

The Battle of Life

by C.H. Spurgeon

The battle of life is a continuous conflict and strife that requires courage, patience, perseverance, and wisdom to overcome the enemies of the soul and achieve eternal life.

Scripture: Isaiah 41:10, Romans 8:37, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Ephesians 6:12, Philippians 4:13, 2 Timothy 2:3, Hebrews 12:1-2, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8-9, 1 John 5:4

Topics: "Dependence On God", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

C.H. Spurgeon emphasizes that life is a continuous battle, where every individual must engage in spiritual warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil. He illustrates that just as soldiers are provided for by their country, Christians should rely on God for strength and support in their struggles. Spurgeon encourages young people to start their battles early, reminding them that they cannot fight this warfare on their own but must depend on divine assistance. He warns against self-reliance and stresses the importance of prayer, holiness, and faith in overcoming life's challenges. Ultimately, he assures that victory is possible through Christ, who has already triumphed over sin and death.

Transcript

THIS question occurs in the course of an argument. The Apostle was proving that the minister who gives all his time to the preaching of the Word is entitled to a maintenance from those people amongst whom he labours. He gives divers illustrations, amongst them this--that the soldier who devotes himself to the service of his country is not expected to find his own equipment and his own rations, but he is provided for by his country. And so should it be, he teaches us, in the Church of God.

The minister set apart to labour wholly in spiritual things should have temporal supplied found him. That isle topic, however, on which it would be superfluous for me to enlarge. Your convictions are so sound, and your practice so consistent, that you do not need to be exhorted, much less to be expostulated with on that matter. But the same question may be asked when we have other morals to point. Is it ever expected that men who go on a warfare should pay their own charges?

There is a warfare in which all of us are engaged. What is life but a great battle, lasting from our earliest days until we sheathe sword in death? This battle we hope to win, and yet if we succeed, it will be a distinct and definite response to the challenge before us, "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?" We may be quite sure that if ever we attempt the warfare of life at our own expense we shall soon find ourselves failing, and it will end in a miserable defeat.

Going at once to the subject, we have here:-- I. AN INSPIRING METAPHOR. When life is represented as a warfare, some peaceful minds may feel a little alarmed at the pictures; yet there are other minds with enough of gallantry in their constitutions to feel their blood pulsing the stronger at the thought that life is to be one continued contest. I do but borrow a reflection from the secular press when I say that it were ill for us if the love of peace, fostered among us as a nation, should degenerate into a fear of danger, a reluctance to bear hardships, or an indifference to the accomplishment of exploits.

Craven spirits we may expect always to find, who conjure up gloomy anticipations, and to forbade horrible disasters. The untrodden path and the unaccustomed climate are dreadful bugbears. But is this the instinct of an Englishman? How else should he contemplate difficulties but as problems to be solved? capital out of which fame or fortune is to be won? And as for the British soldier, is he to be looked upon as a hot-house plant, who shrinks from exposure? Far rather would I respect him as a representative individual, the type of his race, always ready for any emergency.

In the days of the old Gallic wars, when we had to fight with Napoleon in Egypt, there were just as many knotty points and critical situations to be grappled with; and certainly at headquarters the War Department was not more efficiently managed than it is now. Yet British soldiers pressed forward then to the conflict nor did they pant for fortune, what they did seek was a career, with some opportunity of distinguishing themselves. Moreover, those who stayed at home scanned the despatches with eager interest, and full often lamented that they had not the chance given them of going forth to the fight.

Well may the patriot ask, Has Anglo-Saxon courage all fled? if at every call to fresh deeds of heroism we listen to the crowing of those whose nature it is to look black, and utter dark portents. Our children's children may read how the haughty insolence of Theodore of Abyssinia was humbled, but I hope they will never hear the screeching of the ravens who warned us of the mountain fastnesses in which he was lodged. The Ashantee war is behind us now, and I suppose those who were once afraid of its perils are now amazed at its prowess.

Yes, and that is how I would have Christians feel with regard to spiritual conflicts. Difficulties! well, they are things to be deciphered. Dangers! they are things to be met and encountered. Impossibilities! they are to be scouted as a nightmare, a delirious dream. The Christian wakes to find impossibility impossible. With a history behind him and a destiny before him, he can say, "The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." Things that are impossible with man are possible with God.

