

Dearly Beloved

by Thomas Watson

A gospel-minister's heart should be full of love, compassion, and a desire to do good, as this is the key to a successful ministry.

Scripture: Psalm 51:6, Ecclesiastes 9:10, Matthew 10:16, Acts 17:11, Romans 12:12, 1 Corinthians 4:15, Galatians 6:1, Colossians 3:5, 1 Thessalonians 2:8, 1 Peter 5:10

Topics: "Pastoral Ministry", "Christian Living"

Description

Thomas Watson preaches passionately about the ardent affections of a holy gospel-minister towards his people, emphasizing the importance of laboring with love and kindness. He highlights the need for ministers to have both their heads filled with labor and their hearts filled with love, mirroring the affectionate and sacrificial love of the apostle Paul towards his spiritual children. Watson urges the congregation to treasure his twenty directions for their souls, including advice on holiness, self-examination, fellowship, and serving God with all their might, while constantly keeping thoughts on eternity to promote holiness and despise worldly comforts and sufferings.

Transcript

Dearly Beloved

Thomas Watson's Afternoon Farewell Sermon, Preached August 17, 1662.

"Since we have these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God." 2 Corinthians 7:1

It is the title that I intend now, by the help of God, to insist upon, that sweet parenthesis in the text, "dearly beloved," wherein you have the apostle breathing forth his affections unto this people. He speaks now as a pastor, and he speaks to them as his dearly beloved spiritual children. "

First the title, "dearly beloved."

Secondly, the exhortation to holiness, "let us cleanse ourselves."

Thirdly, the means how we should be cleansed and sanctified, "Since we have these promises."

It is the first of these that I intend, the title that the apostle gives to his children, "dearly beloved."

From hence observe this doctrine: That the affections of a holy gospel-minister towards his people, are very ardent.

"Dearly beloved." There are two things in every minister of Christ that are much exercised -- his head, and his heart. His head with labor, and his heart with love. His head with labor in the work of the ministry. If done aright, it is a work fitter for angels than for men. It is our work to open the oracles of God, even those sacred profound things that the angels search into; and if God did not help us, we might soon sink under the weight of such a burden. And as a minister's head is exercised with labor -- so his heart is exercised with love, and it is hard to say which of the two exceeds, his labor or his love. Thus is it here in the text, "my dearly beloved."

In these words, we have Paul laying siege to these Corinthians, and laboring to make a happy victory, to conquer them with kindness, "dearly beloved."

Paul's heart was the spring of love,

his lips were the pipe of love,

the Corinthians were the cistern into which this spring ran.

This holy apostle was a mirror and a pattern of love towards the sinning Corinthians. Paul's tears dropped towards the saved Corinthians, and his love burned. Holy Paul was a seraphim--his heart burned in a flame of affection to his people. How many passages do we find scattered in his epistles? He tells his people, which sometimes he wrote to, and sometimes he preached to -- that he looked after their souls more than their silver, 2 Corinthians 15:14, "I am not seeking what is yours, but you." As a tender mother nourishes her child with the breast -- so Paul gave his people the breast milk of the word. In 1 Thessalonians 2:7, this man of God did not only bestow a sermon upon his people -- but was willing to impart his very soul to them if it might save theirs! 1 Thessalonians 2:8, "We were willing to have imparted to you our own souls, because you are dear unto us."

Such was Paul's affection to his people, that he loved them more than his life. Philippians 2:17, "But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you." That is as if he had said: if it be so, that my blood be poured forth as a sacrifice, if my death may be any way serviceable unto you, if it may help forward the strengthening and confirming of your faith -- then I am willing to die, I rejoice to do it!

So full of affection was this apostle, that he could not choose but love his people, though the more he loved -- the less he should be loved. Oh! how did Paul sweeten all his sermons with love! If he reprov'd sin, yet he was angry in love -- he dipped the bitter pill in sugar! Galatians 4:9-12, "How is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you. I plead with you, brothers, become like me." See how Paul chides their sins, and yet at the same time courts their souls; no sooner did he open the wound -- but presently he poured in wine and oil into it.

So did Paul love his people, that he would not justly give any offence to the weak believer. 1 Corinthians 8:13, "Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall." Paul was like some tender mother, who forbears to eat those foods that she might, for

fear of hurting the child that she nurses.

