

Chapter 11

The Sin of Licentiousness

Rescue From Sin and Impurity—When the law of God is written in the heart, it will be exhibited in a pure and holy life. The commandments of God are no dead letter. They are spirit and life, bringing the imaginations and even the thoughts into subjection to the will of Christ. The heart in which they are written will be kept with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

All who love Jesus and keep the commandments will seek to avoid the very appearance of evil; not because they are constrained thus to do, but because they are copying a pure model, and feel averse to everything contrary to the law written in their hearts. They will not feel self-sufficient, but their trust will be in God, who alone is able to keep them from sin and impurity. The atmosphere surrounding them is pure; they will not corrupt

their own souls or the souls of others. It is their pleasure to deal justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before God.

Last-day Dangers—The danger that lies before those living in these last days is the absence of pure religion, the absence of heart holiness. The converting power of God has not wrought in transforming their characters. They profess to believe sacred truths, as did the Jewish nation; but in their failing to practice the truth they are ignorant both of the Scriptures and the power of God. The power and influence of God's law are around about, but not within the soul, renewing it in true holiness; therefore the Lord sends His appeals to them to urge upon them the practice of what is right. The appeals of His Spirit are neglected and rejected. The barriers are broken down, and the soul is weak, and for want of moral force to overcome, is polluted and debased. They are binding themselves in bundles as fagots, ready to be consumed at the last day.

Duties and Obligations of Ministers—The

Jewish priests were required to be, in person, all that was symmetrical and well-proportioned, that they might reflect a great truth. “Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.” The Lord required not only a well-proportioned mind and symmetrical body of the Jews’ ministry in holy office, but He required also pure and uncorrupted minds. And He requires no less of us, in this dispensation, in the ministry of the gospel. His called and chosen are to show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. The same Bible that contains the privileges of God’s people, and His promises to them, contains also the sacred duties and the solemn obligations He requires of the shepherd who has charge of the flock of God; so that the people can see by comparing the living preacher with the divine picture whether he has credentials from heaven in likeness of character to Him who is the Chief Shepherd. God designs that the teacher of the Bible should in his character and home life be a specimen of the principles of the truth which he is teaching to his fellow men.

True Character an Inward Reflection—

What a man is has greater influence than what he says. The quiet, consistent, godly life is a living epistle, known and read of all men. A man may speak and write like an angel, but his practices may resemble a fallen fiend. God will have the believers of the truth zealous to maintain good works. As they occupy high positions, they will be tested by a higher standard. They will be sifted; defects and vices will be searched out; for if such exist, they will be developed in words and deportment. True character is not something shaped from without, or put on, but it is something radiating from within. If true goodness, purity, meekness, lowliness, and equity are dwelling in the heart, that fact will be reflected in the character; and such a character is full of power.

Faults and Practices of a Few—The officers who were sent to take Jesus reported that “never man spake like this Man.” But the reason of this was that never man lived like this Man; for if He had not so lived, He could not so have spoken. His words bore with them a convincing power, because

they came from a heart pure, holy, burdened with love and sympathy, beneficence and truth. How rejoiced are those who hate God's law, to find spot and stain of character in one who stands in defense of that law! They are only too glad to cast a reproach upon all the loyal and true, because of the faults and impure practices of a few.

There is eloquence in the quiet and consistent life of a pure, true, unadulterated Christian. We shall have temptations as long as we are in this world; but instead of injuring us, they will only be turned to our advantage, if resisted. The bounds are placed where Satan cannot pass. He may prepare the furnace that consumes the dross, but instead of injury, it can only bring forth the gold of the character, purer, upon higher vantage ground than before the trial.

At Baal-peor—The crime that brought the judgments of God upon Israel was that of licentiousness. The forwardness of women to entrap souls did not end at Baal-peor. Notwithstanding the punishment that followed the

sinner in Israel, the same crime was repeated many times. Satan was most active in seeking to make Israel's overthrow complete. Balak by the advice of Balaam laid the snare. Israel would have bravely met their enemies in battle, and resisted them, and come off conquerors; but when women invited their attention and sought their company and beguiled them by their charms, they did not resist temptations. They were invited to idolatrous feasts, and their indulgence in wine further beclouded their dazed minds.

