

The Strait Way to Heaven

Twenty Precious Directions for Your Souls

By William Dyer

1. First, Loathe sin—and leave sin.

"He who covers his sins shall not prosper—but whoever confesses and forsakes them, shall have mercy." Proverbs 28:13.

There must be a falling *out* with our sins—before there be a falling *off* from our sins. There must be a *loathing* of sin in our affections. Oh, is it not a thousand times better to part with sin—though ever so sweet—than to part with God, and Christ, and heaven? One of them, you must part with! One sin will damn a soul *out* of Christ—but no sin can damn a soul *in* Christ! Sin is the evil of evils! Sin is worse than the devil—for it was sin which made the devil to be a devil. Oh! the love of sin, and the lack of grace—will ruin and destroy our souls forever. It is better not to be—than to be an unrepentant sinner! Oh, therefore kill sin—that sin may not kill you. Mourn for sin—and flee from sin. Do not commit new sins—but repent for old sins!

"Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds, and you will loathe yourselves for your sins and detestable practices!" Ezekiel 36:31. Oh, poor soul—have you not served the flesh and the devil long enough? Yes! Have you not had enough of sin? Is sin so good to you—or is it so profitable for you? Oh, what a place will you be shortly in—of joy or torment! Oh, what a sight will you shortly see—in heaven or hell! Oh, what thoughts will shortly fill your hearts—with unspeakable delight or horror! What work will you be employed in: to praise the Lord with saints and angels, or to cry out in unquenchable fire with devils! Oh, therefore, die unto sin, confess it, mourn for it, and be ashamed of it; hate and loathe it, and flee from it as from a deadly serpent; and though your sins are more than you can *number*—yet they are not more than God can *pardon*! "If we confess our sins—he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

2. Put off the old man—and put on the new man.

"You have put off the old man with his deeds—and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him who created him," Col. 3:9, 10. "Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and

true holiness," Ephesians 4:24. "For, in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision—but a new creature," Galatians 6:15. "As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby," 1 Peter 2:2. "Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are past away, behold all things are become new!" 2 Corinthians 5:17. The "new man" is not what he was before; he has new understanding, a new will, new desires, new love, new delights, new thoughts, new words, new company, and a new life.

Oh, dear friends, be *new* creatures—that you may be *glorious* creatures. We can call nothing in heaven ours, until Christ is ours. Without regeneration, there is no salvation, "Truly, truly, I say unto you, unless you are converted, and become as little children, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Truly, truly, I say unto you: Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." You have heard much of God, Christ, and heaven, with your ears—but this will not bring you to heaven, unless you have much of God, Christ, and heaven in your hearts! You must be able to say, "I was once a slave of Satan—but now am a son of God! Once I was dead—but now I am alive! Once I was darkness—but now I am light in the Lord! Once I was a child of wrath, an heir of hell—but now I am an heir of heaven! Once I was under the spirit of bondage—but now I am under the spirit of adoption. A true believer lives:

IN the Lord, 1 Thess. 1:1.

ON the Lord, Romans 1:17, Luke 20:8.

FROM the Lord, John 6:57.

TO the Lord, Romans 14:8.

WITH the Lord, 2 Corinthians 13:4.

3. Make your peace—with the Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6, Psalm 2:12, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him!" Oh, do not lift your hands against his Son—but kiss the Son! Let:

his *will* be your rule;

his *Spirit* be your guide;

his *precepts* be your practices;

his *decrees* be your delights;

his *chosen* ones be your choicest companions.

Submit to his gospel and government. Oh, sirs! make your peace with God. There is a fourfold peace:

First, There is an *external* peace—that is, peace with *men*.

Secondly, There is a *supernal* peace—that is, peace with *God*.

Thirdly, There is an *internal* peace—that is, a peace with *conscience*.

Fourthly, There is an *eternal* peace—and that is, peace in *heaven*.

Psalm 37:37, "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright—for the end of that man is peace." If you have peace with God—then the world and the devil cannot hurt you. Believers have God for their guide and gain. He who meddles with the saints of God, assaults God himself! Zech. 2:8, "He who touches you, touches the apple of his eye." He who lifts up his hand against them, lifts up his hand against God! Though they have *many enemies*—yet they have *one friend* who has more strength than all their enemies. A ragged saint is dearer to God, than a glittering emperor who lacks grace. Oh, make your peace with the Prince of Peace, that in this life you may have the assurance of eternal life, and that eternal death may not be your portion in the next life!