I like my text all the better, because it implies a hostile engagement, and speaks of warfare. For me the battlefield has no charms. With host encountering host, and carnage left behind, I have no sympathy, but spiritually my soul seems enamoured of the idea; I buckle on my armour at the very thought that life is to be a conflict and a strife, in which it behoves me to get the mastery. Do I not address many young men just commencing life? If you have thought of life at all I hope you have thought that it is wise to begin the battle of life early.

We have all so little time to live, and the first years of life are so evidently the best years we shall ever have, that it is a pity to waste them. Oh! how much more some of us might have done if we had begun betimes! Had the very flush of our boyhood been consecrated and the strength of our youth spent in our Master's service, what work we might have accomplished! Now, young men, as a comrade a little farther on the road than you, I take you to the brow of the hill for a moment, and point out to you the pathway we have to pursue, and as I point it out I tell you that you will have to fight along every inch of the road, if you

are at the end to win the crown which I hope your ambition pants after.

Are you ready for the conflict? Then let us talk awhile about it, for as we shall always have to be on the alert, it is well for us to study the map, and to acquaint ourselves with the tactics we must practice. Be sure, then, my friend, that if you and, I are ever to be conquerors at the last, we shall have to, fight with that trinity of enemies--the world, the flesh, and the devil. There is the world. Do you resolve to do the right and to love the true, depend upon it you will get no assistance from this world.

Of its maxims, nine out of ten are false, and the other one selfish; and even that which is selfish has a lie at the bottom of it. As for its customs--well, live where you may, the customs of the world are not such as a citizen of heaven can endorse. Go into what company you please, and you will find that there is much of the prevailing habit that is no friend to grace, and no friend to virtue. In the upper circles, with much presence, there is little reality; there is a lack of sound honesty.

Amongst the lower classes, go where you will, if you firmly resolve to be a Christian, to follow closely the footsteps of your Lord, you will have to breast the current. The most of men are going, down the hill. You will be like the solitary traveller when you are threading your way upwards. Do you enlist for Christ to-night? Then know that you enlist against the whole world. You will henceforth be an alien to your mother's children, and a stranger to your own household, unless happily that household Should have been converted too.

Young man, the young men in the shop will be against you. Alas, for the wickedness of the young men of London! Young woman, you will find in the workroom, aye perhaps you will find even in your father's house, influences at work to impede, if not to thrust you back. Man of business, when you meet others on exchange, if perchance the conversation should turn upon religion, you will find it far from profitable, and far from genial. You will be like a speckled bird, and all the birds round about you will be against you.

As a marked man, your motives will be mistrusted, your character impugned, your piety burlesqued. If you resolve to win the crown of immortality, you will only do it as by the skin of your teeth. It matters not where you are cast, this is sure to be your lot, unless, as here and there is the case, you may be a timid and shielded one, too weak for conflict and, therefore, God keeps you in retirement. And yet as for the world, I think we could easily overcome that were it not for a worse enemy.

Soldier of Christ, you have to struggle with yourself. My own experience is a daily struggle with myself. I wish I could find in me something friendly to grace, but hitherto I have searched my nature through, and have found everything in rebellion against God. At one time there comes the torpor of sloth, when one ought to be active every moment, having so much to do for God, and for the souls of men, and so little time to do it in. At another time there comes the quickness of passion.

When we would be calm and cool, and play the Christian, bearing with patience, there come the unadvised word and the rash expression. Anon, we are troubled with conceit, the devilish whisper--I can call it no less--"How well thou hast done! How well hast thou played thy part!" This pride is the arch-enemy of our souls. Then will come distrust foul and faithless, suggesting that God does not regard the affairs of men, and will not interpose on our behalf. Fresh forms of evil are generated in our own breasts, and this chameleon heart of ours, which never seems of one colour but for a single moment, which is this and that by turns, and nothing long, challenges us on all occasions, and against it we shall have perpetually to struggle.

Unless we deny ourselves and lay violent hands upon the impulses of our nature, are shall never come to the place where the crowns are distributed to the conquerors. And then another foe comes up, though not the closest, the strongest of the three--the devil! If you have ever stood foot to foot with him, as some of us have, you will remember well that blandly day, for even he who beats Apollyon concludes the battle wounded in his own hand and in his own foot. Oh! that stern enemy!

