

SERMONS

SERMON LXXXVII.

THE DANGER OF RICHES.

"They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition." 1 Timothy vi. 9.

1. How innumerable are the ill consequences which have followed from men's not knowing, or not considering, this great truth! And how few are there even in the Christian world, that either know or duly consider it! Yea, how small is the number of those, even among real Christians, who understand and lay it to heart! Most of these too pass it very lightly over, scarce remembering there is such a text in the Bible. And many put such a construction upon it, as makes it of no manner of effect. "They that will be rich," say they, "that is, will be rich at all events; who will be rich, right or wrong; that are resolved to carry their point, to compass this end, whatever means they use to attain it; they 'fall into temptation,' and into all the evils enumerated by the Apostle." But truly if this were all the meaning of the text, it might as well have been out of the Bible.

2. This is so far from being the whole meaning of the text, that it is no part of its meaning. The Apostle does not here speak of gaining riches unjustly, but of quite another thing: His words are to be taken in their plain obvious sense, without any restriction or qualification whatsoever. St. Paul does not say, "They that will be rich *by evil means*, by theft, robbery, oppression, or extortion; they that will be rich by fraud or dishonest art;" but simply, "They that will be rich:" These,

allowing, supposing the means they use to be ever so innocent, "fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition"

3. But who believes that? Who receives it as the truth of God? Who is deeply convinced of it? Who preaches this? Great is the company of preachers at this day, regular and irregular; but who of them all, openly and explicitly, preaches this strange doctrine? It is the keen observation of a great man, "The pulpit is the preacher's strong-hold." But who even in his strong-hold has the courage to declare so unfashionable a truth? I do not remember that in threescore years I have heard one sermon preached upon this subject. And what author, within the same term, has declared it from the press? at least, in the English tongue? I do not know one. I have neither seen nor heard of any such author. I have seen two or three who just touch upon it; but none that treats of it professedly. I have myself frequently touched upon it in preaching, and twice in what I have published to the world: Once in explaining our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, and once in the discourse on the "Mammon of unrighteousness;" but I have never yet either published or preached any sermon expressly upon the subject. It is high time I should;—that I should at length speak as strongly and explicitly as I can, in order to leave a full and clear testimony behind me, whenever it pleases God to call me hence.

4. O that God would give me to speak right and forcible words; and you to receive them in honest and humble hearts! Let it not be said, "They sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words; but they will not do them. Thou art unto them as one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but do them not!" O that ye may "not be forgetful hearers, but doers of the word," that ye may be "blessed in your deed!" In this hope I shall endeavour,

I. To explain the Apostle's words. And,

II. To apply them.

But, O! "who is sufficient for these things?" Who is able to stem the general torrent? to combat all the prejudices, not only of the vulgar, but of the learned and the religious world? Yet nothing is too hard for God! Still his grace is sufficient for us. In his name then, and by his strength, I will endeavour

I. To explain the words of the Apostle.

1. And, First, let us consider, what it is to be rich. What does the Apostle mean by this expression?

The preceding verse fixes the meaning of that: "Having food and raiment," (literally *coverings*; for the word includes lodging as well as clothes,) "let us be therewith content." "But they that will be rich;" that is, who will have more than these; more than food and coverings. It plainly follows, what ever is more than these is, in the sense of the Apostle, *riches*; whatever is above the plain necessities, or at most conveniences, of life. Whoever has sufficient food to eat, and raiment to put on, with a place where to lay his head, and something over, is *rich*.

2. Let us consider, Secondly, What is implied in that expression, "They that will be rich?" And does not this imply, First, they that desire to be rich, to have more than *food* and *coverings*; they that seriously and deliberately desire more than food to eat, and raiment to put on, and a place where to lay their head, more than the plain necessities and conveniences of life? All, at least, who allow themselves in this desire, who see no harm in it, desire to be rich.

3. And so do, Secondly, all those that calmly, deliberately, and of set purpose, *endeavour* after more than food and coverings; that aim at and endeavour after, not only so much worldly substance as will procure them the necessities and conveniences of life, but more than this, whether to lay it up, or lay it out in superfluities. All these undeniably prove their "desire to be rich," by their endeavours after it.

