

and the physical, intellectual, and moral nature to man; for every violation of its precepts does, in the end, evoke the prerogative of all our powers. Sinful indulgence either pall upon the taste, or, he reaction on the system, destroys the very capacity for continuing in it, by which case the craving remains, while the ability to satisfy it is gone. This is part of my theme which might be illustrated in a very harrowing manner; I refer, however, to suggest it thus to you in the simplest way, leaving you to think it out for yourselves. The confirmed drunkard has not now the pleasure which he had at first in the flowing bowl. The enjoyment has gone, and only the slavery remains. But it is so with every other sin. Each time such guilty pleasure is felt, a portion of the sensitiveness is destroyed, and it takes more to produce the same excitement again, until at last it is impossible to produce it by any means whatever. But with the joys of holiness it is quite different. The oftner we enjoy them they are the higher. The longer and the better a man knows CHRIST, the more happiness does he derive from Him. This is a joy which never cloy; this is a pleasure which never palls; this is a delight which, so far from destroying the capacity to receive it, only increases it the more, so that, at the close of his career, the believer can say to JESUS that the governor of the feast said at Cana, "Every man at the beginning hath set forth good wine, and when men are well drunk, then that which is worse; but Thou has kept the good wine until now." Here, again, therefore, I offer you the materials for coming to a wise decision in regard to this momentous matter. I am persuaded that the longer you think out the point which I have now rather hinted to you than amplified before you, the more will you be convinced of its truth. Why, then, will you choose a pleasure which will burn out of you to a helpless slavery? Turn, I pray you, to the LORD JESUS, and through faith in Him and obedience to Him you will enter upon the enjoyment of a happiness which shall grow upon you as the sun waxes to its meridian height, and which has in itself the elements of the blessedness of heaven.

IV. Finally, I would have you to take note that the pleasures of sin are most expensive. Here I refer not to money, though that is by no means unimportant; and when men are inclined to say that they cannot afford to be Christians, I would like them to sit down and calmly reckon up how much their sins cost them. But I speak now of the expense of the man's own nature. The Word of God says, "The wicked do not live out half their days," and notwithstanding the existence of a few exceptions, I am persuaded that this will be corroborated by the observation of men generally. The sinner is old before his time. His physical power is gone. The least illness proves serious to him. He can make no such drafts on his strength as he was wont to do, or if he attempted to do so his life is the forfeit. His intellect has lost its freshness. It needs to be whipped up by stimulants; and when their influence is removed it sinks into lethargy and weakness. His will has become powerless. His conscience has become seared. In a word, he is a wreck. Did you ever look upon that wild sea-piece of Stanfield's, which he has called "The Abandoned"? The sky is dark and lowering, with a forked flash of lightning shooting athwart it; the ocean is angry, and all over it there lies a dreary loneliness that makes the spectator almost shudder. The one solitary thing in sight is a huge hull, without mast or man on board, lying helpless in the trough of the sea. The men who stood by her as long as it was safe have been picked up by some friendly vessel now entirely unseen, and there that battered, broken thing floats on at the mercy of the winds and waves. This is sad enough; but what is it after all in comparison with the condition of an abandoned man, abandoned by friends, abandoned by himself, abandoned, it may be, even, like Saul, by God, and drifting on the ocean of life all dismantled and rudderless, tossed hither and thither by every wind or appetite or impulse, and soon to disappear beneath the waters! And what then? I dare not trust myself to speak of that. Muse on it yourself for a moment, and then if you can calculate the cost of the pleasures of sin? Far otherwise is the experience