

What Saith the Scripture?

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SERMONS ON IMPORTANT SUBJECTS

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SERMON VII.

GOD CANNOT PLEASE SINNERS.

-- Luke vii. 31-35.--

"And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all her children."

This lecture was typed in by Michael and Pam Burns.

It would seem, as if God designed, in his dealings with men, to leave them without excuse. He uses such a variety of instrumentality to reclaim and save them, that it appears as if he meant to try every possible means of winning them away from death, that he may give them eternal life.

John the Baptist, was an austere man: he seems to have had very little intercourse with the people, except in his public capacity as a prophet. His message seems to have been that of reproof and rebuke in a high degree. His diet was locusts and wild honey; and he seems to have practised a high degree of austerity, in all his habits of living. He did not visit Jerusalem as a public teacher, but continued in the wildest parts of Judea, to which places the people flocked, to listen to his instruction. His habits of life; his style of preaching; his abstaining in a great measure from intercourse with the people; led his enemies to say, that he had a bad spirit; and that so far he was from being a good man he was possessed with the devil.

After the Scribes and Pharisees had declined receiving his doctrine, under the pretense that he had a devil: Jesus Christ began his public, and in his habits of life, and intercourse with the people, differed widely from John the Baptist. Instead of confining himself to the wilderness of Judea, he visited most

of the principle places, and especially spent considerable time at Jerusalem as a public teacher. He was affable in his deportment; mingled with great ease, and holy civility, with almost all classes of persons, for the purpose of instructing them in the great doctrines of salvation. He did not hesitate to comply with the invitations of the Pharisees, and great men of the nation to dine with them; and on all occasions was forward in administering such reproof, and instruction, as was suited to the circumstances and characters of those with whom he associated. But when the Pharisees listened to his doctrines, they were filled with indignation, and seized hold of the easy and gentlemanly manner in which he accommodated himself to all classes of people that he might give them instruction, and objected to him that he was a gluttonous man, a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. They objected to John, that he was morose and sour, that he had a denunciatory spirit, and was therefore possessed with the devil: and to Christ they objected, that he was on the opposite extreme; that he too was affable and familiar with all classes of people: that he was not only a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber; but that he was the friend of publicans and sinners. It was this inconsistency in them, that drew forth from Christ the words of the text. An evident allusion is made, in the words of the text, to Eastern customs; to their seasons of festivity and dancing on the one hand; and to their loud lamentation and mournings, on funeral occasions, on the other. It is common, as every one knows, for little children to copy, in their plays, those things which they see in adult persons. When they witness seasons of festivity, piping, and dancing, they get something that will answer as an instrument of music, and go forth piping and dancing, in imitation of what they have seen. So on the other hand, when they have witnessed funeral occasions, on which, mourning men and women, as is common in the East; by their loud wailings, have excited great lamentations among the spectators; they too, have attempted to copy this also. The conduct of the Scribes and Pharisees is compared to children, who sit in the marketplaces, and complain of their little playfellows as morose and sour, and not willing to play with them, play what they would. When they imitated festivity and dancing, their playfellows were solemn and reserved, and did not seem disposed to merriment. And when they attempted to play something that was more agreeable to their humour, and mourned and wailed unto them as if at a funeral, then they were disposed to be merry. We have piped unto you (say they), and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept. And when Christ had thus represented the testy conduct of these children, he presses his hearers with the application, "for John the Baptist came neither eating bread, nor drinking wine, and ye say he hath a devil. The Son of Man is come, eating and drinking, and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all her children."

In speaking from these words, I design, to illustrate the following proposition---That God Cannot Please Sinners.

Some people are apt to imagine that it is a misrepresentation of God's character that creates so much opposition to him in this world. Sometimes, it is true, that his character is greatly misrepresented, and when his character is thus misrepresented the consciences of men are opposed to him; but they are no better pleased when his character is truly represented; for then, their hearts are opposed to him.

It is matter of fact, that only needs to be stated, to be admitted, that upon the subject of religion, the heart and the conscience of impenitent sinners, are opposed to each other. That which their hearts love, their consciences condemn, and that which their consciences approve, their hearts hate. Their consciences approve the character of God, as it is; but to this character their hearts are utterly

opposed, as I have shown when treating upon the subject of total depravity, in No. 5 of this series. If the character of God should be so altered, as to conciliate and please their wicked heart; their conscience would condemn it.