He knows how to attack us in our sore points. He discerns our weaknesses and he is at no loss for cunning devices. He understands how one moment to fawn upon us and flatter us, and how the next moment to cast his fiery darts, telling us that we are castaways, and shall never see the face of God with acceptance. He can quote Scripture for his purpose. He can hurl threatenings at the heads of the saints, which were only meant for sinners, and he can tear promises out of the saints' hands, and cast them in the mire, just when they are ready to feed upon them as fair fruits of Paradise.

Believe me, it is no small thing to have had to fight with Apollyon, the Prince of Hell. Seest thou then, young soldier, what is before thee? There is a triple host of foes, and thou must overcome them all, or else there shall never be given to thee the white stone, and the crown of everlasting life. Think not that this is an engagement to be quickly terminated. Unlike the laconic despatch of the ancient Roman, "Veni, vidi, vici," I came, saw, and conquered, this is a continuous fight.

Wouldest thou fight thy way to heaven, not to-day, nor to-morrow; wilt thou win it with a deadly skirmish or a brilliant dash like a knight at a tournament, thou canst not come back a conqueror. In sober truth, every man and every woman who enlists for Christ will have to wrestle till their bones shall sleep in the tomb. There shall be no pause nor cessation for thee from this day until the laurel is upon thy brow. If thou art defeated one day, thou must overcome the next; if a conqueror to-day, thou must fight to-morrow.

Like the old knights who, slept in their armour, you must be prepared for reprisals--always watchful, always expecting temptation, and ready to resist it; never saying, "It is enough," for he who saith, "It is finished," until he breathes his last has not yet truly begun. We must have our swords drawn, even to the very last. I have sometimes thought that could we enter heaven by one sharp, quick, terrible encounter, such as the martyrs faced at the stake we might endure it heroically; but day after day of protracted martyrdom, and year after year of the wear and tear of pilgrimage and soldier-life is the more bitter trial of patience.

I do but tell you in order that you may be convinced that it is not in our power to fight this warfare at our own charge; that if we have to endure in our own strength and with our own resources, it is most certain that disaster will befall us, and defeat will humble us. To fight, and fight on, is our vocation. But if thus you fight, you may hope to conquer, for others have done so before you. On the summit of the palace see you not those robed in white, who walk in light, with faces bright, and sparkling o'er with joy? Can you not hear their song? They have overcome, and they tell you:--

"To him that overcometh

A crown of life shall be;

He with his Lord and Master

Shall reign eternally."

They have overcome; then why should not you, Jesus Christ, who is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, has passed through the sternest part of the battle, and he has overcome--a type and representative of all those who are cross-bearers, and who shall overcome as he has done. Do I see some young man, eager, earnest, all of a glow, ready for the crown? Let me remind thee that thou mayest be defeated. Though it is well for thee to begin life with a resolute determination to fight through the battle, still I would have thee remember that thou mayest be led captive by thy foe.

There is a most instructive little book, issued by the Religious Tract Society, called *The Mirage of life*, which I think all young men should read. It gives historical pictures of the different ways in which men have sought to be great, wherein the result of the greatness attained has proved to be in mirage, mocking the man, as the mirage in the desert mocks the traveller when it promises him water, and he finds none. That book contains the history of such men as Beckford, a man worth £200,000 a year, who spent the former part of his life in building Fonthill Abbey, with an enormous tower, enriching the place with all the treasures that he could rather from every country; making the grounds so splendid that crowned heads longed to look within, but, it is said, were refused; and at the end of his life you find him almost penniless--the house upon which he had spent all his time and money a dilapidated ruin, the tower fallen to the ground, and the name of Beckford forgotten.

You have a sketch of William Pitt, the heaven-born minister. One of the greatest of statesmen, who could make war or peace at his will, and after years of the most brilliant success he dies with a broken heart through grief. The high ambition of men of art such as Haydon, is introduced to your notice. This great painter, after blazing with wondrous fame in his art, took away his life because he found himself a disappointed and forgotten man. As I read a series of such cases, each one seemed sadder than the other, and it was enough to make a man sit down and weep to think that our mortal race should be doomed to follow such phantoms, and to be mocked by such delusions.

As I read them all I could not help feeling how necessary it was to say to young men, especially just as they are beginning life, and to young women too--aye, and the lesson is profitable for all of us--Take care how ye run in the race, lest after running, till ye think ye have won the prize, ye find that in truth ye have lost it. We must take care how we live, for this is the only lifetime we shall have in which to settle the life that lasts for ever. Make bankruptcy in your secular business; why, you can start again; but once make bankruptcy in soul affairs, and there is no second life in which to start your career afresh.

