

they did upon this matter. We could name a dozen sins which they have not specifically stigmatized, but O how strongly have they spoken out against this particular sin. Given a certain number of persons who have achieved success on this line, and you can see the disadvantage in which they are placed in relation to the Truth of God. To begin with, there is a vast amount of occupation—pre-occupation. They are wealthy, they are looked up to, they have a certain recognized social standing, there are certain things that they must do because they have reached this standing. They are very much engaged, so that they can justify to themselves the omission of the duties that are supposed to be incumbent upon Christians in ordinary conditions. But there is not only pre-occupation, there is occupation. There is occupation that is in its own nature damaging rather than helpful. Society, so called, looks to the wealthy, accords them in some degree its homage, and they do something for society in return. The result is an atmosphere of insincerity, of form, an atmosphere in which truth does not always have its true and proper place, an atmosphere in which things are held to be justified by the condition of those who do them, that are not justified upon the simple basis of the law, the moral law, that God has given to us.

And that is not all. There come in occupations which in their nature are positively injurious. Take our great cities, the wealth that they possess is notable. The caterers to the public amusement, from all parts of the globe, find it in their interest to come to these cities, and it is incumbent, by a sort of common consent, upon those to whom wealth has been given, to recognize their services and enjoy what they bring; sometimes it is corrupting, sometimes it is distinctively weakening, sometimes it is suggestive of evil, too often it exercises an influence upon the human spirit that is directly antagonistic to Christ. to His claims, to His character and the service that He expects at our hands and the holiness of that God with whom we have to do. I do not enter into details or particulars, but I speak what I know when I say that in many instances wealth has become a fearful temptation, a powerful deteriorating influence along the lines that I have thus indicated to you. What minister expects deep and spiritual impressions to be made by the services of God's house upon a family that has been until midnight on the Saturday night at a theatre or a ball, and which family is making arrangements for an entertainment to be given on a Sunday evening in their home? What minister expects the truth of God to have—if I may so say—fair play, in its approaches to minds that are passing through processes and coming under influences like those indicated? Follow this fact a little further. When we everywhere put mammon, and success in the pursuit of mammon, in so favourable an attitude, we are indisposing persons to come to Christ and enter into His service. There is one, for example, who, though he never put the thought into familiar speech, thinks something like this: "I am fond of joy and satisfaction and pleasure. I am living in the pleasures and occupations that are connected especially with the possession of wealth, and I do not well see how I can go in for this religion whose teachers are continually ringing the changes upon crucifying the flesh, dying unto sin, coming out from the world and being separate from it, not being conformed to it, but transformed by the renewing of the mind—I cannot see how I can with comfort and satisfaction go into all this. Besides, this religion of Jesus, as they preach it to me, is continually throwing some degree of discouragement upon the things that make up the substance of my life. The pleasures I enjoy, it is constantly telling me, are only for a season; not only so, but it reflects upon those pleasures as bad in their nature; not only so, but it tells me 'he that liveth in pleasure is dead while he liveth.' Well then, let it be so. I would rather be dead and enjoy the satisfaction and excitement and pleasure that I can have now, than live in the sombre atmosphere and under the continual restraint that this religion of Jesus, as they proclaim it, must needs impose upon me." You remember the young man in the New Testament who was brought into contact with