On account of some peculiarities of the language in which the Bible was originally written, commentators and divines have been greatly perplexed in fixing the meaning of many important passages of scripture. Hence we are told by critics, that according to an idiom of the Hebrew language, the word "hate", frequently signifies to love less. In the 29th chapter of Genesis, it is said, "The Lord knew that Leah was hated", but in the preceding verse, it is asserted, that "Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah". Upon the same principle it is written, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated". In this sense we should understand the words of Christ when he says, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, mother, wife or children, brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple". The true meaning of the word "hate" in this connection will be found in the parallel passage of St. Matthew's gospel, where Christ is represented as saying, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me".

We find also among the peculiarities of scripture language, that a great moral difficulty is sometimes represented under the idea of a natural impossibility. Hence when the Saviour said to his disciples, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, he must have meant, that it was very difficult for a man of great wealth, so to manage the manifold of
unrighteousness - so to manage his temporal affairs, as to live in the exercise of humility, patience, charity, faith and obedience, and finally reach the kingdom of heaven.

For when the disciples enquired "Who then can be saved," the Saviour replied, "all things are possible with God," intimating clearly, that a rich man might be saved although his salvation would be attended with great difficulty.

Another case of this kind is given in our text. We presume that the Prophet Jeremiah did not intend to say that it was as difficult for persons to change reform themselves, who have been long addicted to vice, as for an Ethiopian to change his complexion, or a leopard the color of his skin, for in that case, reformation would be impossible. But this strong language is used, this hyperbole has been employed, to show the great moral difficulty implied in the abandonment of sinful habits which have gathered strength by long indulgence.

This subject will lead me to consider the stubborn and inveterate nature of long confirmed habits, and their dangerous tendency when opposed to a life of virtue and holy life.
The word custom habit are of similar import, and mean nearly the same thing. The former is generally applied to communities the latter to individuals. Here we speak of the customs of a neighborhood, village or city, and the habits of an individual. The text is addressed to persons in a collective capacity. "Then may ye do good that are accustomed to do evil," but we shall give the subject, more particularly, an individual application.

The term habit implies, any practice, indulgence or manner of life, which has become easy, familiar, traditional, from education, example, or frequent repetition.

The peculiar habits of an individual are generally established for life by the influence of education and example, especially among those of tender years, for it is extremely to change the habit of aged persons by any system of education that could be adopted. But in the morning of life, the character of persons may be greatly modified for good or for evil by the force of education and example. "If good we plant not, vice will fill the mind." The peculiar character of an individual is generally determined for life by early training, early associations.

Hence the farmer's son, whose mind is not directed in some other channel, is apt to contract a taste for the peaceful toils of agriculture, while the sailor boy becomes strongly wedded to the bold adventures of
The ocean. And if either of you had been reared in Rome and I in Constantinople, it is likely you would have been a Roman Catholic, while I should have been a follower of Mahomet. (The Case of Egbert)
2. But habits are more generally contracted by frequent exercise, indulgence or repetition, the bent of which may be derived from a great variety of physical or mental causes, such as climate, health, intense application, and constitutional peculiarity.

We find that the Blacksmith, arm gathers nerve & strength by his repeated blows upon the anvil. The eye of the watch-maker becomes very keen by the frequent minute exercise of his vision upon the small machinery of his clocks & watches. And the practiced eye of the Mariner displays great facility in discovering ships as they rise upon his view in the distant horizon.

We have often observed, that by frequent repetition an individual will acquire the habit of rising up, at a particular time — he will become hungry at a certain hour of the day, and he will become drowsy about his usual hour of retiring at night, whether it is 9, 12, or 3 o’clock in the morning.

By frequent indulgence an individual will form the habit of chewing tobacco, taking snuff, or smoking the pipe, until he cannot restrain himself without great discomfort and inconvenience.

In the very same way, an individual may acquire the habit of idleness, the habit ofFaults, finding, the habit of evil speaking, the habit of swearing, the habit of Sabbath breaking, & the dreadful habit of interference.
The man may brood over his money, until he can dream of bank notes and golden mountains, and the libertine, by the force of habit, may loose the power of self-government, and become a slave to the impetuousity of his passions and appetites. Hence the wisdom and importance of the old maxim—"Be wise, betimes, shun darling crimes." If you arrest the growth of any habit which your judgment does not approve, you should endeavor to nip the evil in the bud, or you may become a slave to your sinful indulgences. How many have regretted their bad habits, when it has been too late to correct them.