The power of self-control, their allegiance to God's law, was not preserved. Their senses were so beclouded with wine, and their unholy passions had such full sway, overpowering every barrier, that they invited temptation, even to the attending of these idolatrous feasts. Those who had never flinched in battle, who were brave men, did not barricade their souls to resist temptation to indulge their basest passions. Idolatry and licentiousness went together. They first defiled their conscience by lewdness, and then departed from God still further by idolatry, thus showing contempt for the

God of Israel.

Satan's Repetitious Plots—Near the close of this earth's history Satan will work with all his powers in the same manner and with the same temptations wherewith he tempted ancient Israel just before their entering the land of promise. He will lay snares for those who claim to keep the commandments of God, and who are almost on the borders of the heavenly Canaan. He will use his powers to their utmost in order to entrap souls, and to take God's professed people upon their weakest points. Those who have not brought the lower passions into subjection to the higher powers of their being, those who have allowed their minds to flow in a channel of carnal indulgence of the baser passions, Satan is determined to destroy with his temptations—to pollute their souls with licentiousness.

He is not aiming especially at the lower and less important marks, but he makes use of his snares through those whom he can enlist as his agents to allure or attract men to take liberties

which are condemned in the law of God. And men in responsible positions, teaching the claims of God's law, whose mouths are filled with arguments in vindication of His law, against which Satan has made such a raid—over such he sets his hellish powers and his agencies at work, and overthrows them upon the weak points in their character, knowing that he who offends on one point is guilty of all, thus obtaining complete mastery over the entire man.

Mind, soul, body, and conscience are involved in the ruin. If he be a messenger of righteousness, and has had great light, or if the Lord has used him as His special worker in the cause of truth, then how great is the triumph of Satan! How he exults! How God is dishonored!

Licentiousness, One of Satan's Enchantments—The licentious practice of the Hebrews accomplished for them that which all the warfare of nations and the enchantments of Balaam could not do. They became separated from their God. Their covering and protection were removed

from them. God turned to be their enemy. So many of the princes and people were guilty of licentiousness, that it became a national sin; for God was wroth with the whole congregation.

The very same Satan is now working to the very same end, to weaken and destroy the people who claim to be keeping the commandments of God, as they are just on the borders of the heavenly Canaan. Satan knows it is his time. He has but little time left now in which to work, and he will work with tremendous power to ensnare the people of God upon their weak points of character.

Women as Tempters—There will be women who will become tempters, and who will do their best to attract and win the attention of men to themselves. First, they will seek to win their sympathy, next their affections, and then to induce them to break God's holy law. Those who have dishonored their minds and affections by placing them where God's Word forbids, will not scruple to dishonor God by various species of idolatry. God will leave them to their vile affections.

It is necessary to guard the thoughts; to fence the soul about with the injunctions of God's Word; and to be very careful in every thought, word, and action not to be betrayed into sin. It is necessary to guard against the cultivation of the indulgence of the lower passions. This is not the fruit of sanctified thoughts or hearts.

It is now the duty of God's commandment-keeping people to watch and pray, to search the Scriptures diligently, to hide the word of God in the heart, lest they sin against Him in idolatrous thoughts and debasing practices, and thus the church of God become demoralized like the fallen churches whom prophecy represents as being filled with every unclean and hateful bird.—The Review and Herald, May 17, 1887.

Fitted for Translation—There is to be a people fitted up for translation to heaven, whom Enoch represents. They are looking and waiting for the coming of the Lord. The work will go on with all those who will cooperate with Jesus in the work

of redemption. He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. God has made every provision that they should be intelligent Christians, filled with a knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

A theoretical knowledge of the truth is essential, but the knowledge of the greatest truth will not save us; our knowledge must be practical. God's people must not only know His will, but they must practice it. Many will be purged out from the numbers of those who know the truth, because they are not sanctified by it. The truth must be brought into their hearts, sanctifying and cleansing them from all earthliness and sensuality in the most private life. The soul temple must be cleansed. Every secret act is as if we were in the presence of God and holy angels, as all things are open before God, and from Him nothing can be hid.