Thus you see that Paul was a spiritual father made up of love; and surely, my brethren, this affection in some degree, is in all the true ministers of Jesus Christ; they are full of sympathy and affection unto those over whom the Holy Spirit has made them overseers.

I shall only glance at the reason, why it will be thus, and why it should be thus -- that such flaming affections there should be in all Christ's ministers to their people. It will be thus, for these reasons briefly:

FIRST, From that principle within, that teaches love. Grace does not fire the heart with passion -- but with compassion. Grace in the heart of a minister files off that roughness that is in his spirit; making him loving and kind. Paul once breathed out persecution -- but when grace came, this bramble was turned into a spiritual vine, twisting himself about the souls of his people with loving embraces.

SECONDLY, There will be this ardent love in a minister's heart, from the spiritual relation that is between him and his people. He is a spiritual father, and shall we think him to be without affection? 1 Corinthians 4:15. "Though you have ten thousand instructors, yet have you not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." Some he begets unto Christ, others he builds up in Christ. Does not a father provide cheerfully for his children? Can a father see bread taken from his child, and not have his heart affected with it?

THIRDLY, There should be this ardent love and affection in all God's ministers, for this reason, because this is the liveliest way to do most good. Knotty and stubborn hearts will soonest be wrought upon with kindness. The fire melts the hardest metal; just so, the fire of love, with God's blessing, will melt the most obdurate sinner. A son of consolation, who comes in the spirit of love, is the fittest to do a piece of gospel-surgery, to restore and put such a one in joint again that is taken with a fault. Galatians 6:1, "Restore such a one with the spirit of love and meekness." Thus much in short for the doctrinal part.

Give me permission now to make some APPLICATION. And first, here are several inferences that may be drawn from this:

First, See here the right character of a gospel-minister. He is full of love, he exhorts, he comforts, he reproves -- and all in love. He is never angry with his people -- but because they will not be saved. How grieved is a minister of Christ to see precious souls, like so many jewels, cast over-board into the dead sea of hell! A conscientious minister would count it an unhappy gain -- to gain the world, and lose the souls of his people. He says as the king of Sodom to Abraham, "Give me the persons -- and you take the goods," Genesis 14:21.

The second branch of information is this. Are true gospel-ministers so full of love? Then how sad is it to have such ministers put upon a people -- as have no love to souls? "The work of the ministry, is a labor of love." Oh! how sad it is to have such in the ministry, who can neither labor nor love, who are without affection, who look more at tithes than at souls. It must needs be sad with a people in any part of the world, to have such ministers set over them -- as either poison them with error, or do what in them lies to damn them by their wicked example! How can the devil reprove sin? How can the minister cry out in the pulpit against drunkenness -- who will himself be drunk? Romans 2:22, "You who teach a man should not steal -- do you steal? You who say a man ought not to commit adultery -- do you commit adultery?"

We read that the snuffers of the tabernacle were to be made of pure gold, Exod. 37:23. Those who by their calling are to reprove and snuff off the sins of others -- they should be pure gold, holy persons. In the law, God appointed that the lips of the leper should be covered. He ought to have his lips covered, he should not be permitted to speak the oracles of God -- who though he is by office an angel -- yet by life is a leper!

Thirdly, See from hence the happiness of a minister, who is placed among such a people as give him abundant cause of love. How happy is he who can say to his people from his heart, "My dearly beloved." And here let me speak by way of encouragement to you of this parish. I find Paul commending the good he saw in his people, 1 Thessalonians 1:3. "We are bound to thank God always for you, beloved, because your faith grows exceedingly." Here Paul is commending his people. In imitation of the apostle, let me at this time speak a commendatory word to you.

I have exercised my ministry now among you for almost sixteen years, and I rejoice and bless God that I can say: the more I love you -- the more I am loved. I have received many signal demonstrations of love from you, though other parishes have exceeded you in number of houses, yet I think not for strength of affection. I have with much comfort observed your reverent attentions to the word preached; you rejoiced in this light not for a short season -- but to this day.

I have observed your zeal against error; and as much as could be expected in a critical time, your unity and amity. This is your honor; and if for the future there should be any interruption made in my ministry among you, though I should not be permitted to preach to you -- yet shall I not cease to love you, and to pray for you; but why should there be any interruption made? Where is the crime?

