

***"Incline my heart unto thy testimonies,
and not to covetousness."***

Psalm 119:36

But what *"makes us to go in the path of God's commandments?"* The force of his Almighty love effectually *inclines* the will, as with a Divine touch. The day of his power, in which he makes us willing, is a time of love. "I drew them"--saith he--"with cords of a man, and with bands of love." (Ps. cx. 3. Ezek. xvi. 8. Hos. xi. 4.) Every man, who is conscious of the counteracting bias within, will deeply feel the need of this prayer--*"Incline my heart."* The native principle of man draws him to his own self--to his own indulgence--pleasure--*covetousness*--assuming a thousand forms of gratifying self, at the expense of love to God. Few but are ready to condemn this principle in others, while perhaps it may be their own "easily-besetting sin." When the mind is grasping after the world, as if it were our portion, we have the greatest reason to "take heed" to our Lord's admonition, and beware of "covetousness" (Luke, xii. 15). When we invest earthly gratifications with any inherent excellency--*virtually* putting them in the place of God--then will be a season for special supplication--*Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.*

There is probably no principle so opposed to the *Lord's testimonies*. It casts out the principle of obedience, since the love of God cannot co-exist with the love of the world (1 John, ii. 15); and the very desire to serve Mammon is a proof of unfaithfulness to God. (Matt. vi. 24.) We mark the deadly influence in direct breaches of the law of God. Balaam, in the indulgence of this propensity, set his will in mad contradiction to God (Num. xxii. 15-21. 2 Pet. ii. 14-16); Ahab was tempted to murder (1 Kings, xxi. 1-13); David, to murder and adultery (2 Sam. xi. 2-17); Achan, to steal (Josh. vii. 21); Judas, both to steal from his fellows, and to betray his Master (John, xii. 6. Matt. xxvi. 14-16); Gehazi and Ananias to lying. (2 Kings, v. 20-26. Acts, v. 1-8.) And besides--what is the matter of common but painful observation--how much of the good seed of the kingdom, that was springing up with the promise of a plentiful harvest, has this weed of rank luxuriance "choked, that it has become unfruitful!"¹ Our Lord's parables, therefore (Luke, xii. 16-21; xvi. 14, 19, &c.)--his providence (Matt. vi. 25-31)--his promises (Ib. verse 33. Ps. xxxiv. 9, 10. Isa. xxxiii. 15, 16. 1 Pet. v. 7)--his terms of discipleship (Matt. xvi. 24; xix. 27-29. Luke, xiv. 33)--his counsels (1 Cor. vii. 29-31. Philip. iv. 5)--his own example of poverty and renunciation of this world's comfort (Matt. viii. 20)--all are directed against this destructive principle. The power of the love of Christ delivered Matthew (Matt. ix. 9) and Zaccheus (Luke, xix. 1-10) from its influence, and *"inclined their hearts to the testimonies of God."* And has not faith still the same power to turn the heart from the world, from sin, from self, to Christ? Learn, then, to rest upon the promise of his love (Heb. xiii. 5), and to delight in his *testimonies*. Earthly cares will be cast upon him, and earthly prospects will lose their splendour.² This life of faith--living in union with a heavenly Saviour, involves the only effective principle of resistance. Those who are risen with Christ will be temperate in earthly things, "setting their affections on things above." Such--such alone--will "mortify the members that are upon the earth--evil concupiscence,

1 Mark, iv. 19.--The example of the rich young man, Matt. xix. 21, 22, Demas, 2 Tim. iv. 10.

2 Comp. Luke, xii. 15, with parallel verses, 16-21.

and *covetousness, which is idolatry.*" (Col. iii. 1-5.)

We desire to sit loose to our earthly comforts. Are we enabled to check our natural discontent with the Lord's dealings with us, and to restrain our eagerness to "seek great things for ourselves" (Jer. vi. 13), by the recollection of his word--"Seek them not?" (Jer. xlv. 5.)

Let us not forget, that the inclination--even if it is not brought into active and perceptible motion, is fatally destructive of the life of religion. "They that *will be rich*³ fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." Awful warning to professors!--"The love of money is the root of all evil; which while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Tim. vi. 10.) A most important exhortation to the people of God!--"But thou, O man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness." (Ib. verse 11.) If the Lord loves you, he will not indeed lose you; but unless you "take heed, and beware of covetousness," he will not spare you. In the midst, therefore, of temptation without, and a world of sin within, go onwards, with the pilgrim's (1 Pet. ii. 11) prayer indelibly fixed on your heart--"*Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.*"

3 1 Tim. vi. 9.--The very inclination to be rich is alienation from him, who by just right claims the supreme undisputed whole--"My son, give me thine heart." (Prov. xxiii. 26.)