in the soil of human nature.

Self-righteousness is not peculiar to only certain  
individuals. It is interwoven with our very being.

It is the only religion that human nature . . .  
understands,  
relishes, or  
admires.

Again and again must the heart be ploughed up,  
and its corruptions laid bare, to keep down the  
growth of this pharisaic spirit.

It is a creature of many lives! It is not one blow,  
nor ten, nor a hundred that can kill it. Stunned it  
may be for a while, but it revives again and again!

Pharisaism can live and thrive under any profession.

Calvinism or Arminianism is the same to it. It is not the garb he wears, nor the mask he carries, that constitutes the man.

The believer's chief troubles

As earth is but a valley of tears, the Christian has many tribulations in common with the world. Family troubles were the lot of Job, Abraham, Jacob and David. Sickness befell Hezekiah, Trophimus and Epaphroditus. Reverses and losses fell upon Job. Poverty and famine drove Naomi into the land of Moab.

Trouble, then, is in itself no sign of grace; for it inevitably flows from, and is necessarily connected with, man's fallen state.

But we should fix our eye on two things, as especially marking the temporal afflictions of the Lord's family:

1. That they are all weighed out and timed by special appointment. For though "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards," yet "affliction comes not forth of the dust, neither does trouble spring out of the ground."

Job 5:6

2. That they are specially sanctified, and made to "work together for good" to those who love God.

But the believer's chief troubles are internal, and arise from . . .

the assaults of Satan,

powerful temptations,

the guilt of sin laid on the conscience,

doubts and fears about a saving interest in Christ, and  
a daily, hourly conflict with a nature ever lusting to evil.

A religion that satisfies thousands.

"Having a form of godliness but denying its power."

2 Tim. 3:5

Much that passes for religion,

is not true religion at all.

Much that goes for hopes of salvation,

is nothing but lying refuges.

Much is palmed off for the teaching of the Spirit,

which is nothing but delusion.

Vital godliness is very rare.

There are very few people spiritually taught of God.

There are very few ministers who really preach the truth.

Satan is thus daily deceiving thousands, and tens of thousands.

A living soul, however weak and feeble in himself,

cannot take up with a religion in the flesh.

He cannot rest on the opinions of men, nor be

deceived by Satan's delusions. He has a secret

gnawing of conscience, which makes him dissatisfied

with a religion that satisfies thousands.

Then down they sink to the bottom!

"Until the pit is dug for the wicked." Psalm 94:13

In Eastern countries, the ordinary mode of catching

wild beasts is to dig a pit, and fix sharp spears in the

bottom. And when the pit has been dug sufficiently

deep, it is covered over with branches of trees, earth,

and leaves, until all appearances of the pitfall are entirely concealed. What is the object? That the wild beast intent upon bloodshed--the tiger lying in wait for the deer, the wolf roaming after the sheep, the lion prowling for the antelope, not seeing the pitfall, but rushing on and over it, may not see their doom until they break through and fall upon the spears at the bottom.

What a striking figure is this!

Here are the ungodly, all intent upon their purposes; prowling after evil, as the wolf after the sheep, or the tiger after the deer, thinking only of . . .

some worldly profit,

some covetous plan,

some lustful scheme,

something the carnal mind delights in;

but on they go, not seeing any danger until the moment comes when, as Job says, "they go down to the bars of the pit."

The Lord has been pleased to hide their doom from them.

The pit is all covered over with leaves of trees, grass, and earth. The very appearance of the pit was hidden from the wild beasts; they never knew it until they fell into it, and were transfixed.

So it is with the wicked; both with religious professors and the profane. There is no fear of God, no taking heed to their steps, no cry to be directed, no prayer to be shown

the way; no pausing, no turning back. On they go, on they go; heedlessly, thoughtlessly, recklessly; pursuing some beloved object. On they go, on they go; until in a moment they are plunged eternally and irrevocably into the pit!

There are many such both in the professing church as well as in the ungodly world. The Lord sees what they are, and where they are. He knows where the pit is. He knows their steps. He sees them hurrying on, hurrying on, hurrying on. All is prepared for them. The Lord gives them . . .

no forewarning,

no notice of their danger,

no teachings,

no chastenings,

no remonstrances,

no frowns,

no stripes.

