

Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God. *1 Cor. vi. 10.*

Wo unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also. Thou art filled with shame for glory. *Hab. ii. 15, 16.*

Wo unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink. *Isa. v. 22.*

The time past of your life may well suffice you to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, wherein ye walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banqueting, and abominable idolatries. *1 Pet. iv. 3.*

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. *1 Pet. v. 8.*

## SERMON VI.

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CHASTITY.

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*1 PET. ii. 11.*

Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.

THERE is hardly any sin against which young men more require to be warned, than the very dangerous—the *deadly*—sin of fornication. At the same time it is difficult to write or to speak of this sin, or indeed even to name it, without some offence, some violation of purity. *It is a shame*, says St. Paul, *even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.\**

Still, where the evil is so great and so prevalent, some attempt must be made to check it. The admonition, the warning against it *must* be given. Young men must not be suffered to be guilty of this sin, without being told of the sad consequences which it entails both in this world and the next, of the awful danger to which it exposes them.

Young people are strongly urged to the commission of this sin by their natural appetites and passions, and they derive a sort of encouragement from its shameful prevalence, and from the numbers of the guilty. They perhaps hear it treated,

\* Eph. v. 12.

by unthinking people, as an offence attended with little danger—perhaps as no offence at all. Too often do we see young women, who ought to be bowed to the earth with sorrow for having offended God, and with shame and confusion of face from a sense of sin and disgrace, come boldly and unblushingly forward, and speak of their crime as a mere *misfortune or accident*. Instead of charging themselves, as they ought to do, with a shameful and crying sin, they lay it to the charge of *fortune*. The partners of their guilt are often still less abashed. Instead of being penetrated with sorrow and remorse, they sometimes seem almost to be proud of—almost to glory in—their transgressions. *Were they ashamed, says the prophet, when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush.\** A sad pitch of hardened profligacy. Alas! my friends, it is not in this light, unthinking way that this offence should be treated. However slightly it may be spoken of in an evil world, whatever excuses you may yourselves be disposed to plead, such as the violence of temptation, the strength of your passion and appetites, yet be not misled by them. *Be not deceived with vain words: for it is because of these things—it is because of this very sin—that the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience.†*

You are NOT to give way to your appetites and passions, like brute beasts that have no understanding, but must keep them under the control of reason and religion. The God who made you knows what your passions and appetites are, and he enjoins you thus to control them, and is

\* Jer. vi. 15.

† Eph. v. 6.

ready to give you his grace to assist you in doing so. *This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.\**

The Scriptures are full of warnings against this fatal sin, and repeatedly point out the awful punishment which awaits it.

In the text, St. Peter exhorts you to *abstain from fleshly lusts*. And why does he exhort you to this? Because they WAR AGAINST THE SOUL. They war against the soul, both here and hereafter. They war against the soul *here*, by polluting and defiling it,† by unfitting it for the service of God, for prayer, and for all religious thoughts and offices—by rendering it earthly and sensual. And they war against the soul *hereafter*, by exposing it to everlasting ruin in the world to come. We are assured by St. Paul in several places, that fornication—in common language, the sin of whoredom—is one of those sins which will exclude from the kingdom of God those who are guilty of it. *I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they who do such things—such things as fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness—shall not—cannot—inheritor the kingdom of God.‡* And again to the Ephesians: *For this ye know—every one who has any knowledge at all of religion must know this—this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.§* And if they are not received into that kingdom, what remains for them, but to be cast into that outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth?

We are told in Scripture, that we stand in

\* 1 Thess. iv. 3.

† Gal. v. 21.

‡ Matt. xv. 18, 20.

