"If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." The eye is the intention: what the eye is to the body, the intention is to the soul. As the one guides all the motions of the body, so does the other those of the soul. This eye of the soul is then said to be single when it looks at one thing only; when we have no other design but to "know God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent," -- to know him with suitable affections, loving him as he hath loved us; to please God in all things; to serve God (as we love him) with all our heart and mind and soul and strength; and to enjoy God in all and above all things, in time and in eternity.

7. "If the light which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" If the intention which ought to enlighten the whole soul, to fill it with knowledge, and love, and peace, and which in fact does so as long as it aims at God alone -- If therefore thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. The eye is the intention: what the eye is to the body, the intention is to the soul. As the one guides all the motions of the body, so does the other those of the soul. This eye of the soul is then said to be single when it looks at one thing only; when we have no other design but to "know God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent," -- to know him with suitable affections, loving him as he hath loved us; to please God in all things; to serve God (as we love him) with all our heart and mind and soul and strength; and to enjoy God in all and above all things, in time and in eternity.

3. "If thine eye be" thus "single," thus fixed on God, "thy whole body shall be full of light." "Thy whole body:" -- all that is guided by the intention, as the body is by the eye. All thou art, all thou doest thy desires, thy hopes, thy fears, thy intentions, thy thoughts, thy words, and actions. The whole of these "shall be full of light;" full of true divine knowledge. This is the first thing we may here understand by light. "In his light shalt thou see life." "He which of old commanded light out of darkness, shall shine in thy heart." He shall enlighten the eyes of thy understanding with the knowledge of the glory of God. His Spirit shall reveal unto thee the deep things of God. The inspiration of the Holy One shall give thee understanding, and cause thee to know wisdom secretly. Yea, the anointing which thou receivest of him shall abide in thee and teach thee of all things.

4. The Second thing which we may here understand by light, is holiness. While thou seest God in all things thou shalt find him in all, the fountain of all holiness, continually filling thee with his own likeness, with justice, mercy, and truth. While thou lookest unto Jesus and Him alone thou shalt be filled with the mind that was in him. Thy soul shall be renewed day by day after the image of him that created it. If the eye of thy mind be not removed from him, if thou endurest "as seeing him that is invisible," and seeking nothing else in heaven or earth, then as thou beholdest the glory of the Lord thou shalt be transformed "into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord." And it is also matter of daily experience that "by grace we are" thus "saved through faith." It is by faith that the eye of the mind is opened to see the light of the glorious love of God. And as long as it is steadily fixed thereon, on God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, we are more and more filled with the love of God and man, with meekness, gentleness, long-suffering; with all the fruits of holiness, which are, through Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father.

5. This light which fills him who has a single eye includes, Thirdly, happiness as well as holiness. Surely "light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is to see the sun:" But how much more to see the Sun of Righteousness continually shining upon the soul! And if there be no consolations in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any peace that passeth all understanding, if any rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, all they belong to him whose eye is single. Thus is his "whole body full of light." He walketh in the light as God is in the light, rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in everything giving thanks, enjoying whatever is the will of God concerning him in Christ Jesus.

6. "But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." "If thine eye be evil:" -- We see there is no medium between a single and an evil eye. If the eye be not single, then it is evil. If the intention in whatever we do be not singly to God, if we seek anything else, then our "mind and conscience are defiled." Our eye therefore is evil if in anything we do we aim at any other end than God; if we have any view, but to know and to love God, to please and serve him in all things; if we have any other design than to enjoy God in all and above all things, in time and in eternity.

8. Both destruction and unhappiness are in thy ways; "for the way of peace hast thou not known." There is no peace, no settled, solid peace, for them that know not God. There is no true nor lasting content for any soul that doeth not the will of God. But the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the holy is understanding. The soul that knoweth and understandeth the will of God concerning him in Christ Jesus, will not defraud his neighbour; nay, who will not gain either by his ignorance or necessity. But this is quite another point. Even these do not scruple the thing, but the manner of it. They do not scruple the thing itself, but the way wherein they do it. They do not scruple to do the thing itself, but they do not scruple to do it in a manner that is not according to the way of peace, that is not according to the way of God. They do not scruple to do the thing itself, but they do not scruple to do it in a manner that is not according to the way of peace, that is not according to the way of God. They do not scruple to do the thing itself, but they do not scruple to do it in a manner that is not according to the way of peace, that is not according to the way of God.

