

Life a Battle

by W.R. Inge

To overcome the evil spirit and achieve virtue, one must engage in a constant battle, preparing for it by identifying weaknesses and turning away from sin, and using the tools of faith and prayer to withstand the enemy.

Scripture: Psalm 51:10, 1 Corinthians 10:13, 2 Corinthians 10:4, Ephesians 6:12, James 4:7

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Christian Virtue"

Description

W.R. Inge preaches on the necessity of spiritual warfare in the Christian journey, emphasizing that through fighting against temptations and sins, one learns to know oneself and grow in virtue. He urges believers to identify their weaknesses and actively defend themselves against the attacks of the evil spirit by turning away from sin wholeheartedly and seeking God's grace. In facing spiritual battles, man is equipped with powerful weapons such as faith, sacraments, God's word, and the support of the Church, enabling him to overcome the evil one and stand firm in his free will. In conclusion, Inge highlights the importance of maintaining God's presence in one's inner being, avoiding self-deception, and striving for God's glory alone.

Transcript

NOTHING in the world is so necessary for man as to be constantly assailed; for in fighting he learns to know himself. As grace is necessary to a man, so also is fighting. Virtue begins in fighting, and is developed in fighting. In every state to which a man is called, inward and outward, he must of necessity be assailed. A high Master said: As little as meat can remain without salt and yet not become corrupt, so little can a man remain without fighting. (104)

A man should in the first place act as when a town is besieged, and it is certain that the besieging army is stronger than the town. When the town is weakest, men take the very greatest care to guard and defend the town; if they neglected to do so, they would lose the town, and with it their lives and properties. So should every man do: he should be most careful to find out in what things the evil spirit most often besets him--that is, on what side the man is weakest, and to what kind of errors and failings he is most prone, and should manfully defend himself at those points.

Next, turn thyself earnestly away from sin; for I tell you of a truth, by whatever temptation a man is assailed, if he turns not from it heartily, but stands in it vacillating, he has no wholehearted desire to leave his sins by God's will, and without doubt the evil spirit is close upon him, who may make him fall into

endless perdition.

Know of a truth, that if thou wouldst truly overcome the evil spirit, this can only be done by a complete manful turning away from sin. Say then with all thy heart: Oh, everlasting God, help me and give me Thy Divine grace to be my help, for it is my steadfast desire never again to commit any deadly sin against Thy Divine will and Thine honour. So with thy good will and intention thou entirely overcomest the evil spirit, so that he must fly from thee ashamed.

Understand, however, that it is a miserable and pitiable thing for a reasonable man to let himself be overcome by the evil spirit, and in consequence of his attacks to fall voluntarily into grievous and deadly sin, whereby man loses the grace of God. A reasonable man, who allows himself voluntarily to be overcome by the evil spirit, is like a well-armed man who voluntarily lets a fly bite him to death. For man has many great and strong weapons, wherewith he may well and manfully withstand the evil spirit--the holy faith, the blessed sacrament, the holy word of God, the model and example of all good and holy men, the prayers of holy Church, and other great supports against the power of the evil spirit, whose power is much less than that of a fly against a great bear. If a man will manfully and boldly withstand the evil spirit, the evil one can gain no advantage against his free will.

Turn, therefore, manfully and earnestly from your sins, and watch diligently and earnestly; for I tell you of a truth, that when you have come to the next world, if you have not withstood the evil spirit, and if you are found there without repentance and sorrow, you will be a mockery to all the devils and to yourself, and you will be eternally punished and tormented. And it will then be a greater woe to you, that you have followed the evil spirit, than all the external pains that you must endure eternally for your sins.

Thirdly, a man should diligently attend to his inner Ground, that there shall be nothing in it save God alone, and His eternal glory. For alas! there are many men, both lay and clerical, who live falsely beneath a fair show, and imagine that they can deceive the everlasting God. No, in truth, thou deceivest thyself, and lovest the day of grace, and the favour of God, and makest thyself guilty towards God, in that He gives the evil spirits power over thee, so that thou canst do no good work. Therefore, watch while it is day, that the hour of darkness and God's disfavour may not overtake thee, and take heed that in thy inner ground God may dwell, and nought besides. (75)

Even as each man in his baptism is placed under the charge of a special angel, who is with him always and never leaves him, and protects him waking and sleeping in all his ways and in all his works, so every man has a special devil, who continually opposes him and exercises him without ceasing. But if the man were wise and diligent, the opposition of the devil and his exercises would be much more profitable to him than the aid of the good angel; for if there were no struggle, there could be no victory. (139)

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/wr-inge/life-a-battle/>

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