Some indeed say, that we are disloyal and seditious. Beloved, what my actions and sufferings for his majesty have been, is known to many of you: but, however, we must go to heaven through good report and through bad report, and it is well if we can get to glory, though we pass through the pikes.

I shall endeavor that I may still approve the sincerity of my love to you. I will not promise that I shall still preach among you, nor will I say that I shall not; I desire to be guided by the silver threads of God's Word and of God's Providence. My heart is towards you. There is, you know, an expression in the late act -- that we shall be now shortly die; and If I must die, let me leave some legacy with you before I go from you. I cannot but give you some counsel and advice for your souls, and I hope there is no hurt in that. There are, my beloved, these TWENTY DIRECTIONS, that I desire you to take special notice of, which I would leave as advice and counsel with you about your souls:

First, I beseech you, keep your constant hours every day with God. The godly man is a man set apart -- not only because God has set him apart by election -- but because he has set himself apart by devotion. Give God the best of the day -- begin the day with God, visit God in the morning before you make any other visit; wind up your hearts towards heaven in the morning, and they will go the better all the day after! Oh turn your closets into temples. Read the Scriptures -- the two Testaments are the two lips by which God speaks to us; these will make you wise unto salvation. The Scripture is both a looking-glass to show you your spots -- and a laver to wash them away; besiege heaven everyday with your prayer, thus perfume your houses, and keep a constant fellowship with heaven.

Secondly, Get good BOOKS into your houses! When you have not the spring near to you -- then get water into your cisterns. Just so, when you have not that wholesome preaching that you desire, good books are cisterns that hold the water of life in them to refresh you.

When David's bodily warmth was taken away in his old age, they covered him with warm clothes, (1 Kings 1). Just so, when you find a dullness upon your souls, and that your former warmth begins to abate, cover yourselves with warm clothes -- read those good books that may acquaint you with such truths as may warm and affect your hearts.

Thirdly, Take heed of the COMPANY you keep! "He who walks with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Proverbs 13:20. Beware of unnecessary familiarity with the ungodly.

We cannot catch health from another -- but we may soon catch a disease! The disease of sin is very contagious! I should be as afraid of going among the wicked -- as going among those who have the plague! "They mingled among the pagans -- and adopted their evil customs." Psalm 106:35. If we cannot make others better -- let us take care that they make us no worse.

Lot was a 'miracle' -- he kept fresh in Sodom's salt-water!

My beloved, take heed of the occasions of sin -- evil company is a great occasion of sin. The Nazarites in the old law, as they were not to drink wine -- so they were also forbidden grapes, from which the wine was made, as you read in Numbers 6. This teaches us, that all occasions of sin must be avoided.

Evil company is the devil's draw-net, by which he draws millions to Hell. How many families, and how many souls have been ruined and undone in this city by evil company? Many there are, who go from a play-house and from a tavern -- to the bottomless pit!

Fourthly, Take heed whom you listen to! It is our dear Savior's counsel, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing -- but inwardly are ravening wolves!" Matthew 7:15.

Let me tell you, the Devil has his ministers -- as well as Christ! There are some, who by the subtlety of their wit, have learned the art of mixing error with truth, and to give poison in a golden cup!

Take heed WHO you hear, and HOW you hear. Be like those noble Bereans, who searched the Scriptures daily, to see whether the things that they taught, were true or not. Acts 17:11.

Your ears must not be like sponges that suck in puddle-water, as well as wine. But your ears must be like a winnowing fan, which fans out the chaff -- but retains the pure wheat. You must be like those in the parable, who gathered the good fish -- but cast the bad away. Matthew 13:48.

The saints are called virgins for their wisdom -- they will not let everyone defile their souls with error! They have a judicious ear and a critical palate, which can distinguish between truth and error, and discern a difference between God's pure food -- and the devil's cooking!

Fifthly, Study SINCERITY. Psalm 51:6, "Behold, you, desire truth in the inward part." Be what you seem to be! Do not be like rowers in a boat -- who look one way, and row another! Do not look heaven-ward by your profession -- and row hell-ward by your life. Do not pretend to love God, and yet love sin. Counterfeit piety -- is double iniquity! Let your hearts be sincere and upright with God. The plainer the diamond is -- the richer it is. Just so, the more plain and sincere the heart is -- the more does God value his jewel. A little rusty gold -- is far better than a great deal of bright brass. Just so, a little true grace, though rusted over with many infirmities -- is better than all the glistening shows of religious hypocrites. A sincere heart is God's current coin, and he will allow some measure of imperfection.