In illustration of the proposition, "that God cannot please sinners." I observe in the

- 1st. Place, that sinners do not like the holiness of God, nor would they like him if he were unholy.

To the holiness of God their hearts are bitterly opposed. To deny this is as absurd as it is false. To maintain that an impenitent heart is not opposed to holiness, is the same as to maintain that an impenitent heart is not impenitent. Impenitence is the love of sin. But sin and holiness are direct opposites. To say then, that an impenitent heart is not opposed to holiness, is to say that opposites are not opposites. God is infinitely holy, and therefore the impenitent heart is wholly opposed to him. But suppose he was infinitely sinful; would sinners be better pleased with him than they are at present? No. They would then make war upon him because he was so wicked. Their consciences would then condemn him, and although their hearts would be conciliated, their conscience, and their better judgment would be utterly opposed to him. Men are so constituted, that they cannot approve the character of a wicked being. No man ever approved of the character of the devil: and wicked men are opposed to both God and the devil, for opposite reasons. They hate God with their hearts because he is so holy; and in their consciences condemn the devil, because he is so wicked. Now suppose you place the character of God at any point between the two extremes of infinite holiness and infinite sinfulness; and sinners would not, upon the whole, be better pleased with him than they are now. In just as far as he was holy, their hearts would hate him. In just as far as he was wicked, their consciences would condemn him. So that he does not please them as he is, nor would he please them if he should change.

- Again. Sinners do not like the mercy of God; in view of the conditions upon which it is to be exercised, nor would they like him if he were unmerciful.

If they liked his mercy with its conditions, they would accept forgiveness; and would no longer be impenitent sinners. This is matter of fact. But if he were unmerciful, then they would certainly be opposed to him.

- Again. They do not like the precept of his law, as it is, nor would they approve of it if it were altered. When they behold its perfection, their hearts rise up against it. But if it were imperfect, and allowed of some degree of sin, their consciences would condemn it. Let the precept of the law remain as it is, or alter it as you will; and sinners are and will be displeased. The law now requires perfect holiness; and for this reason the sinner's heart is entirely opposed to it. But suppose it required entire sinfulness; then his conscience would utterly condemn it. Let it be of a mixed character, and require some holiness, and some sin; and in as far as it requires holiness, their heart would hate it; and in as far as it required sin, their conscience would condemn it. So upon the whole, they would be as far from being satisfied, as they are now.

- Again. Sinners do not like the penalty of the law as it is; nor would they approve of it, if it were altered. The heart of sinners rises into most outrageous rebellion, when the penalty of eternal death is held out to their view. But if the penalty were less, their consciences would condemn it. Then they would say the penalty was not equal to the importance of the precept. That as the importance of the precept was infinite; it is a plain matter of common sense that the penalty is infinite. That God was under an obligation in justice, to apportion the penalty to the importance of the precept. Furthermore, they would say that God had not done all the nature of the case admitted, to prevent the commission of sin. That he had not presented the highest motives to obedience, that could be presented; nor such motives as the nature of the case demanded: that therefore he was deficient in benevolence, and even wanting in common honesty and justice. Now, place the penalty of this law at any point between eternal death and no penalty at all, and the sinner is not satisfied.

If you make it less than eternal death, you offend his conscience; and if you let it remain as it is, you offend his heart.

- Again. Sinners do not like the Gospel as it is, nor would they be better satisfied, if it were altered.

1st. They do not like the rule of conduct which it prescribes, now would they be satisfied if it prescribed any other rule. It requires that men should be holy, as God is holy: and requires the same strictness and perfection, as does the moral law. But this is a great offence to their hearts. Suppose it prescribed a different rule of conduct, and lowered its claim as to suit the sinful inclinations of men; then their consciences would oppose it.

What, they would say, is the Gospel to repeal the moral law? Does it make Christ the minister of sin? Is it arrayed against the government of God, and does it permit rebellion against his throne? What sort of Gospel is this? To this their consciences would entirely object.