4. Must we not, Thirdly, rank among those that desire to be rich, all that, in fact, "lay up treasures on earth?" a thing as expressly and clearly forbidden by our Lord, as either adultery or murder. It is allowed, (1.) That we are to provide necessities and conveniences for those of our own household: (2.) That men in business are to lay up as much as is necessary for the carrying on of that business: (3.) That we are to leave our children what will supply them with necessities and conveniences after we have left the world: And, (4.) That we are to provide things honest in the sight of all men, so as to "owe no man any thing:" But to lay up any more, when this is done, is what our Lord has flatly forbidden. When it is calmly and deliberately done, it is a clear proof of our desiring to be rich. And

thus to lay up money is no more consistent with a good conscience, than to throw it into the sea.

5. We must rank among them, Fourthly, all who *possess* more of this world's goods, than they use according to the will of the Donor: I should rather say, of the Proprietor; for He only *lends* them to us as Stewards; reserving the *property* of them to himself. And, indeed, he cannot possibly do otherwise, seeing they are the work of his hands; he is, and must be, the possessor of heaven and earth. This is his unalienable right; a right he cannot divest himself of. And together with that portion of his goods which he hath lodged in our hands, he has delivered to us a writing, specifying the purposes for which he has intrusted us with them. If, therefore, we keep more of them in our hands than is necessary for the preceding purposes, we certainly fall under the charge of "desiring to be rich:" Over and above, we are guilty of burying our Lord's talent in the earth; and on that account are liable to be pronounced wicked, because unprofitable, servants.

6. Under this imputation of "desiring to be rich," fall, Fifthly, all "lovers of money." The word properly means, those that *delight in money*; those that take pleasure in it; those that seek their happiness therein; that brood over their gold or silver, bills or bonds. Such was the man described by the fine Roman painter, who broke out in that natural soliloquy:—

*Populus me sibilat, at mihi plaudo
Ipsæ domi simul ac nummos contemtor in arcâ.**

If there are any vices which are not natural to man, I should imagine this is one; as money of itself does not seem to gratify any natural desire or appetite of the human mind; and as, during an observation of sixty years, I do not remember one instance of a man given up to the love of money, till he had neglected to employ this precious talent according to the will of his Master. After this, sin was punished by sin; and this evil spirit was permitted to enter into him.

7. But beside this gross sort of covetousness, the love of money, there is a more refined species of covetousness.

* The following is Francis's translation of these lines from Horace:—

"Let them hiss on,
While, in my own opinion fully blest,
I count my money, and enjoy my chest."—EDIT.

mentioned by the great Apostle,—*πλεονεξία*,—which literally means, *a desire of having more*; more than we have already. And those also come under the denomination of “they that will be rich.” It is true that this desire, under proper restrictions, is innocent; nay, commendable. But when it exceeds the bounds, (and how difficult is it not to exceed them!) then it comes under the present censure.

8. But who is able to receive these hard sayings? Who can believe that they are the great truths of God? Not many wise not many noble, not many famed for learning; none, indeed, who are not taught of God. And who are they whom God teaches? Let our Lord answer: “If any man be willing to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.” Those who are otherwise minded will be so far from receiving it, that they will not be able to understand it. Two as sensible men as most in England sat down together, some time since, to read over and consider that plain discourse on, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth.” After much deep consideration, one of them broke out, “Positively, I cannot understand it. Pray do *you* understand it, Mr. L.?” Mr. L. honestly replied, “Indeed, not I. I cannot conceive what Mr. W. means. I can make nothing at all of it.” So utterly blind is our natural understanding touching the truth of God!

9. Having explained the former part of the text, “They that will be rich,” and pointed out, in the clearest manner I could, the persons spoken of; I will now endeavour, God being my helper, to explain what is spoken of them: “They fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition.”

“They fall into temptation.” This seems to mean much more than simply, they are tempted. They *enter into the temptation*: They fall plump down into it. The waves of it compass them about, and cover them all over. Of those who thus enter into temptation, very few escape out of it. And the few that do are sorely scorched by it, though not utterly consumed. If they escape at all, it is with the skin of their teeth, and with deep wounds that are not easily healed.

10. They fall, Secondly, into “a snare,” the snare of the devil, which he hath purposely set in their way. I believe the Greek word properly means a gin, a steel trap, which shows no appearance of danger. But as soon as any creature touches the

spring, it suddenly closes ; and either crushes its bones in pieces, or consigns it to inevitable ruin.

11. They fall, Thirdly, “into many foolish and hurtful desires ;” *ανοητους*,—*silly, senseless, fantastic* ; as contrary to reason, to sound understanding, as they are to religion : *Hurtful*, both to body and soul, tending to weaken, yea, destroy, every gracious and heavenly temper : Destructive of that faith which is of the operation of God ; of that hope which is full of immortality : of love to God and to our neighbour, and of every good word and work.

