

"Christ gave himself for us," writes St. Paul, "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." The work of the Lord Jesus is commonly spoken of in the New Testament as a work of cleansing and regeneration. Man stands before God defiled by sin, and, through this, alienated from heaven. Jesus was manifested to put away the defilement, to restore in the human soul the divine image which it had lost, and thus to effect a reconciliation, and establish a harmony, between man and his Maker. Standing in this way, and for this purpose, between a holy God and sinful men, he is the Mediator, through whom we receive the atonement, for atonement, as you know, means reconciliation.

Sin is the great plague of humanity. It eats like a canker into the life of the individual and the race. It vitiates its entire spirit and aim, destroys its proper happiness, and overthrows its highest hopes. So thoroughly is this the case, that the sinful man is justly pronounced dead—morally and spiritually dead—"dead in trespasses and sins." It enters the soul like a malignant poison, blights its most hopeful powers, and kills out, or keeps out, the life of God which ought to be there. The Holy Spirit, which comes from God, will not abide in a temple defiled and desecrated by sin. Yet we are strangely indifferent to it. So much are we accustomed to it, that we have long since ceased to look upon it with that abhorrence which it merits. We are ourselves sinful, sinfulness prevails everywhere around us, and our moral vision is injured. It is neither pure nor perfect, else we should regard every aspect of sin with pain and dread. Proper reflection must always lead us so to regard it. It is the root of all the unhappiness which prevails so extensively in the world. Man has been, and continues to be, untrue to his highest interests, and he suffers accordingly. Do I see a brow clouded with discontent, and hear the language of complaint constantly from the tongue? It is the effect of sin. The man has fixed his love too deeply on the things which minister to the gratification of the passing hour, and when these fail him his felicity is marred. His spirit is out of harmony with the Spirit of God, and when the objects of his earthly desire are disturbed or withdrawn, his soul is sorely troubled. The gods whom he worshipped have been cast from their places, or carried away, and like the idolatrous man of old, his language, in effect, is, "What have I more?" Do I observe distrust depicted on the countenance, in the ordinary intercourse of man with his fellow-man? It is the effect of sin. Truth