

the man who has stolen his neighbors goods once, or only the person who steals constantly as often as he has an opportunity—you will readily grant, that he who has stolen once, is a thief in the estimation of the Most High, and that there is pardon for him through the blood of Christ, only when he seeks it with penitence, and a determination to steal no more. You will readily make the same admission respecting adultery. But strange it is, if the enquiry be now made, who is guilty before God of the sin of drunkenness—the man who has once committed it, or only the man who becomes intoxicated every month, or every week, or as often as he has opportunity? Many will be ready to say, without hesitation, surely no person can be held guilty of drunkenness, in the sight of God, who transgresses in this way only once or twice in the course of a season: it can only be the man to whom intemperance has become habitual, who weekly or daily, violates the rules of sobriety, who is chargeable with drunkenness, in the estimation of God; and few even of this description, will admit that the character in the text belongs to them.

Nor without good reason, and infinite wisdom, does the Most High caution us here, not to deceive ourselves. Be assured, my friends, that the man who has made himself drunk, with ardent spirits, though it be the first time, is as truly guilty of drunkenness before God, as the man who has stolen or murdered the first time, is guilty of stealing or murder; and as truly as the latter is excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven till he repents, and obtains forgiveness, through the blood of the Redeemer, so is the former. Recollect, also, that it is in no case the man who merely confesses his sins, but the man who "confesses and forsakes them," to whom mercy is promised.—We pretend not to limit the goodness of God, or to say how often a man may fall into this or any other sin and again be pardoned, if his repentance be genuine—the mercy of God is infinite. But it is absolutely certain that a man can never have pardon in any case or for any sin, whatever his prayers or confessions be, who has still no other intention, but to commit the same crime over again, whenever an opportunity occurs. He, therefore, who has once committed the sin here forbidden, and repented of it, and solemnly resolved to guard against it in future, and is again left to transgress in the same way, has reason to be doubly penitent, doubly humbled before God, and doubly watchful in future; and only when he is so, does he act as a Christian, or has he cause to expect forgiveness. But the