

sting, makes it its own cure, transmutes it into an instrument of joy, and the mediate cause of glory and felicity! The apostle, in the few brief but powerful words of our text, perfectly describes the *character and advantages* of godly sorrow—sorrow thus graciously transmuted and divinely ennobled,—by contrast with the sorrow of the world—sorrow in its original, natural state. That we may apprehend that *character*, and realize those *advantages*, is the aim of this discourse; and let it, my brethren, be our prayer also to that good God, “without whom” no purpose “is strong or holy.”

1. First, then, whence does sorrow proceed? Undoubtedly from either the idea, or the actual feeling of misery. The manifold inconveniences and sufferings which arise from the losses and calamities of this life—poverty, sickness, disappointment, infamy—are the direct cause of the sorrow of the world. Whilst godly sorrow springs from another source—the consideration of evils of a different nature, evils spiritual and eternal: the injuries inflicted by sin on our moral and intellectual being, which cease not with the present life, but live on through undying ages, in monstrous exaggeration, more and more separating us from the Fountain of happiness—the ever blessed God. Godly sorrow, as the very words indicate, admits of no motive which is not referable to God.

2. But they differ not only in their sources, but in their *effects*. “*The sorrow of the world worketh death.*”—Any great grief, it is well-known, often blinds the understanding, so that it cannot see the means of redress, even when they are visible to others; it induces a mental stupefaction, benumbing the faculties and rendering the case helpless and hopeless. We know, too, how it dims the eyes, dries up the vital moisture of the body, and accelerates dissolution, even where the suicidal hand does not make shorter work. But this is only the smallest—the visible part of that death intended by the apostle. The sorrow which wells up from the low fountains of the earth, nor recognizes God, ends not with the earth—it issues in a worse death than the dissolution of the body,—in the severing of the soul from God, through the whole period of its onward existence,—a severance embracing every thing that is terrible in imagination or reality to a being like man, capable of the extremity of bliss and woe. Such is the dark, shoreless ocean into which the sorrow of the world empties its bitter streams.