

The Way From Darkness to True Illumination

by Jacob Boehme

Jacob Boehme's sermon illustrates the transformative journey of a soul from darkness to illumination through repentance and the grace of Christ.

Scripture: Psalm 51:10, Romans 12:2, Galatians 2:20, James 4:7, 1 Peter 2:9

Topics: "Spiritual Transformation", "Repentance And Faith"

Description

Jacob Behmen (Jakob Boehme) preaches about the journey of a soul from darkness to true illumination, illustrating the encounter between a soul hungry for the love of Jesus Christ and a soul enlightened, showing the path to seek comfort in Christ and warning against the thorny ways of the world that lead to destruction. Through a discourse between a distressed soul and an enlightened soul, the process of forsaking one's own will, repentance, and surrendering to God's mercy is described, leading to the transformation of the soul's image from a beastly nature to the divine image of God. The sermon emphasizes the importance of perseverance, faith, and prayer in the face of trials and temptations, ultimately leading to the soul's restoration and reconciliation with God.

Transcript

The WAY from DARKNESS

to TRUE ILLUMINATION

by Jacob Behmen (Jakob Boehme) 1575-1624,

The Teutonic Theosopher

A

DISCOURSE

BETWEEN

A SOUL HUNGRY AND THIRSTY

AFTER

THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE, THE SWEET LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

AND

A SOUL ENLIGHTENED

SHOWING

Which Way one Soul should seek after and comfort another, and bring it by Means of its Knowledge into the Paths of Christ's Pilgrimage, and faithfully warn it of the thorny Way of the World, which leadeth the fallen Soul that naturally walketh therein, into the Abyss or Pit of Hell.

Composed by a Soul that loveth all

who are Children of JESUS CHRIST, under the Cross.

Brought forth in the 1600's by a humble shoemaker; translated into English over 100 years later; suppressed and hidden away until recently in theological archives around the world... a worthy personal study not just for academics but for all those who are spiritually grounded in the WORD, who are learning to hear the Lord, and who hunger for more.

These writings from out of the Past are in the Public Domain and may be freely shared, photocopied, reproduced, faxed or transmitted in any way by any means. The transcription of this document was done as a labor of love - one keystroke at a time by a modern seeker on the WAY to Truth...the HTML rendering offers a glimpse of the emphases used in the typesetting of the early English printing.

THE WAY FROM DARKNESS

TO TRUE ILLUMINATION

There was a poor Soul that had wandered out of Paradise and come into the Kingdom of this World; where the Devil met with it, and said to it, "Whither dost thou go, thou Soul that art half blind?"

The Soul said,

I would see and speculate into the Creatures of the World, which the Creator hath made.

The Devil said,

How wilt thou see and speculate into them, when thou canst not know their Essence and Property? Thou wilt look upon their Outside only, as upon a graven Image, and canst not know them throughly.

The Soul said,

How may I come to know their Essence and Property?

The Devil said,

Thine Eyes would be opened to see them throughly, if thou didst but eat of that from whence the Creatures themselves are come to be good and evil. Thou wouldst then be as God Himself is, and know

what the Creature is.

The Soul said,

I am now a noble and holy Creature; but if I should do so, the Creator hath said, that I should die.

The Devil said,

No, thou shouldst not die at all; but thy eyes would be opened, and thou shouldst be as God Himself is, and be Master of Good and Evil. Also, thou shouldst be mighty, powerful, and very great, as I am; all the Subtlety that is in the Creatures would be made known to thee.

The Soul said,

If I had the Knowledge of Nature and of the Creatures, I would then rule the whole World as I pleased.

The Devil said,

The whole Ground of that Knowledge lieth in thee. Do but turn thy Will and Desire from God or Goodness into Nature and the Creatures, and then there will arise in thee a Lust to taste; and so thou mayest eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and by that means come to know all Things.

The Soul said,

Well then, I will eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, that I may rule all Things by my own Power; and be of myself a Lord on Earth, and do what I will, as God Himself doeth.

The Devil said,

I am the Prince of this World; and if thou wouldst rule on Earth, thou must turn thy Lust towards my Image, or desire to be like me, that thou mayest get the Cunning, Wit, Reason, and Subtlety, that my Image hath.

Thus did the Devil present to the Soul the Vulcan in the Mercury (the Power that is in the fiery Root of the Creature), that is the fiery Wheel of Essence or Substance, in the Form of a Serpent. Upon which,

The Soul said,

Behold, this is the Power which can do all Things. -- What must I do to get it?

The Devil said,

Thou thyself art also such a fiery Mercury. If thou dost break thy Will off from God, and bring it into this Power and Skill, then thy hidden Ground will be manifested in thee, and thou mayest work in the same Manner. But thou must eat of that Fruit, wherein each of the four Elements in itself ruleth over the other, and is in Strife; the Heat striving against the Cold, and the Cold against the Heat; and so all the Properties of Nature work feelingly. And then thou wilt instantly be as the fiery Wheel is, and so bring all Things into thine own Power, and possess them as thine own.

