

The Christian Soldier

by Thomas Watson

Thomas Watson's sermon emphasizes the Christian's call to actively combat sin and worldliness while pursuing the glory of heaven through spiritual discipline and reliance on Scripture.

Scripture: Psalm 139:23, Matthew 11:12, Luke 13:23, Romans 8:13, Colossians 3:5

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Sanctification"

Description

Thomas Watson preaches about the holy violence a Christian must put forth in the pursuit after glory, emphasizing the need to mortify the flesh by withdrawing fuel that may ignite lust and fighting against fleshly desires with spiritual weapons like faith and prayer. He highlights the importance of searching the Scriptures diligently, using it as a spiritual armory and a soul-enriching treasury to fight against sin and Satan. Watson also warns about the dangers of being entangled in the world's pleasures, the deceitfulness and polluting nature of the world, and the need for self-examination to ensure one's faith and affections are aligned with God's will.

Transcript

The Christian Soldier, or

Heaven Taken by Storm

by Thomas Watson, 1669

A practical handbook on Christian living,

showing the holy violence a Christian is

to put forth in the pursuit after glory.

"The Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and

the violent take it by force." Matthew 11:12

CHOICE EXCERPTS

How do I mortify the flesh?

The flesh is a bosom traitor; it is like the Trojan horse within the walls, which does all the mischief. The flesh is a sly enemy--it kills by embracing. The embraces of the flesh are like the ivy embracing the oak; which sucks out the strength of it for its own leaves and berries. So the flesh by its soft embraces, sucks out of the heart all good.

The pampering of the flesh, is the quenching of God's Spirit.

The flesh chokes and stifles holy motions--the flesh sides with Satan. There is a party within us, which will not pray, which will not believe. The flesh inclines us more to believe a temptation than a promise. The flesh is so near to us, its counsels are more attractive. There is no chain of adamant which binds so tightly --as the chain of lust.

In the best of saints, do what they can, sin will fasten its roots in them, and spring out sometimes with inordinate desires. There is always something which needs mortifying.

"Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry." Colossians 3:5.

How do I mortify the flesh?

1. Withdraw the fuel that may make lust burn. Avoid all temptations. Take heed of that which nourishes sin.

Those who pray that they may not be led into temptation --must not lead themselves into temptation.

2. Fight against fleshly lusts with spiritual weapons --faith and prayer. The best way to combat with sin is--upon our knees. Beg strength from Christ. Samson's strength lay in

his hair; our strength lies in our head--Christ. This is a mystery to the major part of the world--who gratify the flesh rather than mortify it.

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He wounded the old serpent three times!

What an infinite mercy it is, that God has blessed us with the Scriptures! The barbarous Indians have their golden mines--but not the Scriptures, which are 'more to be desired than much fine gold.'

Our Savior bids us 'search the Scriptures'. We must not read these holy lines carelessly, as if they did not concern us, or run over them hastily--but peruse them with reverence and seriousness. The noble Bereans 'searched the Scriptures daily.' The Scripture is the treasury of divine knowledge; it is the rule and touchstone of truth; out of this well--we draw the water of life.

Read the Word as a book made by God Himself. Other books may be written by holy men--but this book is inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is the library of the Holy Spirit!

Read the Word as the perfect rule of faith; it contains all things essential to salvation. The Word teaches us how to please God; and how to order our lives in the world. It instructs us in all things that belong either to prudence or piety, and is 'able to make us wise unto salvation.'

When you read the Word, look on it as a soul-enriching treasury. Search it as for 'hidden treasure!' In this Word are scattered many divine sayings--gather them up as so

many jewels! This blessed book will enrich you--it fills your head with divine knowledge, and your heart with divine grace! In this field, the Pearl of price is hidden! What are all the world's riches compared to these? Islands of spices, coasts of pearl, rocks of diamonds? These are but the riches which reprobates may have--but the Word gives us those riches which angels have!

Look upon the Word as a spiritual armory, out of which you fetch all your weapons to fight against sin and Satan. Here are weapons to fight against SIN. The Word of God is a holy sword, which cuts asunder the lusts of the heart!