Again. Sinners do not like the conditions of the Gospel, now would they be satisfied, if they were altered. The conditions are, repentance and faith: but to these, the sinner's heart is opposed. To hate his sins; to trust in Christ, for salvation; is asking too much, to obtain the consent of his heart. But suppose the Gospel offered to pardon and save, without repentance and faith: tho' this the sinner's conscience, and his common sense would object. What, he would say; shall the Gospel offer pardon while they continue their rebellion? Shall men be saved in their sins? It is absurd and impossible. And shall men be saved without faith in Christ? Shall they be received and pardoned, while they make God a liar? Shall they go to heaven without believing there is a heaven? Shall they escape hell when they do not believe there is a hell? Shall they ever find their way to everlasting life, when they have no confidence in the testimony of God; and will not walk in the only way that will conduct them there? Impossible. A Gospel that pretends to save on such conditions must be from hell.

Now suppose you let the conditions of the Gospel remain as they are, or alter them in any possible way; and the sinner is not satisfied. They commend themselves to his conscience

as they are, but they are a great offence to his heart. Alter them, so as to conciliate his heart, and you offend his conscience; and while the sinner remains impenitent, there is no conceivable alternation that would please him.

The fact is, that sinners are at continual war with themselves. Their hearts and consciences are in perpetual opposition to each other. One view of a subject will please their hearts, and offend their consciences; and another view of it, will satisfy their consciences, but arouse the enmity of their hearts; and while they are in this state, it is plainly impossible to please them.

Again. Sinners do not like the means of grace, as they are, nor would they be satisfied, if any other means were used to save them. They do not like the doctrines that ministers preach, when they preach the truth, now would they be satisfied if they preached error.

If they come out with the pure doctrines of the Gospel, and bear down upon the hearts and consciences of men with the claims of God, their hearts arise in instant rebellion. This say they, is an abominable doctrine. But if the minister lets down the high claims of the Gospel, their conscience is dissatisfied; and the sinner if he is well instructed says, that the minister is afraid to tell the truth; that he is daubing with untempered mortar; that he is deceiving the people and leading them down to hell.

Now, whether the minister preaches the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; or error, and nothing but error; or a mixture of truth and falsehood; in just as far as he preaches the truth; the sinner's heart opposes: and whenever he preaches what the sinner knows to be error, his conscience condemns it. So let the minister preach what he will; while the sinner is impenitent, he will not upon the whole be satisfied.

Again. Sinners do not like the manner of ministers preaching as it is, nor would they be satisfied if their manner was different. If the minister's manner is rousing, and pointed; pungent and impressive; the sinner's heart rises up against it. If it is lazy and cold and dry, his conscience condemns it. In the first case, the sinner says, he is an enthusiast, and a madman, that he appeals to the passions, and excites a great deal of animal feeling; that he frightens the women and children, and will drive people to madness. In the latter case, he says that he preaches the people all to sleep. That he is prosing, and dull, and does not believe the Gospel himself. Now let the minister's manner be wholly right, or wholly wrong, or a mixture of right and wrong; and the sinner is not satisfied. In so far as the manner is right, his conscience takes sides against it: and while the sinner is so inconsistent with himself, it is vain to hope to please him.

Again. Sinners do not like the lives of ministers, as they are, nor would they be satisfied if they lived differently. If the minister is determined to know nothing among his people, save Jesus Christ and him crucified: if he make religion his entire business; and introduce his message on all occasions; the sinner's heart is filled with indignation: Says he is a great bigot; full of superstition; or a canting hypocrite; that he is not sociable, and affable as a minister ought to be; that he takes no interest in the common concerns of men; that

he is entirely unacquainted with human nature; that he is always intruding his religion upon every body: and he thinks, for his part, that a minister would do a great deal more good, to be a little more like other people. But if on the other hand, the minister associates with the world like other people; takes an interest in the passing occurrences of the day: if he interests himself in politics; reads secular news, and books: relates anecdotes, and is cheerful, and companionable; and at home among his people, on all occasions; then the sinner's conscience condemns him. O he says, I don't see that he is any better than any body else; he is not what a minister should be, but is fond of politics, and as much interested in the business of this world, as other people are. I like to see a minister confine himself to the duties of his office. Now, let the minister live as he will; wholly right, or wholly wrong, and the sinner is displeased. But suppose there be a mixture of consistency and inconsistency, or right and wrong, in a minister's life; then they say, he is not at all what he should be; that he is sometimes very hot, and sometimes very cold; that he is sometimes all religion, and sometimes no religion; that sometimes his conversation is all upon religious subjects, and sometimes all upon the world; they think this inconsistency calculated to do a great deal of hurt: for their part, they like to see a minister consistent and be always the same. Now, it is evident, that while the sinner is so inconsistent with himself, he will be displeased with the lives of ministers, let them live as they may. As far as the minister lives as he ought, the impenitent heart, loathes him; and in as far as he lives as he ought not; the conscience condemns him.