4. Make piety your main business—and not a by-business.

"Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure," 2 Peter 1:10. "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling," Philippians 2:12. "But seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness!" Matthew 6:33. Oh! why is the glory of this poor world so much regarded—but because the glory of heaven is so little minded. Oh! what is an earthly kingdom—in comparison of the heavenly kingdom? The angels themselves, though they are *glorious* spirits—yet they are *ministering* spirits.

Do not most men of the world make light of God, and of Christ, and the Spirit, and heaven, and their precious souls? "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.' But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them!" Matthew 22:2-6.

Wretched worldlings make religion a by-business; they will hear, read, and pray, when they have nothing else to do. Oh, that such men did but know what

everlasting glory and everlasting torments are! Would they then do—as they now do? Oh, that they did but know the worth of their souls, and their need of a Savior; the shortness of their time, and the greatness of their work! Would they then neglect God and their own souls as they do?

Oh, friends, let me beseech you to whom I write, to make piety your main business! Make hearing, reading, praying, believing, and doing, your main business! "Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you!" John 6:27.

5. Do nothing in this world—but what you can answer for in the eternal world.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad," 2 Corinthians 5:10. "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel," Romans 2:16. "God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he has ordained," Acts 17:31. "For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil," Ecclesiastes 12:14.

Oh! for the Lord's sake, my dear brethren, let nothing be done by you in this world—but what may be answered for in the eternal world! Many men do that in this world—which they cannot answer for in the eternal world. Now they despise God, blaspheme God, rebel against God, go a-whoring from God, and persecute the beloved people of God. Instead of protecting the saints—they imprison the saints! They are more for crushing them—than comforting them! Instead of visiting them—they vilify them! And instead of affecting them—they afflict them! "They eat them up as they eat bread," Psalm 14:4, and will not allow them to worship the true God, in spirit and in truth—but despise mock, persecute, banish and kill them! Hebrews 11. They:

Threaten them, Acts 4:29.

Accuse them, Acts 24:5.

Slander them, Matthew 5:11.

Curse them, Matthew 5:44.

Beat them, Acts 5:40.

Imprison them, Acts 4:3.

Plunder them, Hebrews 10:34.

Murder them, Romans 8:36.

All this, poor innocent Christians suffer—while swearing, cursing, whoring, robbing, blasphemy, drunkenness, gluttony, and all manner of debauchery; yes, murder itself—walks unpunished in the streets! And only *he who departs from evil*—is a prey! What wonder then, if these ungodly ones shall one day hide themselves in dens and holes, and "cry to the rocks and mountains to fall upon them, and hide them from the face of him who sits upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!" Revelation 6:15, 16. Oh, what will persecutors do, when "the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power!" 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9. Will not they be confounded and speechless, and have never a word to say for themselves; as that man who did not have a wedding garment on? Matthew 22:12.

But, oh, beloved, let that "grace that has appeared unto all men—teach us to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, that we may live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," following the Lamb, resisting Satan, shunning sin and separating from the world.

6. The *Word* of God is the Christian's rule—and the *Spirit* of God is the Christian's guide.

"To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word—it is because there is no light in them," Isaiah 8:20. "We have a more sure word of prophecy, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place," 2 Peter 2:19. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," 2 Timothy 3:16. "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes—he will guide you into all truth." John 16:13.

Most people walk by false rules:

1. Some walk by popular opinions.
2. Some walk by worldly customs.
3. Some walk by providence.
4. Some walk by conscience.
5. Some walk by their own reason.

6. Some walk by other men's examples.

7. Some walk by their own lusts.

But, oh! my dear friends, let me beseech you to walk by none of these false rules—but keep close to the Word and Spirit of God.

The Scripture is a rule outside of us, to *show* as where we must go; the Spirit is a guide inside of us, to *enable* us to walk according to the direction of that Word. The Word of God is a *compass*, by which we must direct our course; the Spirit is the great *pilot*, who steers us in this course. We have no *eyes* to see the Word—until the Spirit enlightens them. We have no *ears* to hear the Word—until the Spirit opens them. We have no *hearts* to obey the Word—until the Spirit bows and inclines them.