When pride begins to lift up itself, the sword of the Spirit destroys this sin! When passion vents itself, the Word of God, like Hercules' club, beats down this angry fury! When lust boils, the Word of God cools that intemperate passion! Here are weapons to fight against SATAN. When the devil tempted Christ, He wounded the old serpent three times with the sword of the Spirit--"It is written!" Satan soon foils the Christian when he is unarmed, and without Scripture weapons.

Look upon the Word as a spiritual looking-glass to dress yourselves by! It is a mirror for the blind--'The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes!' In other mirrors you may see your faces; in this mirror you may see your hearts!

This mirror of the Word clearly represents Christ. He is . . . most precious;
altogether lovely;

a wonder of beauty;

a paradise of delight!

Look upon the Word as a shop of spiritual antidotes and remedies. If you find yourself dead in duty--here is a medicine.

If you find your heart hard--the Word will soften and mollify it.

If you are poisoned with sin--here is an herb to expel it.

Look upon the Word as a sovereign elixir to comfort you in distress. It comforts you against all your sins, temptations, and afflictions. What are the promises--but divine cordials to revive fainting souls.

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It makes men so filthy!

It is a part of our Christian profession--to fight under Christ's banner--against the world.

The world is a flattering enemy. It shows its golden apple. It is given to some--as a snare. Take heed of being drowned in the world's luscious delights!

It must be a strong brain that can bear heady wine.

He had need have a great deal of wisdom and grace, who knows how to maintain a great estate. Riches often send up intoxicating fumes, which make men's heads giddy with pride. It is hard to climb up the hill of God--with too many golden weights!

The world shows its two breasts of pleasure and profit --and many fall asleep with the breast in their mouth!

The world never kisses us--except with an intention to betray us.

The world is a silken halter.

The world is no friend to grace; it chokes our love
for heavenly things--the earth puts out the fire.

Naturally we love the world. Too many are wedded
to their money--they live together as man and wife.

O let us take heed of being entangled in this pleasing
snare! Many who have escaped the rock of scandalous
sins--yet have sunk in the world's golden quicksands!

The sin is not in using the world--but in loving it.

"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If
anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is
not in him." 1 John 2:15

Believers are called out of the world. "They are not
of the world, even as I am not of it." John 17:16.

They are in the world--but not of it. A true saint is
crucified in his affections, to the world, Galat. 6:14.

He is dead to the honors and pleasures of it. What
delight does a dead man take in pictures or music?

Jesus Christ gave Himself "to redeem us from this
present evil world." Galatians 1:4

Living fish swim against the stream. We must swim
against the world, else we shall be carried down the
stream, and fall into the dead sea of hell!

The world is DECEITFUL. Our Savior calls it, "The
deceitfulness of riches." Matthew 13:22. The world
promises happiness--but gives weariness. It promises
us Rachel--but gives us bleary-eyed Leah! The world

promises to satisfy our desires--but only increases them. The world gives poisoned pills--but wraps them in sugar!

The world is POLLUTING. "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: . . . to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." It is called filthy lucre --because it makes men so filthy!

Men will damn themselves to get the world. Ahab would have Naboth's vineyard, though he swam to it in blood.

The world is PERISHING. "The world and its desires pass away." The world is like a flower--which withers while we are smelling it!

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One of you is a devil!

"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you--unless, of course, you fail the test?" 2 Corinthians 13:5

Self-examination is a necessary--but difficult work.

Self-examination is the setting up a court in conscience and keeping a register there, that by strict scrutiny a man may know how things stand between God and his own soul. By a serious scrutiny of our hearts, we come to know to what prince we belong--whether to the Prince of Peace, or the prince of darkness.

Self-searching is a heart-anatomy. As a surgeon, when he makes a dissection in the body, discovers the inward parts, the heart, liver, and arteries--just so, a Christian anatomizes

himself.

Sentimentality and public opinion are false rules to go by.

We must judge the state of souls by the light of Scripture.

Many have foolish, presumptuous hopes. They fancy their state to be good; and while they weigh themselves in the balance of presumption, they pass the test.

Many take their salvation on trust. The foolish virgins thought they had oil in their lamps, the same as the wise. How confident are some of salvation--yet never examine their title to Heaven.

Many rest in the good opinions of others. How vain is this!