The Soul did so, and what happened thereupon.

Now when the Soul broke its Will thus off from God, and brought it into the Mercury, or the fiery Will (which is the Root of Life and Power), there presently arose in it a Lust to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good

and Evil; and the Soul did eat thereof. Which as soon as it had done so, Vulcan (or the artificer in the fire) instantly kindled the fiery Wheel of its substance, and thereupon all the Properties of Nature awoke in the Soul and each began to exercise its own Lust and Desire.

First arose the Lust of Pride; a Desire to be great, mighty and powerful; to bring all Things under Subjection to it, and so to be Lord itself without Control; despising all Humility and Equality, as esteeming itself the only prudent, witty and cunning One, and accounting every Thing Folly that is not according to its own Humor and Liking.

Secondly arose the Lust of Covetousness; a Desire of Getting, which would draw all Things to itself, into its own Possession. For when the Lust of Pride had turned away the Will from God, then the Life of the Soul would not trust God any further, but would now begin to take Care for itself; and therefore brought its Desire into the Creatures, viz. into the Earth, Metals, Trees, and other Creatures. Thus the kindled fiery Life became hungry and covetous, when it had broken itself off from the Unity, Love and Meekness of God, and attracted to itself the four Elements and their Essence, and brought itself into the Condition of the Beasts; and so the Life became dark, empty and wrathful; and the heavenly Virtues and Colors went out, like a Candle extinguished.

Thirdly, there awoke in this fiery Life the stinging thorny Lust of Envy; a hellish Poison, a Property which all Devils have, and a Torment which makes the Life a mere Enmity to God, and to all Creatures. Which Envy raged furiously in the Desire of Covetousness, as a venomous Sting doth in the Body. Envy cannot endure, but hateth and would hurt or destroy that which Covetousness cannot draw to itself, by which hellish Passion the noble Love of the Soul is smothered.

Fourthly, there awoke in this fiery Life a Torment like Fire, viz. Anger; which would murder and remove out of the Way all who would not be subject to Pride. Thus the Ground and Foundation of Hell, which is called the Anger of God, was wholly manifested in this Soul. Whereby it lost the fair Paradise of God and the Kingdom of Heaven, and became such a Worm as the fiery Serpent was, which the Devil had presented to it in his own Image and Likeness. And so the Soul began to rule on Earth in a bestial Manner, and did all Things according to the Will of the Devil; living in mere Pride, Covetousness, Envy, and Anger, having no longer any true Love towards God. But there arose in the Stead thereof an evil bestial Love of filthy Lechery, Wantonness, and Vanity, and there was no Purity left in the Heart; for the Soul had forsaken Paradise, and taken the Earth into its Possession. Its Mind was wholly bent upon cunning Knowledge, Subtlety, and getting together a Multitude of earthly Things. No Righteousness nor Virtue remained in it at all; but whatsoever Evil and Wrong it committed, it covered all cunningly and subtly under the Cloak of its Power and Authority by Law, and called it by the Name of Right and Justice, and accounted it good.

The Devil came to the Soul.

Upon this the Devil drew near to the Soul, and brought it on from one Vice to another; for he had taken it captive in his Essence, and set Joy and Pleasure before it therein, saying thus to it: Behold, now thou art powerful, mighty and noble; endeavour to be greater, richer, and more powerful still. Display thy Knowledge, Wit, and Subtlety, that every one may fear thee, and stand in Awe of thee, and that thou mayest be respected, and get a great Name in the World.

The Soul did so.

The Soul did as the Devil counselled it, and yet knew not that its Counsellor was the Devil; but thought it was guided by its own Knowledge, Wit, and Understanding, and that it was doing very well and right all the While.

Jesus Christ met with the Soul.

The Soul going on in this Course of Life, our dear and loving Lord Jesus Christ, Who was come into this World with the Love and Wrath of God, to destroy the Works of the Devil, and to execute Judgement upon all ungodly Deeds, on a Time met with it, and spoke by a strong Power, viz. by His Passion and Death, into it and destroyed the Works of the Devil in it, and discovered to it the Way to His Grace, and shone upon it with His Mercy, calling it to return and repent; and promising that He would then deliver it from that monstrous deformed Shape or Image which it had gotten, and bring it into Paradise again.

How Christ wrought in the Soul

Now when the Spark of the Love of God, or the Divine Light, was accordingly manifested in the Soul, it presently saw itself with its Will and Works to be in Hell, in the Wrath of God, and found that it was a misshapen ugly Monster in the Divine Presence and the Kingdom of Heaven; at which it was so afraid, that it fell into the greatest Anguish possible, for the Judgement of God was manifested in it.