By the Word of God—we know the mind of the Spirit of God. And by the efficacy of the Spirit—we feel the power of the Word. The Word of God *shows* us the way; and the Spirit of God *leads* us in that way which the Word points out. The Spirit of God is able to expound the Word of God, and to make it plain to our understanding. The Holy Spirit is the Christian's interpreter; he gives the Scriptures, and he alone can reveal unto us the sense and meaning of the Scriptures. The Word is God's *counsel*, to reveal the path in which we are to walk; the Spirit is God's *Counselor*—who teaches us to walk in that path. The Word is a looking-glass, which shows us our duty. If God had not put his Spirit into our hearts, as well as his Word into our heads—we would never have arrived at the fair haven of peace.

The Scriptures reveal the very heart of God. God Almighty has, in the sacred Scriptures, as it were, manifested himself, unfolded all his counsel to the creatures, as far as is necessary to be known for their direction and guidance to everlasting life.

7. Be faithful—and fruitful.

"Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain!" 1 Corinthians 15:58. "Every tree which does not bear good fruit—is hewn down and cast into the fire!" Christians must be fruitful—and not slothful. See that you bring forth *good* fruit—and *much* fruit. What are these fruit?

Firstly, Sincerity, which is not a single grace—but the *soul* of graces, "Behold, you desire truth in the inward parts," Psalm 51:6.

Secondly, Humility is a grace most prevailing with God for the obtaining of all

graces, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and humble in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls," Matthew 11:29.

Thirdly, Prudence. The patient Christian is the best for waiting—but the prudent Christian is the best for working, "Be *wise* as serpents—and *harmless* as doves," Matthew 10:16. We must have innocence with our wisdom—or else our wisdom is but craftiness. And we must have wisdom with our innocence—or else our innocence is but weakness.

We must have the harmlessness of doves, that we may not wrong others; and 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 innocence of doves; not to betray ourselves by rashness—here is the wisdom of the serpent.

Fourthly, Patience. "This calls for *patient endurance* on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus," Revelation 14:12. The way to bring the world under us, is to be patient under its frowns. Be faithful in your promises, and in your purposes. Be faithful to the ways of God, and cause of God. Oh! do not *begin* with the Lamb—and *end* with the beast; "but be faithful unto death—and I will give you a crown of life," Revelation 2:10. Keep your lights burning, and lamps shining, your loins girded, your consciences awakened, your garments unstained, and your spiritual armor constantly on, and closely girt!

Fifthly, Self-denial, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me," Matthew 16:24.

8. Beware of believing the world's report—of the people of God.

Those who have a good *conscience*, have not always a good *name*. The people of God in this life are called by the wicked: troublers, seditious, rebellious, and what not. This is an old device of that old serpent—to impute the troubles of the country upon God's Elijahs, "When Ahab saw Elijah, he said to him—Is that you, you *troubler* of Israel?" 1 Kings 18:17.

Jeremiah, for speaking against their sins and wickedness, and denouncing God's judgments against them—is judged worthy of death. "But when Jeremiah had finished his message, saying everything the Lord had told him to say, the priests and prophets and all the people at the Temple mobbed him. 'Kill him!' they shouted." Jeremiah 26:8.

Just so in Jeremiah 38:4, "These officials went to the king and said, "Sir, this man must die! That kind of talk will undermine the morale of the few fighting men we have left, as well as that of all the people, too. This man is a traitor!"

Just so with Amos: for speaking against the abominations of the king's court,

Amos is charged with treason against the king's person! Amos 7:10-13, "But when Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, heard what Amos was saying, he rushed a message to King Jeroboam: "Amos is hatching a plot against you right here on your very doorstep! What he is saying is intolerable. It will lead to rebellion all across the land." Then Amaziah sent orders to Amos: "Get out of here, you seer! Go on back to the land of Judah and do your preaching there!"

So Paul and Silas, for preaching up the kingly power of Jesus Christ, are accused by the envious Jews, and crude multitude, as turning the world upside down, and breaking the decrees of Caesar. Yes, *Christ himself* had this laid to his charge. Mark what the Jews say of him, "And they began to accuse him, saying, We have found this fellow perverting the nations, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying, that he himself is Christ a King," Luke 23:2. And for this have the servants of God in all ages been accused and persecuted, killed, and stoned, Matthew 23:37. Now, if the Lord and Master was called an enemy to Caesar, no wonder if those of his household be called so. *Our integrity will not secure us from infamy!* The choicest of professors have had *black marks* in the world's calendar. It is usual for those who live in treason and rebellion against the King of heaven—to slander his servants with treason and rebellion against the kings of the earth!

