

The sinner cannot at the same time be a saint. A man whose life is evil, and whose thoughts are base, is never in the devotional frame of mind. Before Christ reigns in any human heart the devil must be cast out. When Christ is enthroned spiritual aptitudes take their rightful place. His Spirit helpeth our infirmities. We aspire to be like Him. We groan to be set free from impediments to spiritual progress, and to attain to a state of fervent communion with God. Thus the downward bent of our minds is arrested and the upward tendency is established. Then must come watchfulness and prayer. These must not be separated. We cannot consistently ask God to "Lead us not into temptation," unless we also set a guard. We cannot expect worldly thoughts to recede and give place to pure and holy feelings, while we at the same time give loose reins to our fancy, allow our imagination to play with corrupt images, and suffer our minds to brood over the frivolous and profane. The temple of the heart into which foul things are constantly invited cannot long remain pure. We must resist evil inclinations. We must be vigilant in thought, self-denying in action, and crucifying to wrong desires. We must meditate upon whatsoever things are pure, honest, just, lovely, and of good report. We must inure our minds to sober reflection. We must encourage serious thoughts, and hold them when they come. A good thought allowed to rush through the mind and then be gone forever, is of little practical use. We must seize upon it, constrain it to remain, analyze it, examine its bearings, incorporate it into our principles, else it makes no lasting impression upon our hearts. The best way, the only way, to exclude the unworthy from our minds is thus to make practical use of the worthy. An intellect busy with high and holy ideals is not likely to amplify the vain or vicious. To get good thoughts we must commune with good minds. Our reading should be carefully chosen. It is not enough that we avoid corrupt writings, which debauch the imagination and poison the principles; we must also refuse the idle, trifling and insipid. Even though comparatively harmless, such works "debase the taste, slacken the intellectual nerve, let down the understanding, set the fancy loose, and send it gadding among low and mean objects." To brood over such is not only a waste of time, but a destruction of the appetite for better things. There are precious few minds in this world so loaded