They are left to themselves to fill up the measure of their iniquity, until they approach the pit that has been dug for them, and then down they sink to the bottom!

Who can come out of the battle alive?

"Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" Ps. 119:117

We know little of ourselves, and less of one another. We do not know . . .

our own needs,

what is for our good,

what snares to avoid,

what dangers to shun.

Our path is . . .

bestrewed with difficulties,

beset with temptations,

surrounded with foes,

encompassed with perils.

At every step there is a snare!

At every turn an enemy lurks!

Pride digs the pit,

carelessness blindfolds the eyes,

carnality drugs and intoxicates the senses,

the lust of the flesh seduces,

the love of the world allures,

unbelief paralyzes the fighting hand and the praying knee,

sin entangles the feet,

guilt defiles the conscience,

and Satan accuses the soul.

Under these circumstances, who can come out of

the battle alive? Only he who is kept by the mighty

power of God. "Hold me up, and I shall be safe!"

**MERCY!**

"Look upon me, and be merciful unto me." Ps. 119:132

When shall we ever get beyond the need of God's mercy?

We feel our need of continual mercy . . .

as our sins abound,

as our guilt is felt,

as our corruption works,

as our conscience is burdened,

as the iniquities of our heart are laid bare,  
as our hearts are opened up in the Spirit's light.

We need . . .

mercy for every adulterous look;  
mercy for every covetous thought;  
mercy for every light and trifling word;  
mercy for every wicked movement of our depraved hearts;  
mercy while we live;  
mercy when we die;  
mercy to accompany us every moment;  
mercy to go with us down to the portals of the grave;  
mercy to carry us safely through the swellings of Jordan;  
mercy to land us safe before the Redeemer's throne!

"Look upon me, and be merciful unto me."

Why me?

Because I am so vile a sinner.

Because I am so base a backslider.

Because I am such a daring transgressor.

Because I sin against You with every breath that I draw.

Because the evils of my heart are perpetually manifesting themselves.

Because nothing but Your mercy can blot out such  
iniquities as I feel working in my carnal mind.

I need . . .

inexhaustible mercy,  
everlasting mercy,  
super-abounding mercy.

Nothing but such mercy as this can suit such a guilty sinner!

A flowery path?

Does the road to heaven lie across a smooth,  
grassy meadow, over which we may quietly  
walk in the cool of a summer evening, and  
leisurely amuse ourselves with gathering of  
flowers and listening to the warbling of the birds?

No child of God ever found the way to heaven  
a flowery path. It is the wide gate and broad  
way which leads to perdition. It is the strait  
gate and narrow way, the uphill road, full of . . .  
difficulties,

trials,

temptations,

and enemies,

which leads to heaven, and issues in eternal life.

But our Father manifests mercy and grace. He never  
leaves nor forsakes the objects of His choice. He . . .

fulfills every promise,

defeats every enemy,

appears in every difficulty,

richly pardons every sin,

graciously heals every backsliding,

and eventually lands them in eternal bliss!

Toys and playthings of the religious babyhouse

"I will feed My flock." Ezekiel 34:15

The only real food of the soul must be of God's  
own appointing, preparing, and communicating.

You can never deceive a hungry child. You may give it a plaything to still its cries. It may serve for a few minutes; but the pains of hunger are not to be removed by a doll. A toy horse will not allay the cravings after the mother's breast.

So with babes in grace. A hungry soul cannot feed upon playthings.

Altars,

robes,

ceremonies,

candlesticks,

bowings,

mutterings,

painted windows,

intoning priests, and

singing men and women;

these dolls and wooden horses; these toys

and playthings of the religious babyhouse,

cannot feed the soul that, like David, cries out

after the living God. (Psalm 42:23)

Christ, the bread of life, the manna that

came down from heaven, is the only food

of the believing soul. (John 6:51)

But oh, the struggle! oh, the conflict!