Are you a defeated soldier of life? Ah! then, you can never begin again, or turn the defeat into a victory. If you go down to your grave a captive of sin, the iron bands will be about you for ever. There is no retrieving your position. The priceless boon of freedom is beyond your reach. You may lament, you cannot attain it. See then, our life is a battle; we must constantly fight; haply we may win, or haply we may be defeated. I now proceed to mark a second point with:-- II.

A KINDLY HINT. Like a cool breath fanning our cheeks when too hot with ambition, this enquiry greets us, "Who goeth a warfare at any time at his own charges?" So, then, charges there will be in this life-battle. It is not to be won without pain and cost. Let us just glance at some of these charges. You will soon see how they mount up. If any man shall get up to heaven what a demand for courage he will have to meet! How many enemies he must face! How much ridicule he must endure!

How frequently must he be misrepresented and maligned! How often must he be discreet enough to be silent, and anon, bold enough to speak and avow his convictions and his purpose! If a man shall get to

heaven, what a charge of patience he will be at! How he must bear and forbear! How he must put up with one sharp difficulty and another, making light of fatigue and fasting, restless days and sleepless nights; in fiery temptation unflinching, amidst cold contempt unabashed. If any man will get to heaven, what an amount of perseverance he will require to hold on and to hold out!

What hours of prayer, what wrestling with God for a blessing, what striving with himself to overcome sinful propensities! What a charge of watchfulness he will be at! How he must guard the avenues of his being! How he must track his actions to the springs of motives, and keep his thoughts pure from guile! There can be little ease and not much slumber for a man who would get the eternal crown. What fresh supplies of zeal he will need; for we shall not drift into heaven without a conflict or a care.

We must cut, and hack and hew with intense energy, for the Saviour says, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by storm." What strength he will require, for he has to deal with potent foes! And oh! what a charge of wisdom he will be put to the expense of, for he has to stand against the craftiness of evil creatures, and to overcome one who is wiser than the ancients, even Satan, the arch-tempter. It is possible that the difficulties of an expedition may be intensely aggravated by a lack of knowledge as to the country to be invaded.

Under such circumstances it is hard to anticipate the contingencies that may arise. In the battle of life this is the rub. Who knows what lies next before him? How can we forestal the surprises that may await us? "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." If I were aware of the temptations that would befall me a year hence, I think I could guard myself against them, but I do not even know what pinch or peril may befall me before the hour has passed.

You cannot tell the provocations that to-night may occur before you close your eyes in slumber. You may have a trial or a temptation such as never crossed your path before. Hence I beseech you to consider the greatness of the charge of this warfare. You have to pass through an experience which no man before you has proved. All the path of life is new to you, unmapped, untrodden, unanticipated. Yet all you lack of clear statistics is made up for in dire prognostics. No doubt the climate is baneful, and will subject you to fever or ague.

Our British soldiers, rank and file, must press forward though they are landed on a blazing beach, across which they have, to march; nor will it ever do for them to be dismayed by steep mountains, dismal swamps, or savage tribes. Bent on victory, they brave the incidents of the campaign before they sight the adversaries they attack, while their heads and hearts are full of honour, promotion, stars, stripes, and Victoria crosses. But in our eventful battle of life the checks and bars to progress, the dangers and temptations that we shall all have to meet with in our natural constitution and our secular calling, the unnavigable currents and the impassable barriers that thwart us before we grapple with the main enterprise to enter heaven, are more than I can describe in one sermon.

No marvel to me that Mr. Pliable should say, as he turned back, "You may have the, brave country yourselves for me." The Slough of Despond, as a first part, put him into a dudgeon and he said, "I do not like it; I will have no more of it." Apart from divine strength, Pliable was a wise man, wise in his generation, to shrink from the adventure, for it is a hard journey to the skies. They spake the truth who said that there were giants, to fight with, dragons to be slain, mountains to be crossed, and black rivers to be forded.

It is so, and I pray you count the cost. There is no "royal road" to heaven, except that the King's highway leads there. There is no easy road skilfully levelled or scientifically macadamised. The labour is too

exhaustive, the obstructions are too numerous, the difficulties are too serious, unless God himself come to our help. I wittingly put these dilemmas before you that I may constrain you to say, "Who can go this warfare at his own Charges?" And now, in the third place, let us look at our text as:-- III.