Sixthly, As you love your souls -- do not be strangers to yourselves. Be much and often in the work of self-examination. Among all the books that you read, turn over the book of your own heart, look into the book of conscience, see what is written there, Psalm 77:6, "I commune with mine own heart." Set up a judgment-seat in your own souls; examine whether you have grace or not; prove whether you are in the faith. Be as much afraid of a painted holiness, as you would be afraid of going to a painted heaven. Do not think yourselves good -- because others think so. Let the word be the touch-stone, by which you try your hearts. Let the word be the looking-glass, by which you judge of the complexion of your soul. For lack of this self-searching, many live known to others, and die unknown to themselves.

Seventhly, Keep your spiritual watch. Matthew 13:37, "What I say unto you, I say unto all -- watch!" If it were the last word I should speak, it would be this word watch. Oh! what need has a Christian to be ever upon his watch! The heart is subtle, and will be stealing out to vanity; and if we are not careful, it will decoy us into sin. We have a special eye upon such people as we suspect. Just so, your heart is a suspicious person -- Oh! have an eye upon it, watch it continually! Your heart it is a bosom traitor! Job set a watch before his eyes, Job 31:1. We must every day keep sentinel. Do not sleep upon your guard. Our sleeping time is the devil's tempting time! Let not your watch-candle go out.

Eighthly, You who are the people of God, must often associate together. Malachi 3:16, "Those who feared the Lord, spoke often one to another." Christ's doves shall flock together. One Christian will help to heat another. A single coal of juniper will soon die; but many coals put together will keep life in one another. Holy fellowship sometimes may do as much as preaching. One Christian by godly discourse, drops holy oil upon another -- which makes the lamp of his grace to shine the brighter. Christians by meeting often together, setting godly discourse on foot, keep up the trade of godliness, that else would decay and soon be lost.

Is not the communion of saints an article in our creed? Do not then live so asunder, as if this article were blotted out. The naturalists observe that there is a sympathy in plants; they say some plants bear better when they grow near other plants, as the vine and the elm; the olive and the myrtle thrive the best when they grow together. Be that as it may -- it is true in religion, the saints are trees of righteousness, that thrive best in godliness, when they grow together.

Ninthly, Get your hearts above the world. "Set your affections upon things above," Colossians 3:5. Though a Christian walks here below, yet his heart should be fixed above in heaven. There is our best kindred, our purest joy, our eternal mansion-house. Oh! let our hearts be above, it is the best and the sweetest kind of life. The higher the bird flies -- the sweeter it sings; and the higher the heart is raised above the world -- the sweeter joy it has. The eagle that flies in the air -- is not stung by the serpent. Those whose hearts are elevated above the lower region of this world -- are not stung with the vexations and disquietments that others are -- but are full of joy and contentment.

Tenthly, Trade much in the promises. The promises are great supports to faith. Faith lives in a promise -- as the fish lives in the water. The promises are both comforting and quickening. They are the very breasts of the gospel; as the child by sucking the breasts gets strength, so faith by sucking the breast of a promise gets strength and revives. The promises of God are divine bladders to keep us from sinking when we come into the waters of affliction. The promises are sweet clusters of grapes, which grow upon Christ the true vine. O! trade much in the promises, there is no condition that you can be in -- but you have a promise. The promises are like manna, which suit themselves to every Christian's palate.

Eleventhly, Live in a calling. Jerome gave his friend this advice, "To be ever well employed, that when the devil came to tempt him, he might find him working in his vineyard." The same God that says, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy," says also, "Six days shall you labor." The great God never sealed any warrants to idleness. An idle professor is the shame of his profession, 2 Thessalonians 3:11, "I hear there are some do not work at all -- but are busy-bodies; such we exhort, by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work." Solon made laws to punish idleness. An idle man draws his breath -- but does not live, he is not useful; but a godly Christian acts within the sphere of his own calling.