Alas, one may be gold and pearl in the eye of others--yet God may judge him to be reprobate silver! Others may think him a saint--and God may write him down in His black book! Judas was looked upon by the rest of the Apostles as a true believer --yet he was a traitor! "Then Jesus replied--Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!" John 6:70

Others can but see the outward behavior--but they cannot tell what evil is in the heart. Fair streams may run on the top of a river--but vermin may lay at the bottom!

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We must either leap over them, or tread upon them!

"A man's enemies will be the members of his own household.

Anyone who loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me." Matt. 10:36-38

Take heed of the snare in your family! It is one of the

Devil's great subtleties--to hinder us from piety by our
nearest relations--and to shoot us with our own rib!
He tempted Adam by his wife. Who would have suspected
the Devil there? He tempted Job by his wife, "Are you still
holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!" Job 2:9
Thus would the Devil have cooled Job's love for God; but
the shield of his faith quenched this fiery dart!
Take heed of such tempters! It is better to go to Heaven
with their hatred--than to Hell with their love! If our
dearest friends and family lie in our way to Heaven--we
must either leap over them, or tread upon them!

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The rat gets into his belly and eats his entrails
Take heed of a slothful, lazy disposition. A slothful
person would gladly have Heaven--but is loathe to
take it by storm. Sloth is the soul's sleep. Many,
instead of working out salvation, sleep away salvation!
Such as will not labor, must be put at last to beg. They
must beg, as Dives in hell--for one drop of water.
God never made Heaven as a hive for drones!
Sloth is a disease apt to grow upon men--shake it off!
A sluggish ship is a prey to the pirate.
A sluggish soul is a prey to Satan!
When the crocodile sleeps with his mouth open--the
rat gets into his belly and eats his entrails. Just
so, while men are asleep in sloth--the Devil enters
and devours them!

Our sleeping time is Satan's tempting time!

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Stunted in grace

It is a pitiful thing, to be contented with feeble grace.

Weak grace may live in the heart--but is sickly, and does not flourish into lively acts. Weak grace will not withstand strong temptations, or carry us through great sufferings. Little grace will not do God much service.

A tree which has but little sap--will not have much fruit.

It may be said that some Christians are stunted in grace.

Oh, labor to grow to further degrees of sanctity. The more grace--the more strength! "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever! Amen." 2 Peter 3:18

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If you live after the flesh

"If you live after the flesh--you shall die! But if you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body--you shall live!" Romans 8:13

Take heed of the flesh! As good consult with the Devil, as with the flesh. The flesh is a bosom traitor. An enemy within the walls, is the worst enemy! The flesh cries out, "There is a lion in the way!" The flesh says as Judas, "Why all this waste?" "Why all this praying and wrestling? Why do you waste your strength? Why all this waste?"

The flesh cries out for ease--it is loathe to put its neck under Christ's yoke. The flesh is for pleasure--it would

rather be playing games--than running the heavenly race.

Here is a description of fleshly pleasures, "You lie on beds inlaid with ivory and lounge on your couches. You dine on choice lambs and fattened calves. You strum away on your harps like David and improvise on musical instruments.

You drink wine by the bowlful and use the finest lotions."

Amos 6:4-6. These are the delights of the flesh.

There was one who tried to please all of his five senses at once. He had a room richly decorated with beautiful pictures; he had the most delectable music; he had all the choice aromatics and perfumes; he had all the sumptuous candies of the confectioner; he was lodged in bed with a beautiful paramour. Thus he indulged the flesh, and swore that he would spend all his estate to live one week like this--though he were sure to be damned in hell the next day.

"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. . . In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire!'" Luke 16:19, 23-24

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They save one sin--and lose one soul!

Take heed of indulging any lust. Indulging in sin will spoil all effort for Heaven. Sin enfeebles; it is like the

cutting of Samson's hair--then the strength departs.

Sin is the soul's sickness. Sickness takes a man off his legs and so dispirits him, that he is unfit for any holy exercise. A sick man cannot run a race.

Therefore lay the axe to the root! Let sin be hewn down!

Do not only abstain from sin in the act--but let the love of sin be mortified, and let every sin be put to the sword!