Demoralizing Practices in Marriage—In this age of our world the marriage vows are often

disregarded. God never designed that marriage should cover the multitude of sins that are practiced. Sensuality and base practices in a marriage relation are educating the mind and moral taste for demoralizing practices outside the marriage relation.

God is purifying a people to have clean hands and pure hearts to stand before Him in the judgment. The standard must be elevated, the imagination purified; the infatuation clustering around debasing practices must be given up, and the soul uplifted to pure thoughts, holy practices. All who will stand the test and trial just before us, will be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped, not participated in, the corruptions that are in the world through lust.

Source of Spiritual Power—The works of Satan are not half discerned, because purity and holiness do not mark the life and character of those who claim to be ministers of Christ. Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, we are thus fortified against the temptations of Satan.

Christ and His purity and His matchless charms should be the soul's contemplation. There is spiritual power for all, which they may have if they will, that they may resist temptation, that duty may be done and the soul hold fast its integrity. Those who feel their need of being strengthened by might by God's Spirit in the inner man, will not lose their integrity. Earnest prayer and watching thereunto will carry them through temptations. We must be united to Christ by living faith.

Like Christ in Character—We are now amid the perils of the last days. Satan has come down with great power to work his deceptions. He fastens the mind or imaginations upon impure, unlawful things. Christians become like Christ in character by dwelling upon the divine Model. That with which they come in contact has a molding influence upon life and character.

I have read of a painter who would never look upon an imperfect painting for a single moment, lest it should have a deteriorating influence upon his own eye and conceptions. That which we allow

ourselves to look upon oftenest, and think of most, transfers itself in a measure to us. The imagination trained to dwell upon God and His loveliness will not find delight in dwelling upon scenes that are created by the imagination that is excited by lust....

The Infernal Wisdom of Satan—Satan is at work now as he worked in Eden, as he has worked through all successive generations. The archfiend knows well with what material he has to deal. He knows the weak points in every character; and if these weak points are not strengthened, he will display his infernal wisdom in his devices to overthrow the very strongest men, princes in the army of Israel. All along through successive generations are wrecks of character which have been destroyed because the soul was not garrisoned. And now as we near the close of time, Satan will work with masterly activity to undermine principle, and corrupt moral character.

Sin is committed by many who think their crime is effectually concealed. But there is One who says, “I know thy works”; “there is nothing

covered which shall not be revealed; and hid, which shall not be known.” When the mind is infatuated with the idea of sin, there will be deception practiced; lies will be told; for those who commit such sins will not be slow to lie as well. But all sin shall be revealed.

No Concealing of Sins From God—God sees the sinner. The eye which never slumbers knows everything that is done. It is written in His book. One may conceal his sin from father, mother, wife, and friends, and yet all lies open before God, and is placed in His book of record.... David was a repentant man, and although he confessed and hated his sin, he could not forget it.

He exclaimed, “Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me.... Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day” [Psalm 139:7-12].

God is everywhere—He sees, He knows, all things, and understands the intents and purposes of the heart. It is in vain that an attempt should be made to conceal sin from His notice. He saw our first parents in Eden. He saw Cain when he raised his hand to kill Abel. He saw the sins of the inhabitants of the old world, and numbered their days and punished them with a flood. He saw the sins of His own covenant people, the Jews, when they plotted against the life of the Son of God.

Book of God's Remembrance—As surely does He mark every transgression, and every secret thing will be brought into judgment. They may be hid from mortal man, they may be hid from the good, the pure, and the holy, from friends and from foes; yet God sees them. All sins will be revealed in the day of judgment, and unless they have been repented of beforehand, they will receive punishment according to their magnitude; for a record of all the deeds of men is kept in the book of God's remembrance. All the good actions, all the evil actions, of life are recorded.

