

which is the companion of a guilty mind; and next the deliverance which the Gospel gives from it, by means of "the blood of sprinkling." In the first place then let us consider that nature of that remorse which is the companion of a guilty mind.

Almighty God, having created man after his own image, intended him for moral excellence and perfection. Hence all his passions were originally set on the side of virtue, and all his faculties tended to heaven. Conscience is still the least corrupted of all the powers of the soul. It keeps a faithful register of our deeds, and passes impartial sentence upon them. It is appointed the judge of human life; is invested with authority and dominion over the whole man, and is armed with stings to punish the guilty. These are the sanctions and enforcements of that eternal law to which we are subjected. For even in our present fallen state, we are so framed by the Author of our nature, that moral evil can no more be committed than natural evil can be suffered, without anguish and disquiet. As pain follows the infliction of a wound, as certainly doth remorse attend the commission of sin. Conscience may be lulled asleep for a while, but it will one day vindicate its rights. It will seize the sinner in an hour when he is not aware; will blast him perhaps in the midst of his mirth, and put him to the torture of an accusing mind. For the truth of this observation, let me appeal to your own experience. Did you ever indulge a criminal passion,—did you ever allow yourselves in any practice which you knew to be unlawful, without feeling an inward struggle and strong reluctance of mind before the attempt, and bitter pangs of remorse after the commission? Though no eye saw what you did; though you were sure that no mortal could discover it, did not shame and confusion secretly lay hold of you? Was not your conscience instead of a thousand witnesses? Did it not plead with you face to face, and upbraid you for your transgressions? Have not some of you perhaps, at this instant, a sensible experience of the truths which I am now pressing upon you? In these days of retirement and self-examination, did not you feel the operation of that powerful principle? Did not your sins then rise up before you in sad remembrance? Has not the image of them pursued you into the house of God? And are not your minds now stung with some of that regret which followed upon the first commission?

My brethren, there is no escaping from a guilty mind. You can avoid some evils, by mingling in society; you can avoid others, by retiring into solitude; but this enemy, this tormentor within, is never to be avoided. If thou retirest into solitude, it will meet thee there, and haunt thee like ghost. If thou goest into society, it will go with thee; it will mar the entertainment, and dash the untasted cup from thy trembling hand.

Whilst the sinner indulges his vain imagination; whilst he solaces himself with the prospect of pleasures rising upon pleasures never to have an end, and says to his soul. Be of good cheer, thou hast happiness laid up for many years, a voice comes to his heart that strikes him with sudden fear, and turns the vision of joy to a scene of horror. Whilst the proud and impious Belshazzar enjoys the feast with his princes, his concubines, and his wives; whilst he carouses in the consecrated vessels of the sanctuary; in a moment the scene changes; the handwriting on the wall turns the house of mirth into a house of mourning; the countenance of the king changes, and his knees smite one against another, whilst the Prophet, in awful accents, pronounces his doom; pronounces that his hour is come, and that his kingdom is departed from him.

It is in adversity that the pangs of conscience are most severely felt. When affliction humbles the native pride of the heart, and gives a man leisure to reflect upon his former ways, his past life rises up to view: having now no interest in the sins which he committed, they appear in all their native deformity, and fill his mind with anguish and remorse. Men date their misfortunes from their faults, and acknowledge their sin when they meet with the punishment. The sons of Jacob felt no remorse when they sold their brother to be a slave; they congratulated themselves upon the mighty deliverance. But the very first misfortune which befel them, a little rough usage in a foreign land, awakened their guilty fears, and they said to one another, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear, *therefore* is this distress come upon us."

But, that the prosperous sinner may not presume upon impunity from the lashes of a guilty mind, and to show you that no situation, however exempted from adversity, and that no station, however exalted, is proof against the horrors of remorse, I shall adduce two remarkable instances of persons who felt all the horrors of a guilty mind, without meeting with any judgments to awaken them. The first is that of Cain, referred to in the text. When the offering of Abel ascended acceptable and well pleasing to God, Cain was seized with envy; from that moment he meditated vengeance against him, and at last imbrued his hands in the blood of his brother. There was then no law against murder: and if antecedent to law there is no original sense of right and wrong implanted in the mind; if conscience as some affirm, was not a natural but an acquired power, the mind of Cain might have been at ease; he might have enjoyed the calm and the serenity of innocence. But when he was brought to the tribunal of conscience, was his mind at ease? Did he enjoy the calm and the serenity of innocence? No. He cried out in the