Again. Sinners do not like the conduct of Christians, as it is, nor would they be satisfied if it were different. When Christians are very much engaged in religion, have a great many meetings, and make great efforts to save souls of men, the hearts of sinners are very much disturbed. They call them enthusiasts, and hypocrites, and think they had much better attend to their worldly business, lest their families should come upon the town. They do not thank them for their impertinence in visiting from house to house, and intruding their religion upon all their neighbors: and if Christians are opposed to balls and parties, and all kinds of sinful amusements; then they say they are morose and sour, and misanthropic; are opposed to all the sympathies, and courtesies of life; and that they want to render every body else, as morose, and sour, and unhappy in themselves--that they had better be engaged in something else, than in muttering their prayers, running to meetings, and exhorting their neighbors to repent, as if nobody had any religion but themselves. But, if on the other hand, Christians say but little about religion, attend meeting but seldom, except on the Sabbath; engage as deeply in business as worldly men; and appear to enjoy parties of pleasure, and time-killing amusements; now they say, these professors of religion are all hypocrites: what do they more than others? They care nothing about the souls of their neighbors. They neither warn, nor exhort them; nor live as if they believed there was a heaven or a hell. If these are Christians, I want no such religion as this. So that is Christians live right or wrong, sinners are not satisfied. Of if there is a mixture of good and evil in their lives, they are no better pleased. If sometimes Christians are awake, and at other times asleep; if sometimes they do their duty, and at other times neglect it; sinners say, that their inconsistency is a great stumbling-block; that they don't like this periodical religion; that is one day all zeal, and the next all coldness and death. The truth is, if they are engaged, the sinner's heart is disturbed; and if they are cold, his conscience

gives sentence against them. If they are neither cold nor hot, in just as far as they are warm, their hearts oppose; and in as far as they are cool, their consciences condemn; and who can please them?

Again. Sinners are displeased if the church exercise discipline, and turn out unworthy members; and they are also displeased, if they do not do it. If a church suffer disorderly and wicked persons in their communion, their consciences are opposed to this. They say these church members are all hypocrites, to sanction such conduct as this. What! Have fellowship with such persons? The church can never prosper while they retain in their communion such hypocrites. By having fellowship with them, they show that they approve their deeds. But, if on the other hand, the church rise up and excommunicate these offending members, then their hearts are disturbed. They maintain that the church are persecuting some of its best members. They think that the proceedings of the church are very uncharitable to deal thus with persons, who for aught they can see, are as good as any persons in the church. Cases of this kind have occurred, where the excommunicated members have been advised, by the ungodly, to prosecute the church for slander. The truth is, that while sinners continue to be so inconsistent with themselves, nothing, upon the subject of religion, can please them. What is right offends their hearts; and what is wrong offends their consciences.

I shall conclude this subject with several remarks:

1st. From what has been said, you can see why it is that sinners find it impossible to rest in any form of error, until their consciences become seared as with a hot iron. It is affecting to see, how many persons there are, who are making continual efforts to hide themselves behind some refuge of lies. These errors are congenial to their feelings, and they want to believe them: and in the excitement of debate, or in view of some glowing exhibition of their error, when it is exhibited, as if it were sober truth, they feel as if they did believe it; and while the excitement lasts they seem to rest in it. But when the tumult of feeling subsides, and an enlightened conscience can gain a hearing, it gives forth the sentence of condemnation against their favorite heresy. Conscience comes forth and writes "falsehood" upon the very head and front of it. This leads the heart to mutiny, and an internal struggle and war is created, from which it would seem that the sinner can only escape by working himself into such an excitement, as to lose sight of Scripture, and reason and common sense: and thus in the wild uproar of his tumultuous feelings drown the voice of conscience, and for the time being feel measurably quiet in his sins. Thus you will see Universalists, and errorists of almost every description courting debate; they seem to be unhappy unless they can be engaged in some exciting conversation that will drown the voice of conscience. But until by utter violence they have put conscience to silence, they can never rest quietly in any form of error when they have been rightly instructed. It is in vain for them to expect to bring an enlightened conscience to take sides against truth, and against God. God has not left himself without a witness in the sinner's breast; and however much his warring passions, and his desperate heart, may mutiny against high heaven, he may rest assured, that conscience will write out, and sign and seal his death-warrant; and often in anticipation of coming retribution, hand him over to the executioner of eternal justice.