Many will leave all their sins but one. They save one sin --and lose one soul! One sin is a fetter! A man may lose the race as well by having one fetter on his leg, just as if he had many. I have read of a great monarch, who, fleeing from his enemy, threw away the crown of gold on his head --that he might run the faster. So, that sin which you wore as a crown of gold--throw it away that you may run the faster to the heavenly kingdom!

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All on fire for the world!

Take heed of too much pursuit after the world. The world cools holy affections. The earth puts out the fire.

The world hindered the young man from following Christ, "he went away sorrowful!" Whereupon, says our Savior, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"

Luke 18:24. Demas' piety was buried in the earth, "Demas has forsaken me--having loved this present world." 2 Timothy 4:10

The world so blinds men's eyes--that they do not see the narrow way to heaven! It so fetters their feet--that they

do not run in the way of God's commandments.

Mithridates, king of Pontus, being beaten by the Romans, and fearing he would not escape them--he caused a great deal of silver and gold to be scattered in the way, which while the Roman soldiers were busy gathering, he got away from them. Satan uses a similar strategy; knowing what tempting things riches are--he throws them as baits, in men's way, that while they are eagerly gathering these, he may hinder them in their pursuit of eternal happiness!

It would hinder a man to climb up a steep rock, with heavy weights tied to his legs. Men's golden weights hinder them in climbing up this steep rock which leads to salvation!

A man cannot seek both Heaven and earth at the same time.

He cannot love both Christ and the world, 1 John 2:15. He who is all on fire for the world--will be all ice for Heaven!

Take heed of engaging your affections too far in these earthly things. Use the world as your servant--but do not follow it as your master.

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Though the sinner shall drink a sea of wrath--
yet he shall not drink one drop of injustice!

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The glory of heaven!

If the mountains were gold; if every sand of the sea were a diamond; if the whole globe were a shining gem; it would all still be infinitely beneath the glory

of heaven!

1. In heaven, there shall be freedom from sin. Here on earth, sin keeps house with us; it is as natural to us to sin as to breathe. The soul that is most refined, and cleansed by grace, is not without some dregs of corruption.

But a sinful thought shall not creep in to heaven. There is beauty which is not stained with lust, and honor which is not swelled with pride. "Nothing impure will ever enter it!" Revelation 21:27

2. In heaven, there shall be freedom from the assaults of the red dragon. It is sad to have Satan daily soliciting us by his temptations, and laboring to trick us into sin. But the old serpent is cast out of the heavenly Paradise!

3. In heaven, there shall be freedom from all afflictions.

Our lives now are interlined with troubles. "My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak." Psalm 31:10. There are many things to occasion disquiet; sometimes poverty afflicts; sometimes sickness tortures; sometimes unkindness of friends breaks the heart. Our lives, like the seas, are full of tempests.

But in the kingdom of Heaven, there is nothing to give grief.

There, all is serene and calm; nothing within to trouble, or without to molest.

4. The delights of the heavenly kingdom are unmixed. The comforts here below, are checkered. Honor may be stained with disgrace; joy interwoven with sorrow. Our skies are mixed with clouds. But the delicacies of heaven are pure as well as

pleasant. There is honey, which has not one drop of gall. The crystal spring of joy has no settlings of sorrow at the bottom. The rose in that paradise, is without prickles; the sun in that horizon, is without eclipse.

Heaven will make amends for all our labor and pains!

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Then the Devil shoots him with his fiery darts!

"While everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat." Matthew 13:25

While men are idle in the vineyard, they are a prey to every temptation. Satan sows most of his seeds of temptation in hearts which lie fallow. When he sees people unemployed, he will find work for them to do--he will stir them up to one sin or other. When Satan finds men in a drowsy condition, their sleeping time is his tempting time!

By watching and praying, we prevent the Devil's design--we are so busy with salvation that we have no leisure to listen to temptation.

When the bird is flying--it is safe; but when it sits still on the bough--it is in danger of being shot! When a Christian sits still and is inactive--then the Devil shoots him with his fiery darts!

"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation!"

Matthew 26:41

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A divine magnet!