What Christ said.

Upon this the Lord Christ spoke into it with the Voice of His Grace, and said, "Repent and forsake Vanity, and thou shalt attain My Grace."

What the Soul said.

Then the Soul in its ugly misshapen Image, with the defiled Coat of Vanity, went before God, and entreated for Grace and the Pardon of its Sins, and came to be strongly persuaded in itself, that the Satisfaction and Atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ did belong to it. But the evil Properties of the Serpent, formed in the astral Spirit or Reason of the outward Man, would not suffer the Will of the Soul to come before God, but brought their Lusts and Inclinations thereinto. For those evil Properties would not die to their own Lusts, nor leave the World, for they were come out of the World, and therefore they feared the Reproach of it, in case they should have to forsake their worldly Honor and Glory.

But the poor Soul turned its Countenance towards God, and desired Grace from Him, even that He should bestow His Love upon it.

The Devil came to it again.

But when the Devil saw that the Soul thus prayed to God, and would enter into Repentance, he drew near to it, and thrust the Inclinations of the earthly Properties into its Prayers, and disturbed its good Thoughts and Desires which pressed forward towards God, and drew its thoughts back again to earthly Things that they might have no Access to Him.

The Soul sighed.

The central Will of the Soul indeed sighed after God, but the Thoughts arising in the Mind, that it should penetrate into Him, were distracted, scattered, and destroyed, so that they could not reach the Power of God. At which the poor Soul was still more afraid, and began to pray more earnestly. But the Devil with his

Desire took hold of the Mercurial kindled fiery Wheel of Life, and awakened the evil Properties, so that evil or false Inclinations arose in the Soul, and went into that Thing wherein they had taken most Pleasure and Delight before.

The poor Soul would very fain go forward to God with its Will, and therefore used all its Endeavours; but its Thoughts continually fled away from God into earthly Things, and could not go to Him.

Upon this the Soul sighed and bewailed itself to God; but it seemed as if it were quite forsaken by Him, and cast out from His Presence. It could not get so much as one Look of Grace, but was in mere Anguish, Fear and Terror, and dreaded every Moment that the Wrath and severe Judgement of God would be manifested in it, and that the Devil would take hold of it and have it. And thereupon the Soul fell into such great Heaviness and Sorrow, that it became weary of all the temporal Things, which before had been its chief Joy and Happiness.

The earthly natural Will indeed desired those Things still, but the Soul would willingly leave them altogether, and desired to die to all temporal Lust and Joy whatsoever, and longed only after its first Native Country, from whence it originally came. But the Soul found itself to be far from thence, in great Distress and Want, and knew not what to do, yet resolved to enter into itself, and try to pray more earnestly.

The Devil's Opposition.

But the Devil opposed it, and withheld it so that it could not bring itself into any greater Fervency of Repentance.

He awakened the old earthly Lusts in its Heart, that they might still keep their evil Nature and false Right therein, and set them at Variance with the new-born Will and Desire of the Soul. For they would not die to their own Will and Light, but would still maintain their temporal Pleasures, and so kept the poor Soul captive in their evil Desires, that it could not stir, though it sighed and longed even more after the Grace of God. For whensoever it prayed, or offered to press forward towards God, then the Lusts of the Flesh swallowed up the Rays and Ejaculations that went forth from it, and brought them away from God into earthly Thoughts, that it might not partake of Divine Strength. Which caused the poor Soul to think itself forsaken of God, not knowing that He was so near it and did thus attract it.

Also the Devil got access to it, and entered into the fiery Mercury, or fiery Wheel of its Life, and mingled his Desires with the earthly Lusts of the Flesh, and tempted the poor Soul; saying to it in the earthly Thoughts, "Why dost thou pray? Dost thou think that God knoweth thee or regardeth thee: Consider but what Thoughts thou hast in His Presence; are they not altogether evil? Thou hast no Faith or Belief in God at all; how then should He hear thee? He heareth thee not, leave off; why wilt thou needlessly torment and vex thyself? Thou has Time enough to repent at Leisure. Wilt thou be mad? Do but look upon the World, I pray thee, a little; doth it not live in Jollity and Mirth? Yet it will be saved well enough for that. Hath not Christ paid the Ransom and satisfied all Men? Thou needest only persuade and comfort thyself that it is done for thee, and then thou shalt be saved. Thou canst not possibly in this World come to any Feeling of God; therefore leave off, and take care for thy Body, and look after temporal Glory. What dost thou suppose will become of thee, if thou turn to be so stupid and melancholy? Thou wilt be the Scorn of everybody, and they will laugh at thy Folly; and so thou wilt spend thy Days in mere Sorrow and Heaviness, which is pleasing neither to God nor Nature. I pray thee, look upon the Beauty of the World; for God hath created and placed thee in it, to be a Lord over all Creatures, and to rule them. Gather a Store of temporal Goods beforehand, that thou mayest not be beholden to the World, or stand in Need hereafter.