9. "If thine eye be not single, if thou seek any of the things of earth, thou shalt be full of ungodliness and unrighteousness, thy desires, temptations, affections, being all out of course, being all dark, and vile, and vain. And thy conversation will be evil as well as thy heart, not seasoned with salt, or "meet to minister grace unto the hearers;" but idle, unprofitable, corrupt, grievous to the Holy Spirit of God. If therefore thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. The veil shall still remain on thy heart. Thy mind shall be more and more blinded by "the God of this world;" lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine upon thee. Thou wilt be full of ignorance and error touching the things of God, not being able to receive or discern them. And even when thou hast some desire to serve God, thou wilt be full of uncertainty as to the manner of serving him; finding doubts and difficulties on every side, and not seeing any way to escape.

10. "If the light which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" If the intention which ought to enlighten the whole soul, to fill it with knowledge, and love, and peace, and which in fact does so as long as it aims at God alone -- if this be darkness; if it aim at anything beside God, and consequently cover the soul with darkness instead of light, with ignorance and error, with sin and misery: O how great is that darkness! It is the very smoke which ascends out of the bottomless pit! It is the essential night which reigns in the lowest deep, in the land of the shadow of death! But as our alms and devotions are not an acceptable service but when they proceed from a pure intention, so our common employment cannot be reckoned a service to him but when it is done with justice, mercy, and truth.

11. "If ye be the light of the world, let no man shut thy light out of his hand; neither let him who is a teacher of the law." Ye that are teachers of the law are not to shut the light of the world out of their hands. Ye are to teach and to instruct all concerning it; unless it were this, -- to break it as soon and as much as they could, and to continue breaking it to their lives' end.
Neither, Secondly, does he here forbid the providing for ourselves such things as are needful for the body; a sufficiency of plain, wholesome food to eat, and clean raiment to put on. Yea, it is our duty, so far as God puts it into our power, to provide these things also; to the end we may "eat our own bread," and be burdensome to no man.

Nor yet are we forbidden, Thirdly, to provide for our children, and for those of our own household. This also it is our duty to do, even upon principles of heathen morality. Every man ought to provide the plain necessaries of life before his wife and children, and to put them into a capacity of providing for these themselves when he is gone hence and is no more seen. I say, of providing those, the plain necessaries of life; not delicacies, nor superfluities; -- and that by their diligent labour; for it is no man's duty to furnish them any more than himself with the means either of luxury or idleness. But if any man provides not thus far for his own children (as also for the widows of his house, of whom primarily St. Paul is speaking in those well-known words to Timothy), he hath practically "denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel," or Heathen.

Lastly, We are not, forbidden in these words, to lay up, from time to time what is needful for the carrying on our worldly business in such a measure and degree as is sufficient to answer the foregoing purposes; -- in such a measure as, First, to owe no man anything; Secondly, to procure for ourselves the necessaries of life; and, Thirdly, to furnish those of our own house with while they live, and with the means of procuring them when we are gone to God.

12. We may now clearly discern (unless we are unwilling to discern it) what is which it is forbidden here. It is the designedly procuring more of this world's goods than will answer the foregoing purposes; the labouring after a larger measure of worldly substance, a larger increase of gold and silver, -- the laying up any more than these ends require, -- is what is here expressly and absolutely forbidden. If the words have any meaning at all, it must be this; for they are capable of no other. Consequently, whoever he is that, owning no man thing, and having food and raiment for himself and his household, together with a sufficiency to carry on his worldly business so far as answers these reasonable purposes; whatsoever, I say, being already in these circumstances, seeks a still larger portion on earth; he lives in an open habitual denial of the Lord that bought him. He hath practically denied the faith, and is worse than an "African or American infidel."

13. Hear ye this, all ye that dwell in the world, and love the world wherein ye dwell. Ye may be "highly esteemed of men;" but ye are "an abomination in the sight of God." How long shall your souls cleave to the dust? How long will ye "load yourselves with thick clay, and open the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." How hard is it for them whose very word is applauded not to be wise in their own eyes! How hard for them not to think themselves better than the poor, base, uneducated herd of men! How hard not to seek happiness in their riches, or in things depending upon the delight of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life! O ye rich, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Only, with all God all things are possible!

14. And even if you do not succeed, what is the end of your endeavours to lay up treasures on earth! "They that will be rich" (hos boulemoi plourein, _those who desire or seek to be rich._ Riches, dangerous as they are, do not always "drawn men in destruction and perdition;" but the desire of riches does: those who calmly desire and deliberately seek to attain them, whether they do, in fact, gain the world or no, infallibly lose their own souls. These are they that sell him who bought them with his blood, for a few pieces of gold or silver. These enter into a covenant with death and hell; and their covenant shall stand. For they are daily making themselves meet to partake of their inheritance with the devil and his angels.

