

them with deficiency of interest. They may have *some* interest, but not *enough*. Can they say, like David, "The habitation of thy house, Lord, I have loved well?"—"One thing I have desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that all days of my life I may dwell in thy house to behold thy beauty, and to inquire in thy temple?" Doubtless to many it would be at the cost of inconvenience to come; but, where there is no inconvenience, there is no test of preference. Church attendance is the channel through which heavenly blessings flow. It is the *way* to become heavenly-minded; and when there is indifference about the *way*, we must infer the absence of the *will*.

Again: another and equally important means is private *meditation*. "The seed on the good ground," said our Lord, "are they which, having heard the word, keep it." The husbandman, when he sows his seed, does not leave it on the surface exposed to every evil influence. The harrow is sent over the field, making the ridges of the furrows to fall on the seed, and cover it up securely. Thus it is protected, and is safe. Now the birds cannot easily carry it off, nor the sun scorch and consume it; but there in secret it feeds upon the fertilizing sap, and gradually expands and grows. David understood the process in spiritual husbandry. "Thy word I have hid in my heart." Meditation alone can do this; and, in our secret, solitary hours, it must be done. Where there is not this habit of serious reflection, the grand realities of religion lie forgotten and ignored. Truth, let it ever be remembered, must not only be understood and known, it must also be pondered and felt, or it can never impress our heart, it can never influence our life.

Once more: There must be the habit of private *prayer*. I suppose most of us have again and again resolved to be more frequent and regular in our secret devotions, and may again and again have had to mourn over broken resolutions. Prayer is the great means for keeping alive religion in the soul. And it is just because we restrain prayer that we remain cold and worldly. At communion seasons, a christian congregation gives great promise of fruitfulness—when religious feelings are fresh and strong, when hundreds of persons solemnly pledge themselves to renounce evil and endeavor after new obedience. In how many will this earnestness be retained after six months have passed away? We may safely predict, only in those who keep up constant communion with their risen Redeemer by habitual, daily, fervent prayer.

*Finally.* Why are we to set our affection on the things above, and to sit loose to the things on the earth? The Apostle not only lays down the requirement, he also lays down the *reason*: "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." With regard to worldly pleasures, you are as a dead thing, unaffected by them, unconscious of their

presence. Your life, your real life, is not supplied from earthly sources. Your life, your real life, is not supported by earthly pleasures. Your life, your real life, is hid with Christ in God. "Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth." "Uncleanness, concupiscence, covetousness," these are pleasures of their kind, but they are pleasures that will pass away. "Put ye off all these, and put ye on kindness, humbleness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance, charity." These are things at present but poorly appreciated, but they will one day shine in the clear radiance of heaven's light. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

It is difficult, brethren, to understand why it should be the case, but it is not difficult to see that in reality it is the case, that the great majority of men,—even, alas! the majority of professing Christians,—instead of sitting loose to the things that are seen and temporal—instead of this, they lean their whole weight upon them; they lay up for themselves treasures upon earth; they love the creature more than the Creator: and thus they "spend their money for that which is not bread, and their labor for that which satisfieth not."

Brethren, it is good for us to stretch in thought beyond the present scene of things, and to anticipate the time when all that is alluring around us shall have passed away. It is good for us to see that when our earthly portion fails, we may have a portion in the sky. So that we may be able, like the Psalmist, to say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in all the earth that my soul desires besides thee; flesh and heart may faint and fail, but thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

In conclusion, let me remind you that this setting our affection must be, not occasional and transient, but habitual and constant; not in the calmness and composure of our meditative hours, but in the noise and bustle of our daily business, we must strive to sit loose to the things of earth. Not in the stillness and solemnity of our sacred seasons alone, but in the toil and turmoil of the world's pursuits, we must strive to sit loose to the things of earth. Not in the quiet region of our thoughts and feelings and resolves alone, but in the sphere of our active occupations and purposes and plans, we must endeavor to set our affection on the things above. Not in the loneliness and awful crisis of our dying hour alone, but in the bright and buoyant moments of our whole existence, we must strive to set our affection on the things above. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world; and the world passeth away, and the lust thereof."

—AMEN.