Again. You can see, from this subject, why it is that sinners will at one time praise, and at another

censure the same thing. There is a sinner goes to hear a minister preach who daubs with untempered mortar; whose velvet lips utter the honied words of deceitfulness and guile; who puts darkness for light, and light for darkness; who makes falsehood appear like truth, and truth like falsehood; and whose flowing eloquence is like one who has a pleasant voice, and can play well upon an instrument. He conceals the sinner's danger. He says nothing of his guilt. "He strengthens the hands of the wicked that he shall not turn from his wicked way, by promising him life." O, says the sinner, what a charming preacher. His feelings are enlisted; he is almost in a rapture. He goes home pouring forth the most enthusiastic commendations of the sermon. But let his feelings subside; let him have time for reflection; and when he has thought, he will change his tune: and when speaking the sober dictates of his conscience, he will condemn the preacher and his sermon, as calculated to bewitch and deceive, rather than to reform and save.

Again. Let him hear a minister who brings the truth of God to bear with the most impressive pungency upon the hearts and consciences of men, and his heart rises in rebellion; and while under the excitement, he will pour out execrations upon the minister and his sermon, and declare that he will never hear him preach again. He is ready to quarrel with every body that will justify the sermon or the preacher. But let him have time to cool; let the lawless perturbations of his bosom cease. Let conscience gain a hearing, and you will find him speaking a different language. Let the same preacher have an appointment in his neighborhood, and you will find him at the house of God. He will say, after all, I may as well go; the man preached the truth, and I may as well hear it as not. Though I was angry at his doctrine, I cannot but respect his honesty; I will go once more and hear what he has to say. Now in one of these cases the sinner speaks the language of his heart; and in the other the language of his conscience.

II. From this subject, you can see, that a minister whose preaching pleases the hearts of sinners, cannot commend himself to their consciences in the sight of God. Many ministers seem to aim at conciliating the feelings of the impenitent part of their congregation. They seem to consider it an evidence of their wisdom and prudence, that their preaching has so much favour with the ungodly. Now let these sinners be converted, and they will lose their confidence in such a minister. Their consciences, if enlightened, have never been satisfied with him. They have praised his preaching, and loved to hear him, because he has commended himself to their hearts, and not because he has commended himself to their consciences. If then, they are ever truly converted, and their hearts are brought over to take sides with their conscience, it is highly probable that they will go away and join some other congregation, if another is within their reach; and where in such cases they do not do this, there is reason to fear that they are not truly converted. But where a ministry preaches to the conscience, and sinners get angry and go away, if ever they are converted they will desire to come back again, and set under the preaching that used so to disturb them while in their sins.

III. From this subject, you can see, that where Christians try to gain influence with sinners, by bringing down their religion so as to conciliate their feelings while in their sins, they will never by this kind of influence do the sinner any good. For while by this course they please the heart of sinners their consciences condemn them; and while their consciences condemn the course they take, it is impossible that this course should do them any good.

Many persons are attempting to gain influence with people in high life, by imitating them, and

conforming their lives and habits, and equipage, to their taste and mode of living. In this way they seem to think that they shall gain access to them, and influence over them. But it is certain, that the access and influence they will thus gain, will never do the sinner any good; because this whole course of conduct, by which this influence is gained, is condemned by the sinner's conscience. It is not a religious, but a worldly influence, that is thus gained. It is not a sanctified, but a sinful influence. And instead of giving the person's character who takes this course, weight, as a Christian, it has directly the opposite effect; and destroys the confidence of the sinner, that he is a Christian. By taking this proud and worldly course to gain influence, he may conciliate the sinner's feelings, and commend himself to his heart, but the sinner's conscience repels and condemns him.