12. But what desires are these ? This is a most important question, and deserves the deepest consideration.

In general, they may all be summed up in one, the desiring happiness out of God. This includes directly, or remotely, every foolish and hurtful desire. St. Paul expresses it by “loving the creature more than the Creator ;” and by being “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.” In particular, they are, (to use the exact and beautiful enumeration of St. John,) “the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life ;” all of which, the desire of riches naturally tends both to beget and to increase.

13. “The desire of the flesh” is generally understood in far too narrow a meaning. It does not, as is commonly supposed, refer to one of the senses only ; but takes in all the pleasures of sense, the gratification of any of the outward senses. It has reference to the *taste* in particular. How many thousands do we find at this day, in whom the ruling principle is, the desire to enlarge the pleasure of tasting ! Perhaps they do not gratify this desire in a gross manner, so as to incur the imputation of intemperance ; much less so as to violate health or impair their understanding by gluttony or drunkenness : But they live in a genteel, regular sensuality ; in an elegant epicurism, which does not hurt the body, but only destroys the soul ; keeping it at a distance from all true religion.

14. Experience shows that the imagination is gratified chiefly by means of the eye : Therefore, “the desire of the eyes,” in its natural sense, is, the desiring and seeking happiness in gratifying the imagination. Now, the imagination is gratified either by grandeur, by beauty, or by novelty : Chiefly by the last ; for neither grand nor beautiful objects please any longer than they are new.

15. Seeking happiness in *learning*, of whatever kind, falls

under "the desire of the eyes;" whether it be in history, languages, poetry, or any branch of natural or experimental philosophy: Yea, we must include the several kinds of learning, such as Geometry, Algebra, and Metaphysics. For if our supreme delight be in any of these, we are herein gratifying "the desire of the eyes."

16. "The pride of life" (whatever else that very uncommon expression, *η αλαζονεια του βιου*, may mean) seems to imply chiefly, the *desire of honour*; of the esteem, admiration, and applause of men; as nothing more directly tends both to beget and cherish pride than the honour that cometh of men. And as riches attract much admiration, and occasion much applause, they proportionably minister food for pride, and so may also be referred to this head.

17. *Desire of ease* is another of these foolish and hurtful desires; desire of avoiding every cross, every degree of trouble, danger, difficulty; a desire of slumbering out life, and going to heaven (as the vulgar say) upon a feather-bed. Every one may observe how riches first beget, and then confirm and increase, this desire, making men more and more soft and delicate; more unwilling, and indeed more unable, to "take up their cross daily;" to "endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ," and to "take the kingdom of heaven by violence."

18. Riches, either desired or possessed, naturally lead to some or other of these foolish and hurtful desires; and, by affording the means of gratifying them all, naturally tend to increase them. And there is a near connexion between unholy desires, and every other unholy passion and temper. We easily pass from these to pride, anger, bitterness, envy, malice, revengefulness; to an headstrong, unadvisable, unprovable spirit: Indeed, to every temper that is earthly, sensual, or devilish. All these, the desire or possession of riches naturally tends to create, strengthen, and increase.

19. And by so doing, in the same proportion as they prevail, they "pierce men through with many sorrows;" sorrows from remorse, from a guilty conscience; sorrows flowing from all the evil tempers which they inspire or increase; sorrows inseparable from those desires themselves, as every unholy desire is an uneasy desire; and sorrows from the contrariety of those desires to each other, whence it is impossible to gratify them all. And, in the end, "they drown" the body in pain, disease, "destruction," and the soul in everlasting "perdition"

II. 1. I am, in the Second place, to apply what has been said. And this is the principal point. For what avails the clearest knowledge, even of the most excellent things, even of the things of God, if it go no farther than speculation, if it be not reduced to practice? He that hath ears to hear, let him hear! And what he hears, let him instantly put in practice. O that God would give me the thing which I long for! that, before I go hence and am no more seen, I may see a people wholly devoted to God, crucified to the world, and the world crucified to them; a people truly given up to God, in body, soul, and substance! How cheerfully should I then say, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace!"

2. I ask, then, in the name of God, Who of you "desire to be rich?" Which of *you* (ask your own hearts in the sight of God) seriously and deliberately desire (and perhaps applaud yourselves for so doing, as no small instance of your *prudence*) to have more than food to eat, and raiment to put on, and a house to cover you? Who of you desires to have more than the plain necessities and conveniences of life? Stop! Consider! What are you doing? Evil is before you! Will you rush upon the point of a sword? By the grace of God, turn and live!