15. And so we may clearly discern (unless we are unwilling to discern it) what it is to "lay up treasures in heaven." But there is at hand a greater trouble than all these. Thou art to die! Thou art to sink into dust; to return to the ground from which thou wast taken, to mix with common clay. Thy body is to go to the earth as it was planted on the things which perish in the using. Thou hast thrown away the treasure in heaven: God and Christ are lost! You have gained riches, and hell-fire!

The caution with which the Apostle here speaks is highly applicable. He does not affirm absolutely of the rich. For a man may possibly be rich, without any fault of his, by an overreaching Providence, preventing his own choice: But he affirms it of _hos boulemoi plourein, _those who desire or seek to be rich._ Riches, dangerous as they are, do not always "drawn men in destruction and perdition;" but the desire of riches does: those who calmly desire and deliberately seek to attain them, whether they do, in fact, gain the world or no, infallibly lose their own souls. These are they that sell him who bought them with his blood, for a few pieces of gold or silver. These enter into a covenant with death and hell; and their covenant shall stand. For they are daily making themselves meet to partake of their inheritance with the devil and his angels.

16. O who shall warn this generation of visionaries from fleeing to the wrath of God! Not those who lie at their gate, or cringe at their feet, desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fall from their tables. Not those who court their favour or fear their power: none of those who mind earthly things. But if there be a Christian upon earth, if there be a man who hath overcome the world, who desires nothing but God, and fears none but him that is able to destroy both body and soul in hell; thou, O man of God, speak and spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet! Cry aloud, and show these honourable sinners the desperate condition wherein they stand! It may be, in one thousand may have ears to hear, may arise and shake himself from the dust; may break loose from these chains that bind him to the earth, and at length lay up treasures in heaven.

17. And if it should be that one of these, mighty power of God, ake, speak and spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet! Cry aloud, and show these honourable sinners the desperate condition wherein they stand! It may be, in one thousand may have ears to hear, may arise and shake himself from the dust; may break loose from these chains that bind him to the earth, and at length lay up treasures in heaven.


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To my new courts sad thought does still repair,
And round my gilded roofs hangs hovering care?

Indeed experience is here so full, strong, and undeniable, that it makes all other arguments needless. Appeal we therefore to fact. Are the rich and great the only happy men?

Amidst our plenty something still,-
To me, to thee, to him is wanting!
That cruel something unpossessed
Corrodes and leavens all the rest.

Yea, and so it will, till thy wearisome days of vanity are shut up in the night of death.

Surely then, to trust in riches for happiness is the greatest folly of all that are under the sun! Are you not convinced of this? Is it possible you should still expect to make the most of this evil state?

These are all dead show. Regard them not. Trust thou in the living God; so shalt thou be safe under the shadow of the Almighty; his faithfulness and truth shall be thy song.

How pernicious to your own soul the latter of these is has been excellently shown by a late writer: --

"If we waste our money we are not only guilty of wasting a talent which God has given us, but we do ourselves this farther harm, we turn this useful talent into a powerful enemy.

"As wit and fine parts cannot be only trifled away, but will expose those that have them to greater follies, so money cannot be only trifled away, but if it is not used aright, it will produce the most pernicious consequences."

"In using riches where they have no real use, nor we any real want, we only use them to our great hurt, in creating unreasonable desires, in nourishing ill tempers, in indolence and idleness, and in weakening our capacity for the performance of good works.

"So that money thus spent is not merely wasted or lost, but it is spent to bad purposes and miserable effects; to the corruption and disorder of our hearts; to the making us idle, lazy, and slothful; to our own ruin and dishonor; and to the greater shame of God.

"Moreover, money is as much a talent as understanding or special abilities.

"The true way of employing what you do not want yourselves you may, Fourthly, learn from those words of our Lord which are the counterpart of what went before: "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break in and steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

"Give to the poor with a single eye, with an upright heart, and write, "So much given to God." For "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

"This is the part of a "faithful and wise steward:" Not to sell either his houses or lands, or principal stock, be it more or less, unless some peculiar circumstance should force such a course as an essential necessity for the support of his family.

"Now money has very much the nature of eyes and feet. If therefore we lock it up in chests, while the poor and distressed want it for their necessary uses, we are not far from being under a peculiar curse of God, and deserve a peculiar punishment for our sins.

"We "charge" you, therefore, "who are rich in this world," as having authority from our great Lord and Master, _agathoergein_ --, to be habitually doing good,

"Snatching the golden moments as they fly,
Thou by few fleeting years ensure eternity!

"By patient continuance in well-doing, seek" thou "for glory and honour and immortality." In a constant, zealous performance of all good works, wait thou for that happy hour.