But, my dear brethren, take heed of this; for as the *death* of the saints is precious, so the *names* of the saints are precious in God's account. The world will father a hundred lies upon the Lord's people! "Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake," Matthew 5:11. 1 Peter 4:14. Wicked men hate those most—whom God loves most! But God will roll away the reproaches of his people; he will cause their innocence and righteousness to break forth as the sun at noon-day, and their names shall be in everlasting remembrance. Yes, at that great day, God will clear their innocence before men and angels, and all the world.

9. Keep in with God—when men are out with you.

"But it is good for me to draw near to God." Psalm 73:28, "He who dwells under the shadow of the Most High—no plague shall come near him." "He shall give his angels charge over you," Psalm 91:10, 11, "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior!" Habakkuk 3:18. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, and the righteous runs into it, and are safe." James 4:8. "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you." This is a great comfort to the people of God, though they be as *lilies among thorns*, and as *sheep among wolves*, that they have a God to go to! "Come, my people, enter into your chambers, and shut your doors about you; hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is over and past," Isaiah 26:20.

Let the world frown, and friends forsake you—God can sweeten all your enjoyments. Keep in God's way—and you will be sure of God's protection; you keep God's precepts—and God will keep you. Do what God commands, and avoid what God forbids—and then you need not fear what man can do unto you. If you would have God to take care of you—you must cast your care upon God; *wait* on him, and *walk* with him, *obey* his precepts, and *believe* his promises.

Oh! beloved, let wicked men fall out with us, and hate us, and reproach us, as much as they will, they cannot hurt us, if we keep in with God. Therefore, my beloved, above all things get communion with God, and keep communion with God. *All saints shall enjoy a heaven when they leave the earth; some saints enjoy a heaven while they are on the earth. Communion with God will yield you two heavens, a heaven upon earth, and a heaven after death!* He enjoys nothing—who does not enjoy communion with God.

10. Live above the love of life—and the fear of death.

"For whoever will save his life shall lose it; and whoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it," Matthew 16:25. "If any man comes to me, and hates not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yes, and his own life also—he cannot be my disciple," Luke 14:26. He who loves Christ more than his life—will be sure to save and keep both. He who goes out of God's way to avoid dangers, shall certainly meet with danger. "You are not your own, for you are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's," 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20.

My dear friends, let us live above sufferings and fears—though we cannot live without sufferings. "In the world you shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," John 16:33. He who loves Christ above life—will let life go rather than Christ.

Consider, my beloved, Christ and the cloud of witnesses and martyrs that are gone before, and passed over through all these floods, and safely arrived to shore, are now in heaven with God, and Christ—where there is fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore, "You will show me the path of life; in your presence is fullness of joy, and at your right hand are pleasures for evermore," Psalm 16:11. Oh! the joy that they enjoy! Oh! the rivers of consolation that flow from God! "They are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." Revelation 7:15-17.

Who are those who shall have all this honor, and glory, and joy, and blessedness in heaven? For this see verse 14, "These are those who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The sweetness of the crown which believers shall receive—will make them amends for the bitterness of the cross which they have carried!

11. Desire better *hearts*—more than better *times*.

"O, Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved. How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you?" Jeremiah 4:14. "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander," Matthew 15:19. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" Jeremiah 17:9.

Oh! beloved, instead of reforming ourselves—we are complaining of wicked men! We complain of their wickedness —more than our apostasy! We complain of their injuries against us—more than our injuries against God. We have been a long time in sinning—and we had need be a long time in repenting. But the times had not been so bad—had we not been so bad; the times would soon be better—if we were but better.

Alas! beloved, we have sinned such sins as unrighteous men could not sin! We have sinned against the clearest light, and dearest love! The better God has been to us—the worse we have been to him! He has loaded us with his mercies—and we have wearied him with our sins. Oh! Let us blame ourselves more, and *the times* less! Let us turn unto the Lord—that he may turn unto us in love and mercy! Let our hearts go out to him—that his heart may come unto us. Oh! beg and cry for better hearts, that you may serve God better! Beg for broken hearts, for sincere hearts; for it is the heart that God looks at, and calls for. Proverbs 23:26, "My son, give me your heart." Our hearts are always out of tune to serve God—but never out of tune to serve sin; for if we had ever so good times, and not good hearts, it would rather hurt us than bless us.