3. By the same authority I ask, Who of you are *endeavouring* to be rich? to procure for yourselves more than the plain necessities and conveniences of life? Lay, each of you, your hand to your heart, and seriously inquire, "Am I of that number? Am I labouring, not only for what I want, but for more than I want?" May the Spirit of God say to every one whom it concerns, "Thou art the man!"

4. I ask, Thirdly, Who of you are, in fact, "laying up for yourselves treasures upon earth?" increasing in goods? adding, as fast as you can, house to house, and field to field! As long as *thou* thus "doest well unto thyself, men will speak good of thee." They will call thee a wise, a prudent man! a man that *minds the main chance*. Such is, and always has been, the wisdom of the world! But God saith unto thee, "'Thou fool!' art thou not 'treasuring up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God!'"

5. Perhaps you will ask, "But do not you yourself advise, to gain all we can, and to save all we can? And is it possible to do this, without both *desiring* and *endeavouring to be rich*?"

may, suppose our endeavours are successful, without actually laying up treasures upon earth?"

I answer, It is possible. You may gain all you can, without hurting either your soul or body; you may save all you can, by carefully avoiding every needless expense; and yet never lay up treasures on earth, nor either desire or endeavour so to do.

6. Permit me to speak as freely of myself as I would of another man. I *gain all I can* (namely, by writing) without hurting either my soul or body. I *save all I can*, not willingly wasting anything, not a sheet of paper, not a cup of water. I do not lay out anything, not a shilling, unless as a sacrifice to God. Yet by *giving all I can*, I am effectually secured from "laying up treasures upon earth." Yea, and I am secured from either desiring or endeavouring it, as long as I give all I can. And that I do this, I call all that know me, both friends and foes, to testify.

7. But some may say, "Whether you endeavour it or no, you are undeniably *rich*. You have more than the necessaries of life." I have. But the Apostle does not fix the charge, barely on *possessing* any quantity of goods, but on possessing more than we employ according to the will of the Donor.

Two-and-forty years ago, having a desire to furnish poor people with cheaper, shorter, and plainer books than any I had seen, I wrote many small tracts, generally a penny a-piece; and afterwards several larger. Some of these had such a sale as I never thought of; and, by this means, I unawares became rich. But I never desired or endeavoured after it. And now that it is come upon me unawares, I lay up no treasures upon earth: I lay up nothing at all. My desire and endeavour, in this respect, is, to "wind my bottom round the year." I cannot help leaving my books behind me whenever God calls me hence; but, in every other respect, my own hands will be my executors.

8. Herein, my brethren, let you that are rich, be even as I am. Do you that possess more than food and raiment, ask, "What shall we do? Shall we throw into the sea what God hath given us?" God forbid that you should! It is an excellent talent: It may be employed much to the glory of God. Your way lies plain before your face; if you have courage, walk in it. Having *gained*, in a right sense, *all you can*, and *saved all you can*; in spite of nature, and custom, and worldly prudence, *give all you can*. I do not say, "Be a good Jew."

giving a tenth of all you possess." I do not say, "Be a good Pharisee; giving a fifth of all your substance." I dare not advise you to give half of what you have; no, nor three quarters; but all! Lift up your hearts, and you will see clearly, in what sense this is to be done. If you desire to be "a faithful and a wise steward," out of that portion of your Lord's goods which he has for the present lodged in your hands, but with the right of resumption whenever it pleaseth him, (1.) Provide things needful for yourself; food to eat, raiment to put on; whatever nature moderately requires, for preserving you both in health and strength: (2.) Provide these for your wife, your children, your servants, or any others who pertain to your household. If, when this is done, there is an overplus left, then do good to "them that are of the household of faith." If there be an overplus still, "as you have opportunity, do good unto all men." In so doing, you *give all you can*; nay, in a sound sense, all you have. For all that is laid out in this manner, is really given to God. You render unto God the things that are God's, not only by what you give to the poor, but also by that which you expend in providing things needful for yourself and your household.*

9. O ye Methodists, hear the word of the Lord! I have a message from God to all men, but to *you* above all. For above forty years I have been a servant to you and to your fathers. And I have not been as a reed shaken with the wind: I have not varied in my testimony. I have testified to you the very same thing, from the first day even until now. But "who hath believed our report?" I fear, not many rich: I fear there is need to apply to some of *you* those terrible words of the Apostle, "Go to now, ye rich men! weep and howl for the miseries which shall come upon you. Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall witness against you, and shall eat your flesh, as it were fire." Certainly it will, unless ye both save all you can, and give all you can. But who of you hath considered this, since you first heard the will of the Lord concerning it? Who is now determined to consider and practise it? By the grace of God, begin to-day!