"The Spirit helps us in our weakness." Romans 8:26

The Spirit helps us in all the duties of piety. The promises encourage us--and the Spirit enables us. In all earthly races a man runs in his own strength; but in the race to Heaven we have the Spirit of God helping us! He not only gives us the crown, when we have finished running--but He gives us legs to run! He gives us quickening and assisting grace!

The Spirit of God helping us, makes our work easy. If another helps us to carry a burden--it is less difficult. If the magnet draws the iron--it is not hard for the iron to move. If the Spirit of God, as a divine magnet--draws and moves the heart in obedience, then the work goes on with more ease.

"He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

Isaiah 40:29-31

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A pleasant, easy way to Heaven

Someone asked Him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" He said to them, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to!" Luke 13:23-24

Though Heaven is given us freely--yet we must take pains for it. Canaan was given Israel freely--but they had to fight with the Canaanites. It is not a lazy wish,

or a sleepy prayer--which will bring us to Heaven.

We have a long race from earth to Heaven--but a little time to run; it will soon be sunset. In a race there's not only a laying aside of all weights which hinder--but a putting forth of all the strength of the body; a straining every joint that men may press on with all swiftness to lay hold on the prize.

Many have made themselves unfit to run this blessed race; they are drunk with the pleasures of the world.

A drunken man is unfit to run a race.

Others neglect to run this race all their life; and when sickness and death approach--now they will begin! A sick man is very unfit to walk, much less to run a race!

I acknowledge that true repentance is never too late; but when a man can hardly move his hand, or lift up his eyes--that is a very unfit time to begin the race from earth to Heaven.

The Lord has in his eternal decree joined the end and the means together--striving and entering; the race and the crown. And a man can no more think to come to Heaven without striving, than he can think to come to the end of his journey, who never sets a step in the way!

Who expects a harvest without plowing and sowing?

How can we expect the harvest of glory without labor?

Though our salvation with respect to Christ is a purchase --yet with respect to us, it is a conquest.

We have a precious soul to save! What pains do we take

for the feeding and enriching of the body, the brutish part?
O then what pains should we use for the saving of the soul?
The body is but a ring of clay; the soul is the diamond. If
Christ thought the soul was worth the shedding of His blood,
well may we think it worth spending our sweat.

We have a heavenly kingdom to gain! What pains are
used for earthly crowns and empires; men will wade to the
crown through blood! Heaven is a kingdom which should
make us strive for it--even to blood. The hopes of a kingdom
(says Basil) should carry a Christian cheerfully through all
labors and sufferings.

Some imagine that there is a pleasant, easy way
to Heaven--an idle wish, a deathbed tear. But it is
not so easy a thing as men imagine. There are . . .
so many precepts to obey;
so many promises to believe;
so many rocks to avoid,
so many sins to mortify;
so many temptations to resist;
so many graces to quicken--
that it is a difficult matter to be saved.

Alas, there is a great work to be done; the bias of the
heart must be changed. Man by nature does not only
lack grace--but hates it! He has an envenomed spirit
against God, and is angry with converting grace!
Is it easy for the proud heart to be made humble?
Is it easy for the earthly heart to be made heavenly?

Can this be done without effort? It is all up hill to Heaven, and it will make us sweat before we get to the top of the hill.

Is salvation-work so easy? Can a man be saved by a faint wish? Can he leap out of the Devil's arms--into Abraham's bosom? Oh no! there must be striving.

A Christian must charge through the whole army of his lusts, every one of which is stronger than Goliath! He has no time to drowse; he must be either praying or watching.

Some think free grace will save them; but it must be in the use of means. "Watch and pray." Others say, the promises will bring them to Heaven; but the promises of the Word are not to be separated from the precepts.

The promise tells us of a crown--but the precept says, "Run in such a way as to get the prize!" 1 Cor. 9:24.

The promises are made to encourage faith, not to nourish sloth. But others say, Christ has died for sinners; and so they leave Him to do all for them and they will do nothing.

Our salvation cost Christ blood; it will cost us sweat. The boat may as well get to shore without rowing, as we can get to Heaven without effort.

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Not whom he may bite--but devour!

We read in Scripture of Satan's snares and darts; he hurts more by his snares than by his darts!

Satan opposes us both by open violence, and secret treachery.