12. Let me entreat you to join the first and the second tables of the law together -- piety to God, and equity to your neighbor. The apostle puts these two words together in one verse, Titus 2:12, "That we should live righteously and godly." Righteously -- that relates to morality towards man. Godly, that relates to piety and sanctity towards God. Always remember this: every command has the same divine stamp and authority as another command has. I would try a moral man by the duties of the first table; and I would try an empty professor by the duties of the second table. Some pretend faith -- but have no works; others have works -- but they have no faith. Some pretend zeal for God -- but are not just in their dealings; others are just in their dealings -- but have not one spark of zeal for God. If you would go to heaven, you must run both sides of the table -- the first and the second table -- you must join piety and morality together. As we blame the papists for blotting out the second commandment, let not the papists blame us for leaving out the second table.

13. Join the serpent and the dove together, innocence and prudence. Matthew 10:6, "Be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." We must have innocency with our wisdom -- or else our wisdom is but craftiness. And we must have wisdom with our innocency -- or else our innocency is but weakness. We must have the harmlessness of the dove -- that we may not wrong others. And we must have the prudence of the serpent -- that others may not abuse and take advantage of us. Not to wrong the truth by silence -- here is the innocency of the dove. Not to betray ourselves by rashness -- here the wisdom of the serpent. How happy is it where these two are united, the dove and the serpent. The dove without the serpent is folly -- and the serpent without the dove is impiety.

14. Be more afraid of sin -- than of suffering. A man may be afflicted -- and yet have the love of God. But he cannot sin -- but presently God is angry. Sin eclipses the light of God's countenance. In suffering, the conscience may be quiet. When the hail beats upon the tiles -- there may be music in the house; and when there is suffering in the body -- there may be peace and music in the conscience; but when a man sins willfully and presumptuously -- he loses all his peace. Spira abjured his faith, and he became a terror to himself, he could not endure himself, he professed that he thought Cain and Judas in hell did not feel those terrors and horrors that he felt. He who will commit sin to prevent suffering -- is like a man who lets his head be wounded to save his shield and helmet!

15. Take heed of idolatry. In 1 John 5:21, "Little children keep yourselves from idols!" Idolatry is an image of jealousy to provoke God. It breaks the marriage-knot asunder, and makes the Lord disclaim his interest in a people.

What kind of religion is popery? it is the mother of many monsters. What soul-damning doctrines does it hold forth, as the meriting of salvation by good works, the selling of pardons, the worshiping of angels, popish indulgences, purgatory, and the like; it is a soul-damning religion! It is the breeder of ignorance, uncleanness and murder! The popish religion is not defended by strength of argument -- but by force of arms. Keep yourselves from idols, and take heed of superstition, that is the gentleman-usurper to popery!

16. Think not the worse of godliness, because it is reproached and persecuted. Wicked men being stirred up by the devil -- do maliciously reproach the ways of God. Though wicked men would be godly on their death-beds -- yet in the time of their life they revile and hate godliness. But do not think the worse of religion, because it is reproached by the wicked. Suppose a virgin should be reproached for her chastity -- yet chastity is never the worse. If a blind man jeer the sun -- the sun is never the less bright. Holiness is a beautiful and glorious thing, it is the angel's glory; and shall we be ashamed of that which makes us like the angels? There is a time coming, when wicked men would be glad of some of that holiness which now they despise -- but they shall be as far then from obtaining it -- as they are now from desiring it.

17. Think not the better of sin -- because it is in fashion. Think not the better of impiety and ungodliness -- because most walk in those crooked ways. Multitude is a foolish argument. Multitude does not argue the goodness of a thing. The devil's name is legion, that signifies a multitude. The road to Hell is thronged with travelers. Esteem not the better of sin -- because most go this way. Do we think the better of the plague -- because it is common? The plea of a multitude, will not hold at God's bar, when God shall ask, "Why did you live in sin?" To say then, "Lord, because most men did so," will be a poor plea. God will say to you then, seeing you have sinned with the multitude -- you shall now go to hell with the multitude. I beseech you, as you love your souls -- walk directly opposite to the corruptions of the times. If you are living fish -- then swim against the stream. Dead fish swim down the stream! Ephesians 5:11, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness -- but rather reprove them."