IV. God, so speaks and conducts, as to commend himself to every man's conscience. The sinner's heart is entirely opposed to God; but God pursues such a course, as not to leave himself without a witness in the sinner's breast. Conscience will testify for God. Now, it is certain, that the sinner's heart must be reconciled to God, or he is eternally miserable; his judgment and conscience, will always bear witness that God is right; and unless the heart is brought over to take sides with conscience, it is self-evident that the sinner must be damned.

V. Ministers, and Christians should take the same course that God does. Should so live and speak, as to commend themselves to the sinner's conscience.

If we live so as to have the sinner's conscience on our side, however much he may hate us now, it is certain, that he must love us, or he must be damned. If we have done that which his conscience approve, he must be reconciled to us, or God will never be reconciled to him.

VI. You see from this subject, why it is that where persons are converted, they often manifest the greatest attachment to those Christians whom they most hated, previous to their conversion. Those Christians that lead the most holy lives, are most apt to be hated by impenitent sinners; and it often happens, that the more they reprove and warn and rebuke them; the more sinners will hate them. But if those sinners become truly converted, you will always see that they have the most confidence in those very persons; the reason is, their hearts are changed. Their conscience took part with the faithful Christian before; and now they are converted, both heart and conscience approve his character.

VII. You see, from this subject, why it is that when persons are converted, they manifest the least attachment for, and the least confidence in, those professors of religion with whom they were most intimate while in their sins. Those persons with whom they were most pleased, while in this state of impenitency; were agreeable to them, not because they had so much piety, but because they had so little. Not because they did their duty to them so faithfully, but because they neglected it. Now when they are converted, they cannot have much confidence in the piety of those professors with whom they used to have this kind of worldly intimacy. They cannot, for their lives, help suspecting that they have no piety. In some cases a husband or wife, who was a professor of religion, has so lived, and so concealed their light as to please their unconverted companion. If, in such a case, the husband or wife becomes truly converted, rest assured, there will be but little Christian confidence between the young convert, and the old professor in this case. In some cases, husbands have said, after their conversion, that they have very little confidence in their wife's religion, because she never manifested religion enough to disturb them in their sins.

VIII. You see, from this subject, that temporising with sinners; letting down, concealing, or evading the claims of the Gospel, can do them no good. To attempt to please them, while in their sins, is but to ruin them, if we succeed. Their hearts must be changed; and the only way to effect this, is by taking the deepest hold upon conscience, that is possible. Instead of expecting to change the heart, by concealing the offensive features of the Gospel, we need only expect to change it, by spreading out before the conscience, the claims of God, in all their length and breadth. The heart is to be brought over, through instrumentality of conscience, and the more fully the claims of God are represented to the conscience, the more likely the sinner is to be converted.

To conceal the truth from conscience, and attempt to win the sinner over by a lovely song; is but to lull him with a syren's voice, until he plunges into eternal death.

IX. You see from this subject, why it is that convicted sinners often manifest the greatest opposition, just before they submit to God. It is often the case, that the more conscience is pressed, the more the sinner is fretted, and the more he will rebel; and when the conscience is thoroughly enlightened, and has obtained a firm footing, so as to exert its utmost power upon the heart; a desperate and outrageous conflict often ensues; and in the madness of his exasperated feelings, the sinner is sometimes almost ready to blaspheme the God of heaven. And it is often observed, that sinners will be the most high-handed in the outbreakings of their enmity, while conscience is taking its most thorough lessons, from the truth and Spirit of God. But when feeling has in a measure exhausted its turbulence, the power of truth, presented by the Spirit of God, exerts upon the heart such tremendous power, through the conscience, as to make the sinner quail ---throw down his weapons, and submit to God.

X. From this subject, you can see the long-suffering of God in sparing sinners. How amazing it is, that he spares them so long, notwithstanding all their unreasonable fault-finding and rebellion. Nothing that he does pleases them, and nothing that he can do would please them. What would you think of your children, if they should conduct in such a manner towards you. Suppose they had never obeyed you, and had never so much as meant to obey you. When you have conducted in such a way as to commend yourself to their consciences, their hearts opposed you; and when you have commended yourself to their hearts, their consciences opposed you; so that upon the whole you have not, and cannot please them. They are always displeased, and murmuring at whatever you do. O how little patience would the kindest earthly parents have with their children, when compared with the long-suffering of the blessed God.