3. We have frequently observed, that habits become strong, inveterate, stubborn, unyielding, and almost irresistible by long and repeated indulgence. Let us suppose, for the sake of an illustration, that a dam or dyke has been constructed across the Roanoke River, and its waters completely arrested in their progress, but just let the most diminutive streamlet, not larger than a straw, find its way across the embankment, and soon the little tiny stream will begin to wash away the grains of sand and silt, which obstruct its passage; but in a few days or weeks it becomes a rapid torrent, until at last, the whole obstruction is carried away by the tremendous flood which has been gathering strength and force by the accumulation of many weeks, or months. You might bind a strong man with the thickest and strongest thread, and he would mope the idea of confinement, but let the spider wind his little thread...
around him, ten thousand times, ten thousand, and he is
find himself powerless and defenseless.
And thus it is precisely with the long indulgence of sinful habits. We bring with us into the world, that moral impurity, by which we are alienated from the life of God. The understanding is blinded and confused by the fall. The judgment is warped and perverted by our lusts, passions, and propensities. The taste becomes vitiated by sensual indulgences. The will becomes rebellious indeterminate, and incapable of performing its own volitions. The conscience is blunted and stupefied by oft-repeated acts of transgression. The whole moral nature becomes stupified by the snares of sin, until the soul of man becomes an easy captive to the great adversary of God and man.

Hence the sinner often resolves to take the name of the Lord in vain no more, but such is the inborn inveterate nature of habit, that under the influence of irritation, he finds himself beclouded out the most honored oath, his resolution to the contrary notwithstanding. The sinner, thus determined to do justly and love mercy, but such is his love of money, that “he lends men most rapacious ear to the clink of money as a gnat,” and again his conscience is violated, and again he will grind the face of the poor.
The confirmed drunkard, was once a very moderate drinker— and lived, in what he called the proportions of spirits. He took his dram in the morning, his toddy at dinner, and occasionally a social gloop with a friend, and here he felt himself perfectly secure— But after a while it is whispered abroad that he was a little lively at the wedding party— rather overjoyed at the club dinner— half-napped on Court-day, and very mellow at the election.

The appetite gathers strength by indulgence, until the moderate drinker acquires the habit of drinking to excess at home, until he becomes a daily, habitual, and confirmed drunkard.

And there is but little hope of such a man's recovery— Habit has become strong, stubborn, and unyielding. "To will is present with them, but how to perform that which is right, they find not."

We have known a number of persons, to begin with a little French Brandy, recommended for their health, they have continued its use, and increased the quantity because they loved its effects, until they have acquired the habit of drinking themselves dead drunk at home, almost every day in the week, and finally they have descended to a drunkard's grave, and if the Bible be true, they have gone to seek their reward in the drunkards' hell. (The man who died a drunkard, after the deaconess crowned him in his bed.)
And thus it is with a course of general transgression. One transgression leaves the way for another. “For one grain of sin that we sow, we reap a crop of wide-wasting woe.” When lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” The work of disobedience, like the work of religion, has its beginning, its progress, and its completion. While the humble Christian is ascending the mystic ladder, round after round which reaches from earth to heaven, the habitual sinner, is descending the fearful steps of the broad road which leads to destruction. Every transgression deadens his moral sensibility, until conscience ceases to chide and warn him of his danger, and he is borne quietly down the stream of time, until his frail bark is wrecked amid the deathless waters of death, and his watcher’s spirit is left to buffet the waves of that fiery lake, where deep trouble up, and loudasonic howl, where the worm dieth not and the fire is never quenched, where hope alight in wild against it, and despair shall spread her seven wings over the edges of horrors everlasting sorrow and dishonor—(When the tempest past blood upon the crumbling verge of this dreadful pit, he saw one soul condemned to die in the hordes of everlastings death.)
From this subject, we should learn the great importance of virtuous and religious habits in the morning of life. We have but little hope of those who have long driven against light and knowledge, who have long been treasuring up wealth, except in the days of youth. They have become carnal and in bondage to their carnal habits. Then they would do good and is present with them. But in the morning of life, we may give the rising generation to form these good habits and acquire that moral character which will afford them peace and comfort in the present life and shield the closing scene of their existence with the prospect of a glorious immortality in that bright world above, when sorrow and suffering shall flee away forever.

We would exhort parents, teachers, and Christians to look, reflect, feel, and act in reference to the spiritual improvement of the rising generation. The hearts of children are more tender, their minds are more susceptible of religious impressions. Their habits are yet untainted and may be correctly formed by the precepts of the Bible. It is the most valuable auxiliary in this work of faith and labor if love is the Sunday School cause.
Let me exhort the young people in this congregation, to seek the Lord, in the depths of their youth—If you trust to any future time, the probability is, that you will be too late beyond the hote of recovery. Martin generally form their habits for life, between the age of 10 & 25. Here are your middle age friends and acquaintance around you, without hope and without God in the world. They were once young like you, some like yourselves, but they have blunted their sensibility by a course of sensual and vicious indulgence.

But go to the man who has lived in sin for 30, 40, or 50 years, whose trembling limbs and furrowed cheeks intimate his near approach to the grave—Speak to him on the subject of conversion, and you will find him farther from God. When he was in the morning of life, he was ushered into the judgments of the Almighty—he has withstood the call, of mercy—he has seen his blooming hopes wither and die—he has turned and consulted the Holy Spirit, and the probability is, that he will live without hope, die in despair, and be driven from the presence of God and the glory of His power.