§ Eph. v. 5.

need of the assistance of the Holy Spirit in order to be saved: *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* But those who give way to fleshly lusts, who commit this sin of fornication, do what they can to drive the Holy Spirit from them. St. Paul argues against this sin, on this very ground: *Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth, is without the body; but he that committeth fornication, sinneth against his own body. What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God?\** *If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy.†*

We all of us profess to rest our hope of salvation upon the redemption effected by the death of Jesus Christ; for it is in him that *we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, and there is none other name given among men whereby we may be saved.* But if we are thus redeemed, thus *bought* by Christ, we *belong* to him, and not to ourselves. St. Paul, in the same chapter, argues against the sin of unchastity from this consideration: *Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid.* And then a little after: *Ye are not your own. Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

The sin of fornication is contrary to the whole spirit and character of the Christian religion. Those who are admitted into the fellowship of that religion, are called upon solemnly to renounce all the sinful lusts of the flesh, especially those lusts of which we have been speaking.

1 Cor. vi. 18, 19.

† 1 Cor. iii. 17.

*Fornication, says St. Paul, and all uncleanness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;\** that is, as becometh *Christians*, as becometh men who have been dedicated to God by baptism. Again to the Colossians: *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, and evil concupiscence: for which things' sake, he adds, the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.†* The wrath of God will come on them in the sentence of condemnation;—for, as we read in several places, that those who commit these sins shall not inherit the kingdom of God, will not go to heaven; so we find in the book of Revelation, that they will *have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.‡*

This awful condemnation, it is true, may in this, as in every other instance, be avoided, through faith in the atonement of Christ, upon the sincere repentance of the offender. That repentance, however, in order to be real and accepted, must be made up of deep shame and confusion of face, of heartfelt sorrow and contrition of spirit, attended with hatred of sin, and with a real change, a real amendment, of heart and life. How little we see of such repentance as this, how utterly inconsistent it is with that light, thoughtless, shameless behaviour, which I have already spoken of, you need not to be told. I must add too, that though sins of this nature, as well as all other sins, may be blotted out, through faith in the blood of Christ, upon the deep repentance of the sinner, yet that they are apt to render repentance peculiarly difficult. This

\* Eph. v. 3.

† Col. iii. 5, 6.

‡ Rev. xxi. 8.

difficulty arises, not only from the remembrance of the guilty pleasure which attended them, but because they have, perhaps more than most other sins, a tendency to brutalize the soul, and make it less fit for spiritual thoughts and considerations. This, as I have already said, is one of the ways in which fleshly lusts *war against the soul*. They indispose it for prayer and all religious thoughts and exercises. In short, they make repentance necessary, and at the same time render it peculiarly difficult to repent.

And here I would add another consideration, which is, that the sin of which I have been speaking, is not committed by *one person alone*. Therefore, even supposing that, through the grace and mercy of God, he, who has in this way offended, is brought to repentance, yet still his repentance cannot save from ruin the partner of his guilt. His own sin may, upon his repentance, be blotted out, but the partner of his crime is perhaps never induced to repent, and he must ever bear in his mind the dreadful thought, that in order to gratify his fleshly lust, he has been accessory to the ETERNAL RUIN of a fellow-creature.

In comparison with the awful sufferings to be endured in the world to come, the evil consequences of unchastity in this world are but as nothing. In themselves, however, they are most lamentable, such as no man of common sense or common feeling would willingly occasion. Reflect, that if you seduce into sin a young woman who hitherto was innocent, you bring upon her character a blot, a stain, which no time can wash away. You make her to become a grief and a reproach to her parents and relations, perhaps an outcast from society. You probably deprive her in great measure of the means of procuring

a livelihood, and make her to become a degraded being, the object of the pity, perhaps of the scorn, of her neighbours. Never suffer your fleshly lusts so far to prevail over you, as to induce you to occasion such great, such irreparable misery. Possibly some men may be disposed to reply, that they would upon no account seduce one who had hitherto been innocent; and that they offend only with those abandoned and profligate women who have long since been corrupted, and who make a trade and profession of sin. But do you not see that you thus encourage them to go on in that evil and shameful course of life? that you make their repentance, their turning to God, more difficult? And reflect on the evil you bring on yourself, the injury you may do to your own character, your substance, your health, your immortal soul. We often see, that, by such women, many men, according to the observation of Solomon,\* are brought to absolute want; often they contract a sore disease, the taint and corruption of which descends to their children and their children's children. And above all, they acquire a habit of that sin which wars against the soul, which drowns men's souls in destruction and perdition. To such I should repeat the advice of Solomon: *Remove thy way far from the evil woman, and come not nigh the door of her house.† He that goeth after her, goeth as an ox to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart—the dart of disease—strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life. Let not thy heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. Her house is the way to hell, going down*

\* Prov. vi. 26.