The fact that the accumulated sins are treasured up and at last exposed, is a terrible fact; and why those professing to be sons and daughters of God venture, in the face of light, in the face of knowledge, to sin against their own conscience and by their sin involve others in the same ruin, is a mystery. Have they ever tasted of the powers of the world to come? Have they ever enjoyed sweet communion with God? Then how can they turn to sensual, condemning, soul-degrading practices?

The Day of God's Revelings—The last great day is right upon us. Let all consider that Satan is now striving for the mastery over souls. He is playing the game of life for your souls. Will there be sins committed by you on the very borders of the heavenly Canaan? Oh, what revelings! The husband will know for the first time the deception and falsehood that have been practiced by the wife whom he thought innocent and pure. The wife for the first time will know the case of her husband, and the relatives and friends will see how error and falsehood and corruption have been clustering

about them; for the secrets of all hearts will stand revealed. The hour of judgment is almost here—long delayed by the goodness and mercy of God. But the trump of God will sound, to the consternation of the unprepared who are living, and awaken the pale nations of the dead. The great white throne will appear, and all the righteous dead will come forth to immortality.

Whatever have been the little sins indulged [they] will ruin the soul, unless they are overcome. The small sins will swell into the greater sins. Impure thoughts, private, impure actions, unrefined, low, and sensual thoughts and actions in the marriage life, the giving of loose reins to the baser passions under the marriage vow, will lead to every other sin, the transgression of all the commandments of God.

Tyrannical Growth of Human Weakness—
Men that God has entrusted with noble talents will be, unless closely connected with God, guilty of great weakness, and, not having the grace of Christ in the soul, will become connected with greater

crimes. This is because they do not make the truth of God a part of them. Their discipline has been defective; the soul culture has not been carried forward from one advance to another; inborn tendencies have not been restrained, but have degraded the soul. For all the natural weaknesses Jesus has made ample provision, that they may be overcome through His grace. If not overcome, the weakness will become a tyrant, a conqueror, to overcome them, and the heavenly light will become beclouded and extinguished.

Intellectual Greatness Insufficient—I feel compelled to write most earnestly on this point because I feel the peril that is upon us. We have in past history the example of most painful characters showing the danger of men in high places being corrupted. Men of masterly minds, who possessed large talents of influence, yet did not put their trust wholly in God, but allowed themselves to be praised and petted and lauded by the world's great men, lost their balance, and thought that great men's sins were not vices. The heavenly guide left them, and their course was rapidly downward to

corruption and perdition. They completely lost the just standard of honor, lost all distinction between right and wrong, between sin and righteousness. There are lights and shades in character, and one or the other certainly triumphs.

But God in heaven is weighing moral worth. He will judge righteously. The wicked will not always remain unchecked. Nothing but grace and truth brought into the inner life, inwrought in the character, is sufficient to keep the greatest, the most talented, men morally erect. If intellectual greatness could have been sufficient, their characters would have been firm as a rock. But they needed virtuous characters. Paul says, I am what I am by the grace of God that is in me. God's people must arise, and gird themselves with the whole armor of righteousness.—The Review and Herald, May 24, 1887.

Reasons for Israel's Failure—Many of ancient Israel fell just in sight of the promised land. What was their sin? Licentiousness. And these unholy passions of the heart are controlling with

masterly power many of those who claim to be following Christ. The words and works of many who know the truth are corrupt. They have reasoning power, they comprehend the truth, but have not been thoroughly converted; have not felt the saving power of the truth upon their souls. They do not entertain Christ as an honored guest in their house. Sensual gratification is corroding the entire man, tainting and corrupting the entire household.... The purity and sanctity of the marriage relation instituted in Eden to be kept sacred, elevated, is brought down to administer to lust.—Ms 31, 1885.