"I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it

shall be no more." Ezekiel 21:27

Jesus wants our hearts and affections. Therefore

every idol must go down, sooner or later, because the idol draws away the affections of the soul from Christ. Everything that is loved in opposition to Him must sooner or later be taken away, that the Lord Jesus alone may be worshiped. Everything which exacts the allegiance of the soul must be overthrown.

Jesus shall have our heart and affections, but in having our heart and affection, He shall have it . . .

wholly,

solely, and

undividedly.

He shall have it entirely for Himself.

He shall reign and rule supreme.

Now, here comes the conflict and the struggle.

SELF says, "I will have a part." Self wants to be . . .

honored,

admired,

esteemed,

bowed down to.

Self wants to indulge in, and gratify its desires.

Self wants, in some way, to erect its throne in opposition to the Lord of life and glory.

But Jesus says, "No! I must reign supreme!"

Whatever it is that stands up in opposition to Him,

down it must go! Just as Dagon fell down before

the ark, so self must fall down before Christ . . .

in every shape,

in every form,  
in whatever subtle guise self wears,  
down it must come to a wreck and ruin before  
the King of Zion!

So, if we are continually building up SELF,  
Jesus will be continually overthrowing self.

If we are setting up our idols,  
He shall be casting them down.

If we are continually hewing out "cisterns  
that can hold no water," He will be continually  
dashing these cisterns to pieces.

If we think highly of our knowledge,  
we must be reduced to total folly.

If we are confident of our strength,  
we must be reduced to utter weakness.

If we highly esteem our attainments, or in  
any measure are resting upon the power of  
the creature, the power of the creature must  
be overthrown, so that we shall stand weak  
before God, unable to lift up a finger to deliver  
our souls from going down into the pit.

In this way does the Lord teach His people the  
lesson that Christ must be all in all. They learn . . .

not in the way of speculation,  
nor in the way of mere dry doctrine,  
not from the mouth of others, but  
they learn these lessons in painful soul-experience.

And every living soul that is sighing and longing after  
a manifestation of Christ and desiring to have Him  
enthroned in the heart; every such soul will know,  
sooner or later . . .  
an utter overthrow of self,  
a thorough prostration of this idol,  
a complete breaking to pieces of this beloved image,  
that the desire of the righteous may be granted, and  
that Christ may reign and rule as King and Lord in him  
and over him, setting up His blessed kingdom there, and  
winning to Himself every affection of the renewed heart.  
Are there not moments, friends, are there not some  
few and fleeting moments when the desire of our souls  
is that Christ should be our Lord and God; when we are  
willing that He should have every affection; that every  
rebellious thought should be subdued and brought into  
obedience to the cross of Christ; that every plan should  
be frustrated which is not for the glory of God and our  
soul's spiritual profit?  
Are there not seasons in our experience when we can  
lay down our souls before God, and say "Let Christ be  
precious to my soul, let Him come with power to my  
heart, let Him set up His throne as Lord and King, and  
let self be nothing before Him?" But oh, the struggle!  
oh, the conflict! when God answers these petitions!  
When our plans are frustrated, what a  
rebellion works up in the carnal mind!

When self is cast down, what a rising up of  
the fretful, peevish impatience of the creature!  
When the Lord does answer our prayers, and  
strips off all false confidence; when He does  
remove our rotten props, and dash to pieces  
our broken cisterns, what a storm; what a  
conflict takes place in the soul!

But He is not to be moved; He will take His own way.

"I will overturn, let the creature say what it will. I will  
overturn, let the creature think what it will. Down it  
shall go to ruin! It shall come to a wreck! It shall be  
overthrown! My purpose shall be accomplished, and  
I will fulfill all My pleasure. Self is a rebel who has  
set up an idolatrous temple, and I will overturn and  
bring the temple to ruin, for the purpose of manifesting  
My glory and My salvation, that I may be your Lord and  
your God."

If God has overturned our bright prospects, shall we say  
it was a cruel hand that laid them low? If He has overthrown  
our worldly plans, shall we say it was an unkind act? If He  
has reduced our false righteousness to a heap of rubbish,  
in order that Christ may be embraced as our all in all, shall  
we say it was a cruel deed?