And when Old Age cometh, or when thou growest near thy End, then there will be Time enough to prepare thyself for Repentance. God will save thee, and receive thee into the heavenly Mansions then. There is no need of such ado in vexing, bewailing, and stirring up thyself, as thou makest."

The Condition of the Soul.

In these and the like Thoughts the Soul was ensnared by the Devil, and brought into the Lusts of the Flesh, and earthly Desires; and so was bound as if it were with Fetters and strong Chains, so that it did not know what to do. It looked back a little into the World and the Pleasures thereof, but still felt in itself a Hunger after the Divine Grace, and would always rather enter into Repentance, and Favor with God. For the Hand of God had touched and bruised the Soul, and therefore it could nowhere find Rest; but always sighed within itself in Sorrow for the Sins it had committed, and longed to be rid of them. Yet it could not get true Repentance, or even the Knowledge of Sin, though it had a mighty Hunger and longing Desire after such penitential Sorrow.

The Soul being thus heavy and sad, and finding no Remedy or Rest, began to cast about where it might find a fit Place to perform true Repentance in, where it might be free from Business, Hinderances and Cares of the World; and also by what Means it might win the Favor of God. And at length it decided to take itself to some private solitary Place, and give up all worldly Employments and temporal Things; and hoped, that by being bountiful and pitiful to the Poor, it should obtain God's Mercy. Thus did it devise all Kinds of Ways to get Rest, and gain the Love, Favor, and Grace of God again. But all that it tried would not do; for its worldly Business still followed it in the Lusts of the Flesh, and it was ensnared in the Net of the Devil now, as well as before, and could not attain Rest. And though for a little while it was somewhat cheered with earthly Things, yet presently it fell to be as sad and heavy again, as it was before. The Truth was, it felt the awakened Wrath of God in itself, but knew not how that came to pass nor what ailed it. For many Times great Trouble and Terror fell upon it, which made it comfortless, sick, and faint with Fear; so mightily did the first bruising Ray or Influence of the stirring Grace work upon it. And yet it knew not that Christ was in the Wrath and severe Justice of God, and fought therein with Satan, that Spirit of Error, which was incorporated in the Soul and its Body; nor it understood not that the Hunger and Desire to turn and repent came from Christ Himself, by which it was drawn in this Manner; neither did it know what hindered it from Attaining to Divine Feeling. It knew not that itSELF was a Monster, and did bear the Image of the Serpent, in which the Devil had such Power and Access to it, and had confounded all its good Desires, Thoughts, and Motions, and brought them away from God and Goodness; concerning which Christ Himself had said, "The Devil snatcheth the Word out of their Hearts, lest they should believe and be saved."

An enlightened and regenerate Soul met the distressed Soul.

By the Providence of God, an enlightened and regenerate Soul met this poor afflicted and distressed Soul, and said, "What ailest thou, thou distressed Soul, that thou art so restless and troubled?"

The distressed Soul answered,

The Creator hath hid His Countenance from me, so that I cannot come to His Rest; therefore I am thus troubled, and know not what I shall do to get His Loving-kindness again. For I feel as though great Cliffs and Rocks lie in my Way to His grace, so that I cannot come to Him. Though I sigh and long after Him ever so much, yet I am kept back so that I cannot partake of His Power, Virtue and Strength.

The enlightened Soul said,

Thou bearest the monstrous Shape of the Devil, and art clothed therewith; in which, being his own Property or Principle, he hath Access or Power of Entrance into thee, and thereby keepeth thy Will from penetrating into God. For if thy Will might penetrate into God, it would be anointed with the highest Power and Strength of God, in the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that Unction would break in Pieces the Monster which thou carriest about within thee; and thy first Image of Paradise would revive in the Center; which would destroy the Devil's Power therein, and thou wouldst become as an Angel again. And because the Devil envieth thee this Happiness, he holdeth thee captive in his Desire in the Lusts of the Flesh; from which if thou art not delivered, thou wilt be separated from God, and canst never enter into our Society.

The distressed Soul terrified.

At this Speech the poor distressed Soul was so terrified and amazed, that it could not speak one Word more. When it found that it stood in the Form and Condition of the Serpent, which separated it from God; and that the Devil was so near to it in that Condition, who injected evil Thoughts into the Will of the Soul, and had so much Power over it thereby, that it was near Damnation, and sticking fast in the Abyss or bottomless Pit of Hell, in the Anger of God; it would have even given up any hope for the Divine Mercy; except for the Power, Virtue and Strength of the first Stirring of the Grace of God, which had before bruised the Soul, - this upheld and preserved it from total Despair. But still it wrestled in itself between Hope and Doubt; whatsoever Hope built up was thrown down again by Doubt. And thus was it agitated with such continual Disquiet, that at last the World and all the Glory thereof became loathsome to it, neither would it enjoy worldly Pleasures any more; and yet for all this, it could not come to Rest.