David's Departure From Right—God selected David, a humble shepherd, to rule His people. He was strict in all the ceremonies connected with the Jewish religion, and he distinguished himself by his boldness and unwavering trust in God. He was remarkable for his fidelity and reverence. His firmness, humility, love of justice, and decision of character, qualified him to carry out the high purposes of God, to instruct Israel in their devotions, and to rule them

as a generous and wise monarch.

His religious character was sincere and fervent. It was while David was thus true to God, and possessing these exalted traits of character, that God called him a man after His own heart. When exalted to the throne, his general course was in striking contrast with the kings of other nations. He abhorred idolatry, and zealously kept the people of Israel from being seduced into idolatry by the surrounding nations. He was greatly beloved and honored by his people.

He often conquered, and triumphed. He increased in wealth and greatness. But his prosperity had an influence to lead him from God. His temptations were many and strong.

Sad Result of Polygamy—He finally fell into the common practice of other kings around him, of having a plurality of wives, and his life was embittered by the evil results of polygamy. His first wrong was in taking more than one wife, thus departing from God's wise arrangement. This

departure from right prepared the way for greater errors. The kingly idolatrous nations considered it an addition to their honor and dignity to have many wives, and David regarded it an honor to his throne to possess several wives. But he was made to see the wretched evil of such a course by the unhappy discord, rivalry, and jealousy among his numerous wives and children.

David's Repentance—His crime in the case of Uriah and Bathsheba was heinous in the sight of God. A just and impartial God did not sanction or excuse these sins in David, but sends a reproof, and heavy denunciation by Nathan, His prophet, which portrays in living colors his grievous offense. David had been blinded to his wonderful departure from God. He had excused his own sinful course to himself until his ways seemed passible in his own eyes. One wrong step had prepared the way for another, until his sins called for the rebuke from Jehovah through Nathan.

David awakens as from a dream—He feels the sense of his sin. He does not seek to excuse his

course, or palliate his sin, as did Saul; but with remorse and sincere grief, he bows his head before the prophet of God, and acknowledges his guilt. Nathan tells David that because of his repentance and humble confession, God will forgive his sin, and avert a part of the threatened calamity, and spare his life.

Transgression and Punishment—Yet he should be punished, because he had given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. This occasion has been improved by the enemies of God, from David's day until the present time. Skeptics have assailed Christianity and ridiculed the Bible, because David gave them occasion. They bring up to Christians the case of David—his sin in the case of Uriah and Bathsheba, his polygamy—and then assert that David is called a man after God's own heart; and if the Bible record is correct, God justified David in his crimes.

I was shown that it was when David was pure, and walking in the counsel of God, that God called him a man after His own heart. When David

departed from God, and stained his virtuous character by his crimes, he was no longer a man after God's own heart. God did not in the least degree justify him in his sins, but sent Nathan, His prophet, with dreadful denunciations to David because he had transgressed the commandment of the Lord.

God shows His displeasure at David's having a plurality of wives by visiting him with judgments, and permitting evils to rise up against him from his own house. The terrible calamity God permitted to come upon David, who for his integrity was once called a man after God's own heart, is evidence to after generations that God would not justify anyone in transgressing His commandments, but that He will surely punish the guilty, however righteous and favored of God they might once have been while they followed the Lord in purity of heart. When the righteous turn from their righteousness to do evil, their past righteousness will not save them from the wrath of a just and holy God.

Saints' Sins in the Bible—Leading men of

Bible history have sinned grievously. Their sins are not concealed, but faithfully recorded in the history of God's church, with the punishment from God which followed the offenses. These instances are left on record for the benefit of after generations, and should inspire faith in the Word of God, as a faithful history. Men who wish to doubt God, doubt Christianity, and the Word of God, will not judge candidly and impartially, but with prejudiced minds will scan the life and character to detect all the defects in the life of those who have been the most eminent leaders of Israel.

A faithful delineation of character, God has caused to be given in inspired history, of the best and greatest men in their day. These men were mortal, subject to a tempting devil. Their weakness and sins are not covered, but are faithfully recorded, with the reproof and punishment which followed. "These things were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come."