† Prov. v. 8.

to the chambers of death.\* HER HOUSE IS THE WAY TO HELL; for the sin of fornication, though in some cases more sinful than in others, does in every case, if died in without repentance, expose a man to the vengeance of eternal fire.

Shun carefully, therefore, every approach to this most dangerous sin. Keep as much as possible out of the way of temptation, and be on your guard against the very first beginnings of unchastity, against every thing that is likely to lead you into it. Avoid reading such books or songs, or having or looking at such prints or pictures, as are calculated to excite impure desires and unchaste thoughts. Especially keep away from all conversation that has this tendency, and from the society of such men as indulge in such conversation. *Let no corrupt communication, says St. Paul, proceed out of your mouth.†* Such corrupt communication will grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and perhaps induce him altogether to leave you. *Neither filthiness, soon after continues the apostle, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient‡—not suitable to, but utterly unworthy of, the character of a Christian.* After all our care, the appetites and desires of our corrupted nature will still be but too headstrong and rebellious. It is madness to add to their strength by such incentives as I have alluded to, by permitting our eyes to see, or our ears to hear, any thing which is calculated to add fuel to the flame. *Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?§* These sins are best avoided by avoiding the first beginnings

\* Prov. vii. 22, 23, 25, 27.  
† Eph. v. 4.

‡ Eph. iv. 29.  
§ Prov. vi. 27, 28.

of them. Every sinful indulgence you allow yourselves, every improper liberty which you take, will be likely to lead you on, with increasing violence, to something more and more criminal.

Remember the solemn words of our Saviour: *I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.\** Pray therefore earnestly to God that he would *turn away your eyes lest they behold vanity,* and resolve, like holy Job, to *make a covenant with your eyes, that they shall not look on any forbidden object.†*

Above all, in this instance especially, *keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.‡* Out of the heart proceeds this sin, together with the other sins which defile a man. *The pure in heart are they that shall see God.* Endeavour therefore to keep your hearts pure from all unchaste thoughts and imaginations. Endeavour, if such thoughts obtain admittance, to drive them from you. And fervently beseech Almighty God to create in you a new and pure heart, and to renew a right spirit within you.

#### The Prayer.

Great and glorious God, thou art a Being of infinite holiness, and hast declared thy abhorrence of all impurity. I beseech thee to give me true sorrow and contrition of heart, for that I am so far from that purity and holiness which thou requirest, and which is necessary to make me meet for the joys of heaven. I beseech thee, for the

\* Matt. v. 28.

† Job xxxi. 1.

‡ Prov. iv. 23.

sake of thy dear Son, to pardon all the impure thoughts, desires, and purposes, which I have ever entertained in my mind, and all the unchaste actions of my life. O cleanse my soul from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and grant that my body may be a holy temple, fit for thy Holy Spirit to dwell in. Enable me to subdue all fleshly lusts which war against the soul. Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me. Put thy fear into my heart, and cause in my soul a steadfast resolution against all unchastity. Hear me, O Lord, for thy mercy's sake, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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*Texts to be committed to memory.*

Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. *1 Pet. ii. 11.*

Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush. *Jer. vi. 15.*

Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. *Eph. v. 6.*

This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication. *1 Thess. iv. 3.*

I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. *Gal. v. 21.*

For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. *Eph. v. 5.*

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If

any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy. *1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.*

Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid. *1 Cor. vi. 15.*

Fornication, and all uncleanness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints. *Eph. v. 3.*

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, and evil concupiscence: for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience. *Col. iii. 5, 6.*

Remove thy way far from the evil woman, and come not nigh the door of her house. *Prov. v. 8.*

He that goeth after her, goeth as an ox to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life. Let not thy heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death. *Prov. vii. 22, 23, 25, 27.*

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth. *Eph. iv. 29.*