The enlightened Soul came again, and spoke to the troubled Soul.

On a Time the enlightened Soul came again to this Soul, and finding it still in so great Trouble, Anguish and Grief of Mind, said to it: What doest thou? Wilt thou destroy thyself in thy Anguish and Sorrow? Why dost thou torment thyself in thy OWN Power and Will, who art but a Worm, seeing thy Torment increaseth thereby more and more? Yea, if thou shouldst sink thyself down to the Bottom of the Sea, or couldst fly to the uttermost Coasts of the Morning, or raise thyself above the Stars, yet thou wouldst not be released. For the more thou grieveest, tormentest, and troublest thyself, the more painful thy Nature will be; and yet thou wilt not be able to come to any Rest. For thy Power is quite lost; and as a dry Stick burnt to a Coal cannot grow green and spring afresh by its OWN Power, nor get Sap to flourish again with other Trees and Plants, so neither canst thou reach the Place of God by thy OWN Power and Strength, and transform thyself into that Angelical Image which thou hadst at first. For in respect to God thou art withered and dry, like a dead Plant that hath lost its Sap and Strength, and so art become a dry tormenting Hunger. Thy Properties are like Heat and Cold, which continually strive one against the other, and can never unite.

The distressed Soul said,

What then shall I do to bud forth again, and recover the first Life, wherein I was at Rest before I became an Image?

The enlightened Soul said,

Thou shouldst do Nothing at all but forsake thy OWN Will, viz. that which thou callest I, or thy SELF. By which Means all thy evil Properties will grow weak, faint, and ready to die; and then thou wilt sink down again into that One Thing, from which thou art originally sprung. For now thou liest captive in the Creatures; but if thy Will forsaketh them, the Creatures, with their evil Inclinations, will die in thee, which at present stay and hinder thee so that thou canst not come to God. But if thou takest this Course, thy God will meet thee with His infinite Love, which He hath manifested in Christ Jesus in the Humanity, or Human Nature. And that will impart Sap, Life, and Vigour to thee; whereby thou mayest bud, spring, and flourish again, and rejoice in the Living God, as a Branch growing on His True Vine. And so thou wilt at length recover the Image of God, and be delivered from the Image or Condition of the Serpent: Thenshalt thou come to be my Brother, and have Fellowship with the Angels.

The poor Soul said,

How can I forsake my Will, so that the Creatures which lodge therein may die, seeing I must be in the World, and also have need of it as long as I live?

The enlightened Soul said,

Now thou hast worldly Power and Riches, which thou possesses as thy OWN, to do what thou wilt with, and regardest not how thou gettest or usest the same; employing them in the Service and Indulgence of thy OWN carnal and vain Desires. Nay, though thou seest the poor and needy Wretch, who wanteth thy Help, and is thy Brother, yet thou helpest him not, but layest heavy Burdens upon him, by requiring more of him than his Abilities will bear, or his Necessities afford; and oppressest him, by forcing him to spend his Labor and Sweat for thee, and for the Gratification of thy voluptuous Will. Thou art moreover proud, and insultest over him, and behavest roughly and sternly to him, exalting thyself above him, and making small Account of him in Respect to thyself. Then that poor oppressed Brother of thine cometh, and complaineth with Sighs towards God, that he cannot reap the Benefit of his Labor and Pains, but is forced by thee to live in Misery.

By which Sighings and Groanings of his, he raiseth up the Wrath of God in thee; which maketh thy Flame and Unquietness still the greater. These are the Creatures which thou art in Love with, and hast broken thyself off from God for their Sakes, and brought thy Love into them, or them into thy Love, so that they live therein. Thou nourishest and keepest them by continually receiving them into thy Desire, for they live in and by thy receiving them into thy Mind; because thou thereby bringest the Lust of thy Life into them. They are but unclean, filthy, and evil Births, and Issues of the bestial Nature, which yet, by thy receiving them in thy Lust or Desire, have gotten an Image, and formed themselves in thee. And that Image is a Beast with four Heads; First, Pride. Secondly, Covetousness. Thirdly, Envy. Fourthly, Anger. And in these four Properties the Foundation of Hell consisteth, which thou carriest in thee and about thee. It is imprinted and engraven in thee, and thou art wholly taken Captive thereby. For these Properties live in thy natural Life; and thereby thou art severed or cut off from God, neither canst thou ever come to Him, unless thou so forsake these evil Creatures that they may die in thee.