10. O ye lovers of money, hear the word of the Lord. Suppose ye that money, though multiplied as the sand of the sea, can give happiness? Then you are "given up to a strong

delusion to believe a lie ;"—a palpable lie, confuted daily by a thousand experiments. Open your eyes ! Look all around you ! Are the richest men the happiest ? Have those the largest share of content who have the largest possessions ? Is not the very reverse true ? Is it not a common observation, that the richest of men are, in general, the most discontented, the most miserable ? Had not the far greater part of them more content, when they had less money ? Look into your own breasts. If you are increased in goods, are you proportionably increased in happiness ? You have more substance ; but have you more content ? You know that in seeking happiness from riches, you are only striving to drink out of empty cups. And let them be painted and gilded ever so finely, they are empty still.

11. O ye that *desire* or *endeavour to be rich*, hear ye the word of the Lord ! Why should ye be stricken any more ? Will not even experience teach you wisdom ? Will ye leap into a pit with your eyes open ? Why should you any more "fall into temptation ?" It cannot be but temptation will beset you, as long as you are in the body. But though it should beset you on every side, why will you *enter into* it ? There is no necessity for this : It is your own voluntary act and deed. Why should you any more plunge yourselves *into a snare*, into the trap Satan has laid for you, that is ready to break your bones in pieces ? to crush your soul to death ? After fair warning, why should you sink any more into "foolish and hurtful desires ?" desires as inconsistent with reason as they are with religion itself ; desires that have done you more hurt already than all the treasures upon earth can countervail.

12. Have they not hurt you already, have they not wounded you in the tenderest part, by slackening, if not utterly destroying, your "hunger and thirst after righteousness ?" Have you now the same longing that you had once, for the whole image of God ? Have you the same vehement desire as you formerly had, of "going on unto perfection ?" Have they not hurt you by weakening your *faith* ? Have you now faith's "abiding impression, realizing things to come ?" Do you endure, in all temptations, from pleasure or pain, "seeing Him that is invisible ?" Have you every day, and every hour, an uninterrupted sense of his presence ? Have they not hurt you with regard to your *hope* ? Have you now a hope full of immortality ? Are you still big with earnest expectation of all the great and precious

promises? Do you now "taste the powers of the world to come?" Do you "sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus?"

13. Have they not so hurt you, as to stab your religion to the heart? Have they not cooled (if not quenched) your *love to God*? This is easily determined. Have you the same delight in God which you once had? Can you now say,

I nothing want beneath, above;
Happy, happy in thy love?

I fear, not. And if your love of God is in anywise decayed, so is also your love of your neighbour. You are then hurt in the very life and spirit of your religion! If you lose love, you lose all.

14. Are not you hurt with regard to your *humility*? If you are increased in goods, it cannot well be otherwise. Many will think you a better, because you are a richer, man: And how can you help thinking so yourself? especially, considering the commendations which some will give you in simplicity, and many with a design to serve themselves of you.

If you are hurt in your humility, it will appear by this token: You are not so teachable as you were, not so advisable; you are not so easy to be convinced, not so easy to be persuaded; you have a much better opinion of your own judgment and are more attached to your own will. Formerly, one might guide you with a thread; now one cannot turn you with a cart-rop. You were glad to be admonished or reprov'd; but that time is past. And you now account a man your enemy because he tells you the truth. O let each of you calmly consider this, and see if it be not your own picture!

15. Are you not equally hurt, with regard to your *meekness*? You had once learned an excellent lesson of him that was meek as well as lowly in heart. When you were reviled, you reviled not again. You did not return railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing. Your love was *not provoked*, but enabled you on all occasions to overcome evil with good. Is this your case now? I am afraid, not. I fear you cannot "bear all things." Alas, it may rather be said, you can bear nothing; no injury, nor even affront! How quickly are you ruffled! How readily does that occur, "What! to use *me* so! What insolence is this! How did he dare to do it? I am not now what I was once. Let him know, I am now able to defend myself." You

mean, to revenge yourself. And it is much, if you are not willing, as well as able; if you do not take your fellow-servant by the throat.

16. And are you not hurt in your *patience* too? Does your love now "endure all things?" Do you still "in patience possess your soul," as when you first believed? O what a change is here! You have again learned to be frequently out of humour. You are often fretful; you feel, nay, and give way to, peevishness. You find abundance of things go so cross, that you cannot tell how to bear them.

