

guidance of God's word, and if he could search into the secrets of their heart, he might discover that there was a struggle there for a short time between the vanities of the world and the favour of God. But he would soon find that they recovered their wonted character—that the law of God was recognized by them to be of paramount importance—that the suggestions of the earthly principle was rejected—and that they went on their way with the law of God in their hand, and most earnestly desirous of conforming every part of their conduct to its decisions. If he continued to mark the conduct of such persons for a considerable time, he would see the same uniform sustained course of obedience to the precepts of the divine law. If the observer was only candid in giving us a true narration of what fell under his observation, he would most certainly say that he had witnessed men living in the midst of a world which was filled with every thing fitted to excite the depraved appetites of the soul, and that they were obviously uninfluenced by them. He would say that he saw other men drawn away by the immediate prospect of enjoyment which the continual recurrence of new events and new scenes opened up to them, but that in these men who professed to have received Christ, he had seen an entirely different spirit. He could not well understand what peculiarity of character and temperament they possessed, for they were altogether unaffected by those motives which wrought so powerfully upon other men. He saw throughout their whole deportment a seriousness in regard to religion. It was not a spirit that existed for only a short time that he witnessed, but it was steady and sustained seriousness. They never appeared to be taken off their guard. The element which pervaded their presence seemed to be devout. They were the uniform patrons of all that is decorous in outward conduct, of all that is moderate in regard to the enjoyments and pleasures of the world. They were always meek and gentle in their demeanour. They were always ready to instruct their neighbours and friends in the doctrine of the gospel. The Sabbath was their delight. They were men that persevered in prayer to God. They were men in short, who seemed to have every motive and principle of their souls influenced by a system of things nowhere visible in this world, and shadowed forth only in the inspired narratives of the sacred volume. It would be a very natural train of reflection for a person who thus observed the conduct of those servants of God, to turn his eyes on his own conduct, and if we should suppose him to be

ingenuous enough to state the contrast that existed between himself, and that of those persons concerning whom we have been speaking, it would be enough to make him pause, and earnestly to investigate the cause of the difference that existed between them. He would tell us candidly, that as for him, he could not by any means acquire that spirit of sustained devoutness which he saw to be so marked a principle in the character of the persons of whom we have just spoken. He would say that there were particular seasons when momentary feelings of a serious kind were impressed upon him, but he could not by any possibility realize their habitual seriousness. The slightest intercourse with the world, put to flight every serious thought from his mind. He could be serious on the death of a friend, or he could be serious when he was brought to a sick bed, or he could be serious when he heard some awakening sermon about the necessity of repentance and the terrors of the judgment day, but that seriousness should pervade the whole extent of his life was far beyond all that he could possibly accomplish. He would tell us, besides, that he possessed no sustained resolution, to resist the influence of circumstances. He could not conceive how the will of any class of men, could be so steadfastly turned in the direction of virtue and holiness, that it was, apparently, proof against all the varieties of times, of places, or of company. As for him, his spirit was easily seduced into the paths of vanity and folly. When the temptation came round, he immediately yielded. The principle of sin, which dwelt within him, was so strong, that it broke, at once, through the feeble resolution which he had formed to restrain it. He had often in secret resolved to lay aside his besetting sin, but he found these resolutions to be weak as water, in the hour of his trial. The pleasures of life intoxicated his soul. The mirth of associates when they came in his way, dissipated all his seriousness. The sympathies and smiles of the world could not be put away by him, and so the law of God, he thought not of. It never entered into his mind so as to lay its authoritative arrest on his sinfulness and folly, and, altogether, forgetful of God, he is passing long periods of time in the same state of moral imbecility. When the man thus contemplates his own exceeding proneness to sin—his own love for immediate enjoyment—his feebleness in repulsing the very smallest temptations—his confirmed carnality—his strangeness in regard to the holy ways of God—the fruitlessness of his attempt to imitate the manners of the people who are so pre-