But since thou desirest me to tell thee how to forsake thy own perverse creaturely Will so that the Creatures in thee might die, and how yet thou mightest live along with them in the World, I must assure thee that there is but one Way to do it, which is narrow and straight, and will be very hard and irksome to thee at the Beginning, but afterwards thou wilt walk in it cheerfully.

Thou must seriously consider, that in the Course of this worldly Life thou walkest in the Anger of God and in the Foundation of Hell; and that this is not thy true Native Country; but that a True Christian should, and must live in Christ, and in his Walking truly follow Him; and that he cannot be a True Christian, unless the Spirit and Power of Christ so live in him, that he becometh wholly Subject to It. Now seeing the Kingdom of Christ is not of this World, but in Heaven, therefore thou must always be in a continual Ascension towards Heaven, if thou wilt follow Christ; though thy Body must dwell among the Creatures and use them.

The narrow Way to which perpetual Ascension into Heaven and Imitation of Christ is this: Thou must despair of all thy OWN Power and Strength, for in and by thy OWN Power thou canst not reach the Gates of God; and firmly purpose and resolve wholly to give thyself up to the Mercy of God, and to sink down with thy whole Mind and Reason into the Passion and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ, always desiring to persevere in the same, and to die from all thy Creatures therein. Also thou must resolve to watch and guard thy Mind, Thoughts and Inclinations that they admit no Evil into them, neither must thou suffer thyself to be held fast by temporal Honor or Profit. Thou must resolve likewise to put away from thee all Unrighteousness, and whatsoever else may hinder the Freedom of thy Motion and Progress. Thy Will must be wholly pure, and fixed in a firm Resolution never to return to its old Idols any more, but that thou wilt leave them the very Instant they are known to thee, and separate thy Mind from them, and enter into the sincere Way of Truth and Righteousness, according to the plain and full Doctrine of Christ. And as thou dost thus purpose to forsake the Enemies of thine own inward Nature, so also must thou forgive all thy outward Enemies, and resolve to meet them with thy Love; so that there may be left no Creature, Person, or Thing at all able to take hold of thy Will and captivate it; but that it may be sincere, and purged from all Creatures.

Nay further; if it should be required, thou must be willing and ready to forsake all thy temporal Honor and Profit for Christ's sake, and regard nothing that is Earthly so as to set thy Heart and Affections upon it; but esteem thyself in whatsoever State, Degree, and Condition thou art, as to worldly Rank or Riches, to be but a Servant of God and of thy Fellow-Christians; or as a Steward in the Office wherein thy Lord hath placed thee. All Arrogance and SELF-Exaltation must be humbled, brought low, and so annihilated that nothing of thine OWN or of any other Creature may stay in thy Will to bring thy Thoughts or Imagination to be set upon it.

Thou must also firmly impress it on thy Mind, that thou shalt certainly partake of the promised Grace in the Merit of Jesus Christ, viz. of His outflowing Love, which indeed is already in thee, and which will deliver thee from thy Creatures, and enlighten thy Will, and kindle it with the Flame of Love, whereby thou shalt have Victory over the Devil. Not as if thou couldst will or do anything in thine OWN Strength, but only enter into the Suffering and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and take them to thyself, and with them assault and break in Pieces the Kingdom of the Devil in thee, and mortify thy Creatures. Thou must resolve to enter into this Way this very Hour, and never to depart from it, but willingly to submit thyself to God in all thy Endeavours and Doings, that He may do with thee what He pleaseth.

When thy Will is thus prepared and resolved, it hath then broken through its own Creatures, and is sincere in the Presence of God, and clothed with the merits of Jesus Christ. It may then freely go to the Father with the Prodigal Son, and fall down in His Presence and pour forth its Prayers; and putting forth all its Strength in this Divine Work, confess its Sins and Disobedience; and how far it hath departed from God. This must be done not with bare Words, but with all its Strength, which indeed amounteth only to a strong Purpose and Resolution; for the Soul of itself hath no Strength or Power to effect any good Work.