God has not allowed much said in His Word to

extol the virtues of the best men that have lived upon the earth. All their victories and great and good works were ascribed to God. He alone was to receive the glory, He alone to be exalted. He was all and in all. Man was only an agent, a feeble instrument, in His hands. The power and excellence were all of God. God saw in man a continual disposition to depart from, and to forget Him, and worship the creature instead of the Creator. Therefore God would not suffer much in the praise of man to be left upon the pages of sacred history.

The Penitential Psalm—David repented of his sin, in dust and ashes. He entreated the forgiveness of God, and concealed not his repentance from the great men, and even servants of His kingdom. He composed a penitential psalm, recounting his sin and repentance, which psalm he knew would be sung by after generations. He wished others to be instructed by the sad history of his life.

The songs which David composed were sung by all Israel, especially in the presence of the

assembled court, and before priests, elders, and lords. He knew that the confession of his guilt would bring his sins to the notice of other generations. He presents his case, showing in whom was his trust and hope for pardon. “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving kindness; according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.” “Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation” [Psalm 51:1, 2, 14].

David does not manifest the spirit of an unconverted man. If he had possessed the spirit of the rulers of the nations around him, he would not have borne from Nathan the picture of his crime before him in its truly abominable colors, but would have taken the life of the faithful reprover. But notwithstanding the loftiness of his throne, and his unlimited power, his humble acknowledgment of all with which he was charged is evidence that he still feared and trembled at the word of the Lord.

Results of David's Wrongdoing—David was made to feel bitterly the fruits of wrongdoing. His sons acted over the sins of which he had been guilty. Amnon committed a great crime. Absalom revenged it by slaying him. Thus was David's sin brought continually to his mind, and he was made to feel the full weight of the injustice done to Uriah and Bathsheba.—4SGa 85-89.

Warnings in Others' Examples—God's reproof has been plainly uttered against men and women who have sinned by corrupting their bodies and defiling their souls by licentiousness. They have the warnings to others placed in similar circumstances, who have been overcome by the tempter, and they know that the displeasure of God rested upon them.... God has expressed condemnation of sin in all its forms. The sin of licentiousness is plainly rebuked and condemned. Men and women will be judged according to the light given them of God.—Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 437.

Control by Sanctified Reason—Every unholy

passion must be kept under the control of sanctified reason, through the grace abundantly bestowed of God in every emergency. But let no arrangement be made to create an emergency; let there be no voluntary act to place one where he will be assailed with temptation or give the least occasion for others to think him guilty of indiscretion.—Mind, Character, and Personality 1:237.

Correct View of Self in Light of God's Word—Satan's constant temptations are designed to weaken man's government over his own heart, to undermine his power of self-control. He leads man to break the bands which connect him in holy, happy union with his Maker. Then when he is disconnected from God, passion obtains control over reason, and impulse over principle, and he becomes sinful in thought and action; his judgment is perverted, his reason seems to be enfeebled, and he needs to be restored to himself by being restored to God by a correct view of himself in the light of God's Word.—Mind, Character, and Personality 1:228.

The Power of Religion—By what means shall the young man repress his evil propensities, and develop what is noble and good in his character? The will, intellect, and emotions when controlled by the power of religion will become transformed. “Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” [1 Corinthians 10:31]. Here is a principle underlying every act, thought, and motive if the entire being is under control of the will of God.

The voice and passions must be crucified—“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” [Philippians 4:13]. The will, the appetites and passions, will clamor for indulgence, but God has implanted within you desires for high and holy purposes; and it is not necessary that these should be debased. This is so only when we refuse to submit to the control of reason and conscience. We are to restrain our passions and deny self.

Satan’s Pursuit of the Youth—The unsanctified mind fails to receive the strength and comfort which God has provided for all who will

come to Him. There is an unrest, a burning desire for something new, to gratify, to please and fascinate the mind, and this indulgence is called pleasure. Satan has alluring charms with which to engage the interest and excite the imagination of youth, and fasten them in his snare. Do not build your character on the sand.—Ms 59, 1900.