

THE KEEPING OF THE COMMANDMENTS.

"The Lust of the Flesh."

"I AM the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Ex. 20:2, 3.

We have seen that, for any one to have this world, or anything that is of this world, is to have another god before the Lord. And this other god is "the god of this world," the "spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience," which is Satan.

But Christ came to "bring us to God." And this is the whole work of the preaching of the gospel; for it is written: "Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them *from* darkness to light, and from the power of *Satan unto God*, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." Acts 26:17, 18.

Now "the world" is divided into three parts—"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." And under one or all of these three heads is idolatry manifested. We shall study them one by one as they are written.

First: "the lust of the flesh"—appetite, or intemperance. This is specifically defined as a god; for it is written: "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, *whose god is their belly*, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." Phil. 3:18, 19.

Temperance is self-control,—not merely the control of one particular part of the man, self-control in one particular thing,—it is the control of self, the very being, the whole man. But this can never be done by the man himself; for the man himself is already subject to the control of "the god of this world," the evil one. This control was gained by the evil one, in the garden, and *through appetite*, this very "lust of the flesh." Since man is thus the subject of "the god of this world," a slave, "sold under sin," it is impossible for him of himself to clear himself of that power to which he surrendered himself.

But there is deliverance by *the power of God*, the true God, the living God, the rightful God of man. God can set free every man, from all the power of "the god of this world;" and it is *only thus* that any man can ever gain control of *himself*. It is only thus that any man can attain to true self-control, to true temperance.

The heart of man is the place of the seat of God in things pertaining to the man; for "the kingdom of God is within you." The kingdom of the heart and life of man belongs to God: it is alone His dominion. Through the deception of man this kingdom has been usurped by "the god of this world." This was done at the choice of man. At the choice of man, God, the true God, will return to His kingdom, and will take His place upon His throne in that kingdom, and will there rule and reign in righteousness, "even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference." Rom. 3:22.

Therefore the whole question of having other gods, or the true God alone, turns simply upon the one question: Who has the heart? Therefore it is written: "Keep thy heart above all keeping; for out of it are the issues of life." Prov. 4:23, margin.

Since, then, it is only by the power of God that any man can ever truly have control of himself, can be truly master of himself, it follows, inevitably, that the use of anything which has a tendency to take control of the man, to deprive the man of the control of himself; anything the use of which creates a habit which must be satisfied, and demands that it shall be served,—that is the having of another god. The man who has thus surrendered himself, and is thus controlled, is of those whom the scripture describes, "whose god is their belly."

This principle is expressed in the scripture: "All things are lawful unto me, . . . but I will not be brought under the power of any." 1 Cor. 6:12. Anything, therefore, which has a tendency to bring man under its power is the indulgence of idolatry: it is to have another god before the Lord.

Now not only the tendency, but the positive effect of all stimulants and narcotics, is to take control of the man who uses them. The only effect of any of these things is to create an appetite for itself,—an appetite that must be served at whatever cost,—and thus to rob the individual of all control of himself. Also it makes him not only a slave to that particular habit, but so weakens him that in other things he cannot control himself. And "from tear to hasheesh we have, through hops, alcohol, tobacco, and opium, a sort of graduated scale of intoxicants, which stimulate in small doses, and narcotize in larger. The physiological action of all these agents gradually shades into each other; all producing, or being capable of producing, consecutive paralysis of the various parts of the nervous system". —*Encyclopedia Britannica, Art., "Drunkeness."*

Thus the First Commandment is the basis of all true temperance; and the keeping of that commandment and the faith of Jesus, is the only way to true temperance.

"I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." "Out of Egypt have I called my Son."

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

Alonzo T. Jones.

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