1. Satan opposes by open violence--so he is called the Red Dragon. He labors to storm the castle of the heart; he stirs up passion, lust, and revenge. These are called "fiery darts," Ephes. 6:16, because they often set the soul on fire. Satan in regard to his fierceness, is called a lion, "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour!" 1 Peter 5:8. Not whom he may bite--but devour! Yes, there is "a lion in the way," but we must resolve upon fighting.

2. Satan opposes by secret treachery--so he is called the Old Serpent. What he cannot do by force, he will endeavor to do by fraud. Satan has several subtle devices in tempting:

Satan suits his temptations to the temper of the individual. Satan studies our dispositions, and lays suitable baits. He knew Achan's covetous heart, and tempted him with a wedge of gold. He tempts the youthful man with lust.

Satan tempts to sin gradually. He steals into the heart by degrees. He is at first, more modest. He did not say to Eve at first, "Eat the apple!" No! but he goes more subtly to work. He puts forth a question, "Has God said? Surely Eve, you are mistaken; the bountiful God never intended to debar one of the best trees of the garden. Has God said? Surely, either God did not say it; or if He did, He never really intended

it." Thus by degrees he wrought her to distrust God, and then she took of the fruit and ate. Oh, take heed of Satan's first motions to sin, which seem more modest. He is first a fox, and then a lion.

Satan tempts to evil in lawful things. It was lawful for Noah to eat the fruit of the grape; but he took too much, and so sinned. Excess turns that which is good--into evil. Eating and drinking may turn to intemperance. Industry in one's calling, when excessive, becomes covetousness. Satan draws men to an immoderate love of the creature, and then makes them sin in that which they love--as Agrippina poisoned her husband Claudius, in that food which he loved most.

Satan puts men upon doing good out of evil ends. If he cannot hurt them by scandalous actions--he will by virtuous actions. Thus he tempts some to espouse religion out of ulterior motives. He tempts others to give to charity, for applause, that others may see their good works.

"Take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one!" Ephesians 6:16. We must resist the devil by faith. Faith is a wise, intelligent grace. Faith can see a hook under the bait! Faith keeps the castle of the heart, so that it does not yield. Faith beats back the temptation. Faith holds the promise in one hand, and Christ in the other. The promise encourages faith, and Christ strengthens it; so faith beats the enemy out of the field! We overcome Satan upon our knees! A Christian by prayer

fetches in auxiliary forces from Heaven. In all temptations, go to God by prayer. "Lord, teach me to use every piece of the spiritual armor--how to hold the shield, how to wear the helmet, how to use the sword of the Spirit. Lord, strengthen me in the battle; let me rather die a conqueror--than be taken prisoner, and led captive by Satan!"

Remember that Christ has given Satan his death-wound upon the cross. He has bruised the head of the old Serpent! He is a chained enemy, and a conquered enemy; therefore do not fear him. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you!" James 4:7. "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet!" Romans 16:20

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Suck out the sweetness of a truth

Meditation is a holy exercise of the mind; whereby we bring the truths of God to remembrance, and seriously ponder upon them and apply them to ourselves. It is a work which cannot be done in a crowd. A Christian must retire from the world, to have serious thinking upon God. It is not a few transient thoughts that are quickly gone; but a fixing and staying of the mind upon heavenly objects.

As the bee sucks the honey from the flower, so by meditation we suck out the sweetness of a truth.

It is not the receiving of food into the mouth, but the digesting of it which makes it nutritious. So it is not the receiving of the most excellent truths in the ear,

which nourishes our souls--but the digesting of them by meditation.

Satan does what he can to hinder this duty. He is an enemy of meditation. The devil does not care not how much we read--so long as we do not meditate on what we read. Reading begets knowledge--but meditation begets devotion.

"Oh, how I love Your law! I meditate on it all day long." Psalm 119:97

Holy meditation quickens the affections. The reason why our affections are so cold to heavenly things is because we do not warm them at the fire of holy meditation. As the musing on worldly objects makes the fire of lust burn; the musing on injuries makes the fire of revenge burn; just so, meditating on the transcendent beauties of Christ, would make our love to Christ flame forth.