18. In the business of true religion, serve God with all your might. Eccles. 9:10. "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no device or work in the grave where you go." This is an argument why we should do all we can for God, serve him with all our strength because the grave is very near, and there is no praying, no repenting, in the grave. Our time is but small -- and therefore our zeal for God should be great. David danced with all his might before the ark -- and so should we act vigorously for God in the sphere of obedience. Romans 12:12, "Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

Take heed of a dull lazy temper in God's service. You must not only say a prayer, or read a prayer -- but you must pour out your souls in prayer. You must not only love God -- but be love-sick for God. God in the old law would have the coals put to the incense, Levit. 16:13, and why so? to typify that the heart must be inflamed in the worship of God. Your prayers must go up with a flame of devotion. I confess hell will be taken without storm, you may jump into hell with ease -- but it is all up-hill to heaven, and therefore you must put forth all your might, Matthew 12:11, "The violent take heaven by force." Heaven is not taken, but by storm. Do you not see men zealous and very active for the devil, and for their lusts? Shall they take pains for hell -- and will not you take pains for heaven?

19. Do all the good you can, while you live to others. God has made every creature useful for us. The sun has not its light for itself -- but for us. The fountains run freely, and so does the myrrh drop from the tree. Every creature does as it were, deny itself for us: the beast gives us its labor, the bird gives us its music, and the silk-worm its silk. Now has God made everything useful for us -- and shall not we be useful one for another? O labor to be helpful to the souls of others, and to supply the needs of others. Jesus Christ was a public blessing in the world, "he went about doing good." We are members of the body of Christ -- and shall not every member be helpful for the good of the body? That is a dead member, which does not communicate to the good of the body. O labor to be useful to others while you live, that so when you die, there may be a missing of you. Many live so unfruitfully, that truly their life is scarcely worth a prayer, nor their death scarcely worth a tear.

20. Every day spend some thoughts upon ETERNITY. O eternity, eternity! All of us will before long, it may be some of us within a few days or hours -- launch forth into the ocean of eternity. No looking-glass can see to the end of eternity. Eternity is a sum that can never be numbered; it is a line that can never be measured. Eternity is a condition of everlasting happiness -- or everlasting misery. If you are godly -- then shall you be forever happy, you shall be always fanning yourselves in the light of God's countenance. If you are wicked -- then you shall be always miserable, ever lying in the scalding furnace of the wrath of the Almighty God! Eternity to the godly, is a day that has no sun-setting. Eternity to the wicked, is a night that has no sun-rising. O I beseech you, my brethren, every day spend some time upon the thoughts of eternity. The serious thoughts of an eternal condition would be a great means to promote holiness.

The thoughts of eternity would make us very serious about our souls. O my soul, you are very shortly to fly into eternity -- a condition that can never be reversed or altered. How serious would this make us about our eternal souls. Zeuxis being once asked why he was so long in drawing of a picture, answered, "I am now painting for eternity!" Oh how frequently would that man pray -- who thinks he is praying for eternity! Oh how accurately and circumspectly would that man live -- who thinks that upon this moment, hangs eternity!

The thoughts of eternity would make us slight and despise all the things of this world. What is the world, to him who has eternity always in his eyes? Did we think seriously and solemnly of eternity, we would never over-value the comforts of the world, nor over-grieve the crosses of the world.

We should not over-value the comforts of the world. Worldly comforts are very sweet -- but they are very swift, they are soon gone. The pleasures of the world are but for a season, just like Noah's dove, which brought an olive-branch in her mouth -- but she had wings, and so did presently fly from the ark. Just so are all outward comforts; they bring an olive-branch -- but they have wings too, with which they fly away.

The thoughts of eternity would make us not to overgrieve the crosses and sufferings of the world. What are these sufferings -- compared to eternity? Our sufferings, says the apostle, are but for a while, 1 Peter 5:10. What are all the sufferings we can undergo in the world -- compared to eternity? Affliction may be lasting -- but it is not ever-lasting. Our sufferings here are not worthy to be compared to an eternal weight of glory.

And thus, my beloved, I have given you these twenty directions for your precious souls. I beseech you treasure them up as so many jewels in the cabinet of your heart. Did you carry these directions about you, they would be a most excellent antidote to keep you from sin -- and an excellent means to preserve the zeal of piety flaming upon the altar of your hearts.

I have many things yet to say to you -- but I know not whether God will give me another opportunity. My strength is now almost gone. I beseech you, let these things which I have spoken, make deep impressions upon all your souls. Consider what has been said, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.

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