A GRACIOUS REMINDER. Does any man at any time go a warfare at his own charge? I trow not. Young man! I have told you of difficulties and of dangers. I trust your bold spirit taught by God, has thereby been fired to greater ardour. Now I have somewhat to say unto thee which has cheered me, and cheered thy sires before me, and made them strong, even in their weakness. It is this. You see you cannot go this warfare in your own strength. Is not that clear to you? Then, I pray you, do not try it.

Do not for a moment contemplate it. If you do, you will rue it. Your fall will be your first warning; the second time it will warn you more bitterly; if you continue in your own strength, you will, perhaps, have a warning too late. But you may rely on God to help you. The text implies it. If, by faith, you yield yourself to Christ, whoever you may be, with a desire and intent to live henceforth as a follower of Jesus, God will help you, and that right early. Though a warfare is before you, you are not to go at your own charges.

Shall I tell you how God will help you? Certainly you may reckon upon his watchful Providence. You little know how easy the Almighty can make a path which otherwise would have been difficult and dangerous. Follow God's leading, and you shall never lack for his comfort. I have lived long enough to see many people carve for themselves very eagerly, and cut their fingers very severely. I have seen others who albeit they were great losers for a time by doing right, have had to bless God year after year for the abundant recompense they received afterwards.

No man shall be a loser in the long run by loving and serving God. If thou be willing and obedient, trusting thyself with Christ, thou shalt find those awful wheels of Providence revolve for thy welfare. The beasts of the field shall be in league with thee, and the stones of the field shall be at peace with thee. All things shall work together for good to them that love God. Now I am not pretending that piety will procure wealth, or that if you espouse Christ's cause you shall grow rich.

I should not wonder if you did. You are none the less likely to prosper in business for being a Christian. I am not going to, predict that you shall be without sickness, much less without temptation, for "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth", but sure I am of this, that if you put your trust in God and do right, no temporal circumstances shall ever happen to you which shall not be for your eternal good. This is forestalling much more than any transient benefit.

In the short space you are to live here you may reckon upon the gigantic wheels of Providence as your helpers. The angels or God shall be swift to defend you. Your eyes shall not see them, but your heart shall wax confident. You shall perceive that by some means you have been rescued from a place of drought and led into a fruitful land. More than this; as you go this warfare, looking to God to bear your charges, you shall have the Lord Jesus Christ to help you. Promise not yourself that you will be able to maintain henceforth a perfect life.

Sin will harass you. Old corruptions, even when they are driven out from the throne (for sin shall not reign over you), will yet struggle at the foot thereof. But Jesus Christ will be your helper. He will be always present to revive you with his precious blood, to sprinkle your hearts from an evil conscience, to wash your bodies with pure water. Have you never admired that picture of Christ, with the basin and the towel washing his disciples' feet? This is what he will ever do for you at every eventide when you have defiled yourself through inadvertence or infirmity.

Look into the face of the Crucified. Perhaps you have sometimes wished that he were now visible, and in body accessible to you. That sympathizing One who has suffered so much for you! You have said, "Oh! that I might go and tell him my griefs, and get his help!" He is alive. He is here. He is not far from any one that seeketh him. Whosoever trusteth shall surely find Christ to be his very present help in time of trouble. Believe this, and thou shalt prove it true. And he that is a soldier of the cross shall have the divine power Of God the Blessed Spirit to help him.

I have sometimes thought, when some strong passion has been raging within my soul--How can I ever overcome it? The will was good, but the flesh was weak. But as soon as the Spirit of God has moved on me the flesh has given way. The Holy Ghost can give the man that is prone to idleness such an intense apprehension of the value of time that he shall be more industrious than the naturally active man. I believe that if any of you who are subject to a bad temper will lay this besetting sin before God in prayer, and ask the Holy Spirit's help, you shall not only be able to curb it, but you will acquire a sweeter and gentler spirit than some of those whose temperament is naturally even, with no propensity to fitful change or sudden storm.

Do not tell me that there is anything in human nature too obdurate for the Lord to overcome, for there is not. Whatever may be your temptation, you need not account it an effectual hindrance to your being a Christian. What though it be beyond your own power to grapple with it! When the Eternal arm comes to the rescue; when the right hand of Jehovah is made bare; when the Holy Spirit puts forth his irresistible power, he can smite through the loins of our kingly sins, and cut the Rahabs and dragons of our iniquities in pieces.