Meditation has a transforming power in it. The reading of the Word may affect us--but the meditating upon it transforms us. Meditation stamps the impression of divine truths upon our hearts. By meditating on God's holiness, we grow holy. While by meditation we look upon God's purity, we are changed into His likeness.

Meditation produces reformation. "I have considered my ways and have turned my steps to Your statutes." Psalm 119:59. If men would spend but one quarter of an hour every day in contemplating heavenly objects,

it would leave a mighty impression upon them!

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The looking-glass of self-love

"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" Jeremiah 17:9.

The heart is the greatest impostor.

Little does a man know what secret atheism, pride, and lust is in his heart.

As ignorance blinds, so self-love flatters.

Every man is ready to think the best of himself.

What Solomon says of love to our neighbor is most true of self-love; "it hides a multitude of sins." When a man looks upon himself in the looking-glass of self-love--his virtues appear greater than they are, and his sins less. Self-love makes one rather excuse what is amiss, than correct it.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139:23-24

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He came hewing and cutting down men's sins!

"Repent! for the kingdom of heaven is near!" Matthew 3:2

Hence learn, what kind of ministry is likely to do most good, namely, that which works upon the consciences of men. John the Baptist lifted up his voice like a trumpet, he preached the doctrine of repentance with power! He came hewing and

cutting down men's sins, and afterwards preached Christ to them. First, he poured in the vinegar of the law, then the wine of the gospel. This was that preaching which made men studiously seek after heaven. John did not so much preach to please--as to profit; he chose rather to reveal men's sins--than to show his own eloquence. The best mirror is not that which is most ornate, but that which shows the truest face. That preaching is to be preferred which makes the truest discovery of men's sins, and shows them their hearts!

It is the greatest mercy, to have a soul-searching ministry.

If one had a desperate wound, he would desire to have it probed to the bottom. Who would not be content to have their souls searched, so they may have them saved?

John the Baptist was a burning and shining light; he did burn in his doctrine and shine in his life; and therefore men pressed into heaven. John 5:35

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Error damns as well as vice

Error is the adultery of the mind; it stains the soul.

Error damns as well as vice. A man may as well die by poison--as by pistol.

Truth distinguishes a Christian from the world, as chastity distinguishes a virtuous woman from a harlot.

We have not a richer jewel to trust God with than our souls; nor He a richer jewel to trust us with than His truths.

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God's severity against sin

Meditate on God's severity against sin.

Every arrow in God's quiver is shot against sin.

Sin burned Sodom, and drowned the old world.

Sin kindles hell.

The meditation of this would frighten us out of our sins. There cannot be so much sweetness in sin--as there is sting. How dreadful is God's anger!

"Who knows the power of His wrath?" All fire, compared with the fire of God's wrath--is but painted and imaginary fire.

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Our words show what our heart is

"The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks."

Luke 6:45

Our discourse demonstrates what our heart is. As the looking-glass shows what the face is--whether it be fair or foul; just so, our words show what our heart is.

Vain discourse reveals a light, feathery heart. Gracious discourse reveals a gracious heart. The water of the conduit shows what the spring is.

Holy discourse is very edifying. It enlightens the mind when it is ignorant--and settles it when it is wavering.

A godly life adorns religion; godly discourse propagates it.

Gracious discourse makes us resemble Christ. His words were perfumed with holiness: "grace was poured into His lips." Levi made Him a feast--and Christ feasted him with holy discourse. The more holy our discourse is, the more we are like Christ.

God takes special notice of every good word we speak when we meet. "Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in His presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored His name." Malachi 3:16.

When men entertain bad discourse, Satan draws near, and makes one of the company; but when they have holy and gracious discourse, Jesus Christ draws near, and wherever He comes, He brings a blessing along with Him.

"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."

Colossians 4:6

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Go in a feather-bed to Hell

Slothful professors are settled on their lees. They make a lazy profession of piety--but use no diligence. They are like the lilies, which neither toil, nor do they spin.

They have some faint wishes, "Oh that I had Heaven!"