XI. You see that it is of no use for God to try to please you, sinner, while you are in your sins. He cannot please you if he would, and he would not please you if he could while you remain in sin. Sinners often seem to imagine, that if God was such a being, as they would have him, they should love him. They do not realize, that if they framed a God to suit their hearts, they would fail of appeasing their consciences. Sinner, your conscience approves of the character of God as it is. If his character could be altered in any conceivable degree, it would upon the whole please you no better than it does now, while you are in your sins; for if you could alter his character so as to satisfy your heart, you would only outrage your conscience; and the only possible way for you to be happy is, to change yourself, instead of expecting or desiring that God should change.

XII. The necessity of a change of heart is self-evident. It is a fact of universal experience that the consciences and hearts of sinners are opposed to each other; and this is true even where the light of the Gospel has never shone. That men in following the inclination of their hearts, have violated their consciences, is known and acknowledged by every nation under heaven. This they have acknowledged in the most public manner by the expiatory sacrifices which they have offered to appease their offended gods. However absurd and foolish their ideas of God have been, yet their sacrifices show that they have violated their consciences; and there is probably not a man on earth who can honestly say, that in the indulgence of his heart he has not violated his conscience.

An enlightened conscience will never change. Its testimony will be louder and louder in favour of truth for ever. There must be a change or there can be no inward peace; and this change must plainly be in the heart, and not in the conscience.

XIII. It is in vain for sinners to wait for God to use means that suit them better, before they are converted.

Most sinners are waiting to hear some different kind of preaching; and sometimes they will pass through one revival after another, because the means, as they think, are not adapted to their case. Sometimes they hear preaching that pleases their hearts, but then their consciences are not enough impressed, to do them any good. And then again, they hear preaching that impresses their consciences; but their hearts rise up in rebellion.

Now if they could only hear some preaching, or God could use some means, that they would please both their conscience and their heart, they think they should be converted. But such means cannot possibly be used while the heart, and conscience are opposed to each other. Sinner, there is no use in your waiting. To expect God, or any body else, to satisfy you before you are converted, is vain; and if you wait for such an event you will wait, until you are in the depths of hell.

XIV. Sinners ought not to desire that means should be used to please their hearts, while they are in their sins. If any preaching, or means, make you feel pleasantly; if your heart is delighted with it, rest assured, that these means will do you no good. They will only deceive you, and make you overlook the necessity of a change of heart.

XV. You can see the nature of hell torments.

Sinners are often thrown into great agony in this life, by the internal struggles, and janglings of their consciences and hearts. Now let them go into eternity with their hearts unchanged. Let the full blaze of eternity's light be poured upon their consciences; and with a heart at enmity against God, what horrible rebellion, what insupportable conflicting, and quarreling with self, and with God, will the sinner experience.

With a conscience that sternly takes the part of God; and a heart that supremely hates him, what a fire of hell will such a conflict kindle up in the sinner's breast.

Lastly. Sinners should not follow their feelings, but obey the voice of conscience. In other cases,

where sinners find their feelings, opposed to their better judgement, they will often set down their foot, and resist the current of their feelings. They will say, I am not going to be carried away, and throw up the reins to my feelings, I must exercise my judgment. I must act like a reasonable being. But oh, on the subject of religion, how perfectly men give themselves up to their wicked hearts. Sinner, you ought this moment to come forth promptly, and act like a man, and say you will not go another step in the way of death. Why throw up the reins, and give loose to passion? Why drive with such furious haste to hell? Why suffer yourself to be carried hither and thither, by every gush of feeling, and by every breathe of emotion that passes over the surface of your soul? Why sinner, if you do not exercise your reason; if you do not listen to the voice of conscience; if you do not gather up the reins; gird up your loins, and address yourself to the work of your salvation like a man. If you do not make up your mind to resist the whole tide of your carnal feelings, and put yourself under the clear blaze of heaven's light; and when conscience gives forth its verdict, unless you will promptly obey, you must die in your sins; and now will you here, in the house of God, while your character, and danger are before you; while mercy waits to save, and death brandishes his weapon to destroy, while heaven calls, and hell groans; while the spirit strives, and Christians pray, will you have the moral courage; the decision of character, the honesty, and manhood, to resolve on immediate submission to Jesus Christ?