

***"I thought on my ways,  
and turned my feet unto thy testimonies."***

Psalm 119:59

The Psalmist's determination, lately mentioned, to *keep God's word*, was not a hasty impulse, but a considerate resolve, the result of much *thinking on his* former ways of sin and folly. How many, on the other hand, seem to pass through the world into eternity without a serious *thought on their ways!* Multitudes live for the world--forget God and die! This is their history. What their state is, is written as with a sunbeam in the word of truth--"*The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.*" (Ps. ix. 17.) When "no man repenteth him of his wickedness, saying, *What have I done?*" (Jer. viii. 6)--this banishing of reflection is the character and ruin of an unthinking world. Perhaps one serious thought might be the new birth of the soul to God--the first step of the way to heaven. For when a man is arrested by the power of grace, he is as one awaking out of sleep, lost in solemn and serious thoughts--'What am I?<sup>1</sup> where am I? what have I been? what have I been doing? I have a soul, which is my everlasting all--yet a soul without a Saviour--lost--undone. What is my prospect for its happiness? Behind me is a world of vanity, an empty void. Before me a fearful unknown eternity. Within me an awakened conscience, to remind me of an angry God, and a devouring hell. If I stay here, I perish; if I go forward, I perish; if I return home to my offended Father, I can but perish.' (Comp. 2 Kings, vii. 4.) The resolution is formed; ' "I will arise" (Luke, xv. 18), and fight my way through all difficulties and discouragements to my Father's house.' Thus does every prodigal child of God "come to himself;" and this his first step of return to his God (Verse 17) involves the whole work of repentance. The wanderer *thinks on his ways, and turns his feet unto the testimonies of his God;* witnessing, to his joyful surprise, every hindrance removed, the way marked with the blood of his Saviour, and his Father's smiles in this way welcoming his return homeward. This *turn is the practical exercise of a genuine faith;* and "*because he considereth, and turnest away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live--he shall not die.*" (Ezek. xviii. 28.)

But this considerate exercise is needed, not only upon the first entrance *into the ways of God*, but in every successive step of our path. It will form the habit of daily "communion with our own heart" (Ps. iv. 4); without which, disorder and confusion will bewilder our steps. Probably David did not know how far his feet had backslidden from *the ways of his God*, until this serious consideration of his state brought conviction to his soul--so imperceptible is the declining of the heart from God! Nor is it a few transient thoughts or resolutions, that will effect this turn of the heart to God. *A man may maintain a fruitless struggle to return to God for many years in sincerity and earnestness; while the simple act of faith in the power and love of Jesus will at once bring him back.* Thus, while *thinking on his ways*, let him walk in Christ as the way of return--and he will walk in the way of *God's testimonies* with acceptance and delight. In this spirit of simplicity, he will listen to the first whisper of the convincing voice of the Spirit, which marks the early steps of return from secret declension from God. (See Isa. xxx. 21.) He will also thankfully accept

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1 How utterly unmeaning was the celebrated aphorism of antiquity--'Know thyself'--until explained and illustrated by the light of Revelation!

the chastening rod, as the Lord's appointed instrument of restoring his wandering children to himself. For so prone are they to *turn their feet* away from the Lord--so continually are they "turning aside like a deceitful bow" (Ps. lxxviii. 57),--and so deaf are they, from the constitution of their sinful nature, to the ordinary calls of God; that, in love and tender faithfulness to their souls, he is often constrained, by the stroke of his heavy hand, to arrest them in their career of thoughtlessness, and turn them back to himself. Most suitable then for such a state is the prayer of Basil--'Give me any cross, that may bring me into subjection to thy cross; and save me in spite of myself!'