But a man may desire venison, and lack it--if he does not hunt for it. "The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied." Pr. 13:4

Men would be content to have the kingdom of Heaven; but they are loath to fight for it. They choose rather to go in a feather-bed to Hell, than to be carried to Heaven in a "fiery chariot" of zeal and diligence. How many sleep away, and play away, their time--as if they were made merely to rest, or amuse themselves! Such as have accustomed themselves to an idle, lazy disposition, will find it hard to shake off, "I have taken off my robe--must I put it on again?" Song of Songs 5:3. The spouse had laid herself upon the bed of sloth, and though Christ knocked at the door, she was reluctant to rise and let Him in.

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Enslaved

"Enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures."

Titus 3:3

Lust is an inordinate desire or impulse, provoking the soul to the gratifying of its carnal desires. Aristotle calls them 'brutish lusts' because when lusts are violent, they will not let reason or conscience be heard; but a man is carried brutishly to the satisfying of the flesh.

Men are enslaved by their drunken lusts. Though death is in the cup, they will drink it up. One having almost lost his eye-sight, the physician told him there was no cure for him, unless he would leave off his excessive drinking.

"Then," replied he, "farewell sweet light!"

Men are enslaved by their impure lusts. Men are said to

"burn in lusts," Romans 1:27. The apostle intimates that lust is a kind of fever. Feverish heats are not more deadly to the body, than lust is to the soul. O what folly is it--for a drop of pleasure to drink a sea of wrath!

Men are enslaved by their covetous lusts. Covetousness is the soul's idolatry. Their God is made of gold, and to it they bow down. Those who bowed down on their knees to drink of the waters, were accounted unfit soldiers for Gideon. So are those unfit for Christ, who stoop immoderately to the care of earthly things. Those who are enslaved by the world, what have they but the wind? "What does he gain, since he toils for the wind?" Eccles. 5:16. The world cannot enrich the soul, it cannot remove pain. If pangs of conscience come, the world can no more give comfort, than a crown of gold can cure a head-ache.

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The dregs of old age!

Someone asked Him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" He said to them, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to." Luke 13:23-24

Many put off seeking for heaven, until old age. When they are fit for no other work, then they will begin this taking heaven by storm.

No man says, "I will learn my trade when I am old."

It is imprudence for one to begin to work for Heaven,

when he is past his time for labor. There is a night of sickness and death coming, and our Savior says, "The night comes, when no man can work." Surely a man can put forth but little effort for Heaven when old age, and old sins are upon him. Besides, how unworthy and insincere it is--to give the Devil the flower of youth; and God the dregs of old age! There is little hope of their salvation--who are never seek for Heaven, until they are on the borders of eternity.

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Many seek heaven hypocritically
Many seek heaven hypocritically. They would have Heaven and their lusts too. But let not such seekers ever think to find happiness; let them not think they can lie in Delilah's lap--and go to Abraham's bosom when they die.

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What makes men so loathe to die?
Because their conscience accuses them that they are not fit for heaven--so now death looks ghastly! They are afraid death will carry them as prisoners to hell!

At the hour of death, sinners will awaken out of their lethargy--and fall into a frenzy of horror and despair!

But the Christian who has been active in piety, and has spent his time in the service of God, can look

death in the face with comfort. Death shall do him no
hurt; it shall not be a destruction, but a deliverance!
It shall purge out sin and perfect glory!

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He who digs in a gold mine sweats

"Christ's love compels us!" 2 Corinthians 5:14

Love to Christ made Paul labor more than all the other
apostles. A man will only strive for that which he loves.
Why are men so eager in their pursuit after gold--but
because they love it? Love causes delight, and delight
causes diligence. Love is like oil to the wheels. Get love
for Christ and piety--and you will never be weary; you
will count those the best hours which are spent with God.
When a man has warmed himself by this fire, he is fittest
for holy work.

He who digs in a gold mine sweats--yet love for
the gold makes his labor delightful.

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It cost more to redeem us, than to make us
Great was the work of creation; but greater the work of
redemption. It cost more to redeem us, than to make
us. In the one, there was only the speaking a Word, Psalm
148:5; in the other, the shedding of blood, Heb. 9:22. The
creation was the work of God's fingers, Psalm 8:3; the
redemption was the work of his arm, Luke 1:5. In creation
God gave us ourselves; in redemption He gives us Himself!

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