Now when thou art thus ready, and that thy Heavenly Father shall see thy coming and returning to Him in such Repentance and Humility, He will inwardly speak to thee, and say in thee, "Behold this is My Son which I had lost; he was dead and is alive again." And He will come and meet thee in thy Mind with the Grace and Love of Jesus Christ, and embrace thee with the Beams of His Love, and kiss thee with His Spirit and Strength; and then thou shalt receive Grace to pour out thy Confession before Him, and to pray powerfully. This indeed is the right Place where thou must wrestle in the Light of His Countenance. And if thou standest resolutely here, and shrinkest not back, thou shalt see or feel great Wonders. For thou shalt find Christ in thee assaulting Hell, and crushing thy Beasts in Pieces, and that a great Tumult and Misery will arise in thee; also thy secret undiscovered Sins will then first awake, and labor to separate thee from God, and to keep thee back. Thus shalt thou truly find and feel how Death and Life fight one against the other, and shalt understand by what passeth within thyself, what Heaven and Hell are. At which Time be not moved, but stand firm and shrink not; for at length all thy Creatures will grow faint, weak, and ready to die; and then thy Will shall wax stronger, and be able to subdue and keep down the evil Inclinations. So shall thy Will and Mind ascend into Heaven every day, and thy Creatures gradually die away. Thou wilt get a Mind wholly new, and begin to be a new Creature, and getting rid of the Bestial deformity, recover the Divine Image. Thus shalt thou be delivered from thy present Anguish, and return to thy Original Rest.

The poor Soul's Practice.

Then the poor Soul began to practice this Course with such Earnestness, that it conceived it should get the Victory presently; but it found that the Gates of Heaven were shut against it in its own Strength and Power and it was as if it were rejected and forsaken by God, and received not so much as one Look or Glimpse of Grace from Him. Upon which it said to itself, "Surely thou hast not sincerely submitted thyself to God. Desire Nothing at all of Him, but only submit thyself to His Judgement and Condemnation, that He may kill thy evil Inclinations. Sink down into Him beyond the Limits of Nature and Creature, and submit thyself to Him, that He may do with thee what He will, for thou art not worthy to speak to Him."

Accordingly the Soul took a Resolution to sink down, and to forsake its own Will; and when it had done so, there fell upon it presently the greatest Repentance that could be for the Sins it had committed; and it bewailed bitterly its ugly Shape, and was truly and deeply sorry that the evil Creatures did dwell within it. And because of its Sorrow it could not speak one more Word in the Presence of God, but began in its Repentance to realize the bitter Passion and Death of Jesus Christ, viz. what great Anguish and Torment He had suffered for its Sake, in order to deliver it out of its Anguish, and change it into the Image of God. In which Consideration it wholly sunk down, and did Nothing but complain of its Ignorance and Negligence, and that it had not been thankful to its Redeemer, nor once considered the great Love He had shown to it, but had idly spent its Time, and not at all regarded how it might come to partake of His purchased and proffered Grace; but instead thereof had formed in itself the Images and Figures of earthly Things, with the vain Lusts and Pleasures of the World. Whereby it had gotten such bestial Inclinations, that now it must lie captive in great Misery, and for very shame dared not lift up its Eyes to God, Who hid the Light of His Countenance from it, and would not so much as look upon it. And as it was thus sighing and crying, it was drawn into the Abyss or Pit of Horror, and laid itself as it were at the Gates of Hell, there to perish.

Upon which the poor troubled Soul was as it were bereft of Sense, and wholly forsaken, so that it in a Manner forgot all its Doings, and would willingly yield itself to Death, and cease to be a Creature. Accordingly it did yield itself to Death, and desired Nothing else but to die and perish in the Death of its Redeemer, Jesus Christ, Who had suffered such Torments and Death for its Sake. And in this Perishing it

began to sigh and pray in itself very inwardly to the Divine Goodness, and to sink down into the mere Mercy of God.

Upon this there suddenly appeared unto it the amiable Countenance of the Love of God, which penetrated through it as a great Light, and made it exceedingly joyful. It then began to pray aright, and to thank the Most High for such Grace, and to rejoice abundantly, that it was delivered from the Death and Anguish of Hell. Now it tasted of the Sweetness of God, and of His promised Truth; and now all the evil Spirits which had harassed it before, and kept it back from the Grace, Love, and inward Presence of God, were forced to depart from it. The "Wedding of the Lamb" was now kept and solemnized, that is, the Noble Sophia [or the Eternal Wisdom] espoused or betrothed herself to the Soul; and the Seal-Ring of Christ's Victory was impressed into its Essence, and it was received to be a Child and Heir of God again.

When this was done, the Soul became very joyful, and began to work in this new Power, and to celebrate with Praise the Wonders of God, and thought thenceforth to walk continually in the same Light, Strength, and Joy. But it was soon assaulted; from without, by the Shame and Reproach of the World, and from within, by great Temptation, so that it began to doubt whether its Ground was truly from God, and whether it had really partaken of His Grace.

For the Accuser, Satan, went to it, and would fain lead it out of this Course, and make it doubtful whether it was the true Way; whispering thus to it inwardly: "This happy Change in thy Spirit is not from God, but only from thine own Imagination." Also the Divine Light retired in the Soul, and shone but in the inward Ground, as Fire raked up in Embers, so that Reason was perplexed, and thought itself forsaken, and the Soul knew not what had happened to itself, nor whether it had really and truly tasted of the heavenly Gift or not.