12. Grow downward in humility—and inward in sincerity.

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints," Ephesians 3:8. "Whoever shall exalt himself, shall be abased; and he who humbles himself, shall be exalted," Matthew 23:12. "Put on therefore (as the elect of God, holy and beloved) affections of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering," Col. 3:12. "Be clothed with humility; for God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time," 1 Peter 5:5, 6.

Be low in your own eyes, and keep a low esteem of yourselves; abhor pride, and

flee from it; be inwardly sincere, as well as outwardly humble; do not look heaven-ward by your profession, and hell-ward by your conversation, "He who lives in sin, is dead in sin," Ephesians 2:1. "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," Ephesians 6:24. Let your hearts be upright with God, and walk as those that have God for their portion; knowing there are many eyes upon you: the eye of God, the eye of Christ, the eye of angels, the eye of saints, the eye of the world, and the devil's eye upon you too! Therefore walk wisely, and sincerely; be like the king's daughter, all glorious within, Psalm 44:13, "She is all glorious within," though within is not all her glory, "her *clothing* is of wrought gold."

Do you think yourselves good, because others think so? Alas! the best men's confidence of us are poor evidences of heaven; the best testimony is that within us, and above us. See therefore that you grow in grace, and delight in holiness, bring forth much fruit, and live still as before the living God. Take heed of hypocrisy; make it your daily business to walk with God; be much in the exercise of humility; humility will exceedingly adorn your profession. Do not place religion in a few good *words*, when the *substance* is neglected; but live as you would die; live today as if you were to die tomorrow.

13. Do good—to those who are good.

"Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share." 1 Timothy 6:18. "He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" Micah 6:8. "Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share," 1 Timothy 6:18, "And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased," Hebrews 13:16, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world," James 1:27.

Oh! beloved, what an opportunity have you now to do good! Are there not many of Christ's ministers now in need, and members in need? And are there not some in prison for the gospel. "Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering," Hebrews 13:3.

There are many men who have a great deal of this world's wealth, and riches, and goods in their hands, and in their houses—but have no grace in their hearts! And therefore they do no good with the goods of this world. They live so unfaithful, that their lives are scarcely worth a prayer, and their deaths scarcely worth a tear. Men may as well go to hell for not doing good—as for doing evil. He who bears no good fruit, is *fuel for hell*—just as much as he who bears bad fruit. You may not be outwardly bad—and yet not be inwardly good. You may be as far

from grace as from vice! The rich glutton was in hell's torments, not for *persecuting* Lazarus—but for not *relieving* Lazarus. "I was hungry—and you gave me nothing to eat. I was thirsty, and you gave me nothing to drink," Matthew 25:42.

"'Curse Meroz,' said the angel of the Lord. 'Curse its people bitterly, because they did not come to help the Lord, to help the Lord against the mighty.'" Judges 5:23. It is one of the greatest mercies in the world—for God to give a man a heart to do good with that good which he has given him.

Oh! beloved, be always doing good—and hating evil. Look not only where you may get good for yourself—but where you may do good to others. Labor to be helpful to the souls of others, and supply the needs of others.

14. Choose *suffering*—before *sinning*.

"By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time." Hebrews 11:24-25. "You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions!" Hebrews 10:34.

Just so, the three Hebrew children chose burning in the fiery furnace—before bowing to the golden image! "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." Daniel 3:16-18

Just so, Daniel chose suffering before sinning. "Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before." Daniel 6:10

And it is said of those in Hebrews 11, "Others were tortured and refused to be released, so *that they might gain a better resurrection*. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated." Hebrews 11:35-37

Oh! beloved, there is more evil in the least sin against Christ—than in the greatest suffering for Christ! "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving

for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all." 2 Corinthians 4:17

1. Our sufferings for Christ are but light.
2. Our sufferings for Christ are short—but for a moment.
3. Christ stands by us in our sufferings.
4. Our sufferings are ordered by the Father.
5. Our sufferings shall not hurt our souls.
6. God gives us the best of comforts in the worst of times. We have most consolation from God—when we have most tribulation from men! As our sufferings do abound—so our consolations do abound. When the burden is heaviest upon the back—then the peace of conscience is sweetest and greatest within. Therefore, my dear brethren, keep yourselves out of the filthy puddle of this world, and from the evil of this world—and if you must *sin* or *suffer*—choose suffering before sinning.

15. Do not think the worse of godliness, because it is frowned upon; nor the better of ungodliness, because it is smiled upon.

"For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come!" 1 Timothy 4:8. "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ!" Philippians 3:8. "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; but rather reprove them!" Ephesians 5:11. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Romans 6:23.