Many years ago I was sitting with a gentleman in London, who feared God greatly, and generally gave away, year by year, nine tenths of his yearly income. A servant came in and threw some coals on the fire. A puff of smoke came out. The baronet threw himself back in his chair and cried out, "O Mr. Wesley, these are the crosses I meet with daily!" Would he not have been less impatient, if he had had fifty, instead of five thousand, pounds a year?

17. But to return. Are not you who have been successful in your endeavours to increase in substance, insensibly sunk into softness of mind, if not of body too? You no longer rejoice to "endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." You no longer "rush into the kingdom of heaven, and take it as by storm." You do not cheerfully and gladly "deny yourselves, and take up your cross daily." You cannot deny yourself the poor pleasure of a little sleep, or of a soft bed, in order to hear the word that is able to save your souls! Indeed, you "cannot go out so early in the morning; besides it is dark, nay, cold, perhaps rainy too. Cold, darkness, rain, all these together,—I can never think of it." You did not say so when you were a poor man. You then regarded none of these things. It is the change of circumstances which has occasioned this melancholy change in your body and mind: You are but the shadow of what you were! What have riches done for you?

"But it cannot be expected I should do as I have done. For I am now grown old." Am not I grown old as well as you? Am not I in my seventy-eighth year? Yet, by the grace of God, I do not slack my pace yet. Neither would you, if you were a poor man still.

18. You are so deeply hurt, that you have nigh lost your zeal for works of mercy, as well as of piety. You once pushed on.

through cold or rain, or whatever cross lay in your way, to see the poor, the sick, the distressed. You went about doing good, and found out those who were not able to find you. You cheerfully crept down into their cellars, and climbed up into their garrets,

To supply all their wants,
And spend and be spent in assisting his saints.

You found out every scene of human misery, and assisted according to your power:

Each form of woe your generous pity moved;
Your Saviour's face you saw, and, seeing, loved.

Do you now tread in the same steps? What hinders? Do you fear spoiling your silken coat? Or is there another lion in the way? Are you afraid of catching vermin? And are you not afraid lest the roaring lion should catch you? Are you not afraid of Him that hath said, "Inasmuch as ye have not done it unto the least of these, ye have not done it unto me?" What will follow? "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!"

19. In time past, how mindful were you of that word, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: Thou shalt in anywise reprove thy brother, and not suffer sin upon him!" You *did* reprove, directly or indirectly, all those that sinned in your sight. And happy consequences quickly followed. How good was a word spoken in season! It was often as an arrow from the hand of a giant. Many a heart was pierced. Many of the stout-hearted, who scorned to hear a sermon,

Fell down before his cross subdued,
And felt his arrows dipt in blood.

But which of you now has that compassion for the ignorant, and for them that are out of the way? They may wander on for *you*, and plunge into the lake of fire, without let or hindrance. Gold hath steeled your hearts. You have something else to do.

Unhelp'd, unpitied let the wretches fall.

20. Thus have I given you, O ye gainers, lovers, possessors of riches, one more (it may be the last) warning. O that it may not be in vain! May God write it upon all your hearts! Though "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven,

yet the things impossible with men are possible with God. Lord, speak! and even the rich men that hear these words shall enter thy kingdom, shall “take the kingdom of heaven by violence,” shall “sell all for the pearl of great price;” shall be “crucified to the world, and count all things dung, that they may win Christ!”

SERMON LXXXVIII.

ON DRESS.

“Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of—wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;”
“But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”
 1 Peter iii. 3, 4.

1. ST. PAUL exhorts all those who desire to “be transformed by the renewal of their minds,” and to “prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God,” not to be “conformed to this world.” Indeed this exhortation relates more directly to the *wisdom* of the world, which is totally opposite to his “good and acceptable and perfect will.” But it likewise has a reference even to the *manners* and *customs* of the world, which naturally flow from its wisdom and spirit, and are exactly suitable thereto. And it was not beneath the wisdom of God to give us punctual directions in this respect also.

2. Some of these, particularly that in the text, descend even to the apparel of Christians. And both this text, and the parallel one of St. Paul, are as express as possible. St. Paul’s words are, (1 Tim. ii. 9, 10,) “I will that women adorn themselves in modest apparel; not—with gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.”

3. “But is it not strange,” say some, “that the all-wise Spirit of God should condescend to take notice of such trifles as these? to take notice of such insignificant trifles, things of so little