Rest thou in the might of Jehovah, the God of Israel. He that brake Egypt in pieces with his plagues can vanquish our sins with his judgments or with his grace, and he can bring the new nature, like the children of Israel, up out of bondage into joyous liberty. Go thou to the blood, and thou shalt conquer sin. Go to the Eternal Spirit, and thy worst corruptions shall be overthrown. "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?" As the soldier draws from his paymaster, so let every Christian draw from his God and Saviour.

Conduct your warfare trusting in the blessed God. My last words shall be to those who are beginning the great battle of life. Let me urge upon them these:-- IV. CAUTIONS AND COUNSELS. Behold the wisdom of diffidence. I heard some time ago of a minister preaching on the dignity of self-reliance; and I thought to myself, Surely that is the dignity of a fool! The dignity of self-reliance! Taken in a certain sense, there is some kind of truth about it; or at least the folly of asking counsel of your neighbour in every strait is sufficiently obvious.

But he that relies on his own wits will soon pander to expediency and grovel in the mire. His actions will admit of no better defense than excuses and apologies. Nay, sirs; "but let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." A better subject, and one that no preacher need be ashamed of if the Master should come ere the sermon be done, is the dignity of reliance upon God, and the wisdom of diffidence of oneself. Begin life, young man, by finding out that the capital you thought you had, is much less than it looked before you counted it.

Begin life, young man, by understanding that all in your nature that glitters is not gold, and that your strength is perfect weakness. Begin by being emptied, and you will soon be filled. Blessed are the poor in spirit." Begin by being poor. If you begin with lowliness, you will not need to be humiliated.

"He that is down need fear no fall,

He that is low no pride;

He that is humble ever shall

Have God to be his guide."

He will win the battle who knows how to begin on the low ground and to fight uphill by divine strength. Learn the wisdom, not of self-reliance, but of self-diffidence, for he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool. Be thoroughly alive to the importance of prayer. If all our charges in the life-war are to be paid us by the Paymaster, let us go to the treasury. Amongst the strangest of human sins is a distaste for prayer. I open my eyes with wonder at myself whenever I find my own self slow to pray!

Why, if your children want anything of you, they are not slow to speak. They need not be exhorted to ask for this or that; they speak at once. And here is the soul-enriching exercise of prayer. Is it not strange that you and I should be slack in it? Did you ever stand in a market and see the people coming in from the country with their goods? How diligent they are in their business; how eager to take home as much money as they can! How their eyes glitter; how sharp they are!

But here is heaven's market; God's wares are given away to them that will ask for them. Yet we seem indifferent, as though we did not care to be enriched; we even leave the mercy-seat of God unvisited! Oh! young people, do understand the value of prayer; and you aged people, do continue in prayer and supplication; for if we are to win this battle of our life, it can only be by taking in our charge-bill to the great Paymaster, and asking him to discharge the charges of this war.

Consider, too, the necessity of holiness. If, in my life's warfare, I am entirely dependent upon God, let me not grieve him. Let me seek so to walk with him that I may expect to have him with me. Oh! let our consecration be unreserved and complete. And in all these we must prove the power of faith. If we have never begun to trust in Jesus, let us begin now. Oh! may the Eternal Spirit breathe faith into our souls. The beginning of true spiritual life is here--trusting what Christ has wrought for us, relying upon his sufferings on our behalf.

The continuation of spiritual life is here--trusting still in what Christ has done and is doing. The consummation of spiritual life on earth is still the same--trusting still, trusting ever; always repairing to Christ for the supply of all our needs; going to him with our blots to have them removed, with our failings to have them forgiven, with our wants and requirements to have them provided for, with our good works and our prayers to have them rendered acceptable, and with ourselves that we may still be preserved in him.

Sharpen your swords, soldiers of the cross, and be ready for the fray, but as ye march to the battle let it be with heads bowed down in adoration before him, who alone can cover your heads in the day of battle; and when you lift up those heads in the front of the foe, let this be your song, "The Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; the Lord has become my salvation!" And when the fight waxes hot, if your head grow weary, think of "him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself," and still fight on until you win the day, and then as the fight draws to a close, and your sun is going down, and you can count your scars, and are ready to enter into your rest, be this your prayer "I have gone astray like a lost sheep, but seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments."

And be this your last word on earth, "Into thy hand I commit my spirit, for thou best redeemed me, O Lord God of my salvation"; so shall this be your eternal song in heaven above, "Unto him that hath loved us,

and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

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