Is he an unkind father who takes away poison from  
his child, and gives him food? Is she a cruel mother  
who snatches her boy from the precipice on which he  
was playing? No! The kindness was manifested in the

act of snatching the child from destruction!

So if the Lord has broken and overthrown our purposes, it was a kind act; for in so doing He brings us to nothing, that Christ may be embraced as our all in all, that our hearts may echo back, "O Lord, fulfill all Your own promises in our souls, and make us willing to be nothing; that upon the nothingness of self, the glory and beauty and preciousness of Christ may be exalted!"

A snake, a monkey, an onion, a bit of rag

"Dear children, keep yourselves from idols." 1 John 5:21

Idolatry is a sin very deeply rooted in the human heart.

We need not go very far to find the most convincing proofs of this. Besides the experience of every age and every climate, we find it where we would least expect it--the prevailing sin of a people who had the greatest possible proofs of its wickedness and folly; and the strongest evidences of the being, greatness, and power of God.

It is true that now this sin does not break out exactly in the same form. It is true that golden calves are not now worshiped--at least the calf is not, if the gold is. Nor do Protestants adore images of wood, brass, or stone.

But that rank, property, fashion, honor, the opinion of the world, with everything which feeds the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; are as much idolized now, as Baal and Moloch were

once in Judea.

What is an idol?

It is that which occupies that place in our esteem and affections, in our thoughts, words and ways, which is due to God only. Whatever is to us, what the Lord alone should be--that is an idol to us.

It is true that these idols differ almost as widely as the peculiar propensities of different individuals.

But as both in ancient and modern times, the grosser idols of wood and stone were and are beyond all calculation in number, variety, shape, and size.

So is it in these inner idols, of which the outer idols are mere symbols and representations.

Nothing has been . . .

too base or too brutal,

too great or too little,

too noble or too vile,

from the sun walking in its brightness--to a snake,

a monkey, an onion, a bit of rag--which man has

not worshiped. And these intended representations

of Divinity were but the outward symbols of what

man inwardly worshiped. For the inward idol preceded

the outward--and the fingers merely carved what the

imagination had previously devised. The gross material

idol, then, is but a symbol of the inner mind of man.

But we need not dwell on this part of the subject.

There is another form of idolatry much nearer home;

the idolatry not of an ancient Pagan, or a modern Hindu--but that of a Christian.

Nor need we go far, if we would but be honest with ourselves, to each find out our own idol . . .

what it is,

how deep it lies,

what worship it obtains,

what honor it receives,

and what affection it engrosses.

Let me ask myself, "What do I most love?"

If I hardly know how to answer that question, let me put to myself another, "What do I most think upon? In what channel do I usually find my thoughts flow when unrestrained?"--for thoughts flow to the idol as water to the lowest spot.

If, then, the thoughts flow continually to . . .

the farm,

the shop,

the business,

the investment,

to the husband, wife, or child,

to that which feeds lust or pride,

worldliness or covetousness,

self-conceit or self-admiration;

that is the idol which, as a magnet, attracts

the thoughts of the mind towards it.

Your idol may not be mine, nor mine yours; and

yet we may both be idolaters! You may despise or even hate my idol, and wonder how I can be such a fool, or such a sinner, as to hug it to my bosom!

And I may wonder how a partaker of grace can be so inconsistent as to love such a silly idol as yours! You may condemn me, and I condemn you. And the Word of God, and the verdict of a living conscience may condemn us both.

O how various and how innumerable these idols are! One man may possess a refined taste and educated mind. Books, learning, literature, languages, general information, shall be his idol. Music--vocal and instrumental, may be the idol of a second--so sweet to his ears, such inward feelings of delight are kindled by the melodious strains of voice or instrument, that music is in all his thoughts, and hours are spent in producing those harmonious sounds which perish in their utterance. Painting, statuary, architecture, the fine arts generally, may be the Baal, the dominating passion of a third. Poetry, with its glowing thoughts, burning words, passionate utterances, vivid pictures, melodious

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