Yet it could not leave off struggling; for the burning Fire of Love was sown in it, which had raised in it a vehement and continual Hunger and Thirst after Divine Sweetness. So at length it began to pray aright, and to humble itself in the Presence of God, and to examine and try its evil Inclinations and Thoughts and to put them away. By which means the Will of its Reason was broken, and the evil Inclinations inherent in it were killed and extirpated more and more. This Process was very severe and painful to the Nature of the Body, for it made it faint and weak, as if it had been very sick; and yet it was no natural Sickness that it had, but only the Melancholy of its earthly Nature which was feeling and lamenting the Destruction of its evil Lusts.

Now when the earthly Reason found itself thus forsaken, and the poor Soul saw that it was despised outwardly, and derided by the World, because it would no longer walk in the Way of Wickedness and Vanity; and also that it was inwardly assaulted by the Accuser, Satan, who mocked it, and continually set before it the Beauty, Riches, and Glory of the World, and called it a Fool for not embracing them; it began to think and say thus within itself; "O eternal God! What shall I now do to come to Rest?"

The enlightened Soul met it again, and spoke to it.

While it was in this Consideration, the enlightened Soul met with it again, and said, "What ailest thou, my Brother, that thou art so heavy and sad?"

The distressed Soul said,

I have followed thy Counsel, and thereby attained a Ray, or Emanation of the Divine Sweetness, but it is gone from me again. and I am now deserted. Moreover I have outwardly very great Trials and Afflictions in

the World; for all my good Friends forsake and scorn me; and am also inwardly assaulted with Anguish and Doubt, and know not what to do.

The enlightened Soul said,

Now I like thee very well; for now our beloved Lord Jesus Christ is performing that same Pilgrimage or Process on Earth with thee and in thee, which He did Himself when He was in this World, Who was continually reviled, despised, and evil spoken of and had nothing of His own in it; and now thou bearest His Mark or Badge. But do not wonder at it, or think it strange; for it must be so, in order that thou mayest be tried, refined, and purified. In this Anguish and Distress thou wilt necessarily hunger and cry after Deliverance; and by such Hunger and Prayer thou wilt attract Grace to thee both from within and from without.

For thou must grow from above and from beneath to be the Image of God again. Just as a young Plant is agitated by the Wind, and must stand its Ground in Heat and Cold, drawing Strength and Virtue to it from above and from beneath by that Agitation, and must endure many a Tempest, and undergo much Danger before it can come to be a Tree, and bring forth Fruit. For through that Agitation the Virtue of the Sun moveth in the Plant, whereby its wild Properties come to be penetrated and tinctured with the Solar Virtue, and grow thereby.

And this is the Time wherein thou must play the Part of a valiant Soldier in the Spirit of Christ, and co-operate thyself Therewith. For now the Eternal Father by His fiery Power begetteth His Son in thee, who changeth the Fire of the Father, namely, the first Principle, or wrathful Property of the Soul, into the Flame of Love, so that out of Fire and Light (viz. Wrath and Love) there cometh to be ONE Essence, Being, or Substance, which is the true Temple of God. And now thou shalt bud forth out of the Vine Christ, in the Vineyard of God, and bring forth Fruit in thy Life, and by assisting and instructing others, show forth thy Love in Abundance, as a good Tree. For Paradise must thus spring up again in thee, through the Wrath of God, and Hell be changed into Heaven in thee.

Therefore be not dismayed at the Temptations of the Devil, who seeketh and striveth for the Kingdom which he once had in thee; but having now lost it, he must be confounded, and depart from thee. And he covereth thee outwardly with the Shame and Reproach of the World, that his own Shame may not be known, and that thou mayest be hidden to the World.

For with thy new Birth or regenerated Nature, thou art in the Divine Harmony in Heaven. Be patient, therefore, and wait upon the Lord; and whatsoever shall befall thee, take it all from His Hands, as intended by Him for thy highest Good. And so the enlightened Soul departed from it.

The distressed Soul's Course.

The distressed soul began its Course now under the patient Suffering of Christ, and depending solely upon the Strength and Power of God in it, entered into Hope.

Thenceforth it grew stronger every Day, and its evil Inclinations died more and more in it. So that it arrived at length to a High State or Degree of Grace; and the Gates of the Divine Revelation and the Kingdom of Heaven, were opened to, and manifested in it.

And thus the Soul through Repentance, Faith, and Prayer, returned to its Original and True Rest, and became a Right and Beloved Child of God again; to which may He of His Infinite Mercy help us all. Amen.

"But ye are a chosen Generation, a royal Priesthood, a holy Nation, a peculiar People; that ye should show forth the Praises of Him Who hath called you out of Darkness into His marvellous Light."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jacob-boehme/the-way-from-darkness-to-true-illumination/>

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