Oh! friends, think not the worse of holiness because it is reproached, and scorned, and persecuted by wicked men and devils; nor the better of wickedness, because wicked men love it, and follow it, and say, "It is futile to serve God. What did we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the Lord Almighty?" Malachi 3:14. But there is a time coming, when ungodly men would give all they had—for that holiness that they now despise. But they shall be as far from *obtaining* it—as they are now from *desiring* it.

Let us therefore love holiness—and hate wickedness; for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," Hebrews 12:14. *Holiness* is the only way to *happiness*. We must not dress ourselves for the heavenly world—by the looking-glass of this vile world.

"You shall not follow the multitude to do evil," Exodus 23:2. "For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things!" Philippians 3:18-19. The children of God must be harmless in their actings—and blameless in their walkings.

16. Prize the Word of God by the *worth* of it—that you may never come to prize the Word of God by the *want* of it!

"How sweet are your Words unto my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" Psalm 119:103. "They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb!" Psalm 19:10. "I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my daily food!" Job 23:12. "Oh, how do I love your law! I meditate on it all day long!" Psalm 119:97. "Truly, I love your commands more than gold, even the finest gold!" Psalm 119:127. "Your law is more valuable to me than millions in gold and silver!" Psalm 119:72. "As new born babes—desire the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby!" 1 Peter 2:2. "Let the Word of God dwell richly in you;" not only *with* you—but *in* you, Col. 3:16.

Oh! let us, with Job, esteem the Word of God above our *necessary food*! Job 23:12; and with David, above our *gold and silver*! The delight of a saint in God's Word, over-tops all his creature delights. Wicked men can delight in the *creatures* of God—but not in the *Word* of God. They can delight in the *gifts* of God—but not in the *God* of gifts. Oh! let us *love* the Word, let us *prize* the Word! It is the sun of the spiritual world, as the sun is the light of the natural world. Without the sun—the world is but a chaos, and a dungeon full of darkness! Just so, the Word of God is the light of the spiritual world, without which a man is in eternal night.

Take away the Scriptures, and there will be no *certain rule* to direct men what is to be *done*, or what is to be *believed*. In Scripture, all *false ways* are here unveiled, all *sins* are here forbidden, all *holiness* is here commanded; here you may see every action and motion of our lives: as a step to life—or a step to death; as a step heaven-ward—or a step hell-ward. The Word is the savor of life unto life, unto those who believe. Oh! therefore prize and obey the Word.

1. It is a *plain* word.
2. It is an *consistent* word.
3. It is a *sure* word.
4. It is a *powerful* word.

Oh, beloved! let us read the Word, and abide in the Word, "If you continue in the Word—then you are my disciples indeed." John 8:31.

17. Beware of the *whore of Babylon's* golden goblet, and sweet wine!

"The *woman* wore purple and scarlet clothing and beautiful jewelry made of gold and precious gems and pearls. She held in her hand a *golden goblet* full of obscenities and the impurities of her immorality." Revelation 17:4. "Then the *dragon* tried to drown the woman with a flood of water that flowed from its mouth!" Revelation 12:15. Let me beseech you to beware of this, and keep yourselves from this! Be like the virgin spouse of Christ—who follows him wherever he goes.

My dear friends, *keep yourselves from four things:*

First, Beware of false TEACHERS. The devil has his ministers as well as Christ, "Beware of false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves!" Matthew 7:15. Yes, they are ferocious wolves, they can never have enough! They are false shepherds who look only for their own gain! "They are dogs with mighty appetites; they never have enough. They are shepherds who turn to their own way, each seeks his own gain!" Isaiah 56:11.

Oh! false teachers do not feed the flock—but fleece the flock! They do not convert—but pervert! They do not purify—but poison! They do not edify for salvation—but destroy for damnation! Instead of curing souls—they kill souls!

Just so long as they pilfer the people's money, they care not though the devil has their souls! They are neither rightly called, nor rightly qualified, nor rightly ordained, "These wicked people, who refuse to listen to my words, who follow the stubbornness of their hearts and go after other gods to serve and worship them!" Jeremiah 13:10. They are *dogs* and *wolves* combining together to massacre the flock of Christ. Oh! therefore keep yourselves from Babylon's merchants, who make merchandise of the souls of men, Revelation 18:13. Oh! the sins of teachers—are the teachers of sins!

Secondly, Beware of false DOCTRINE. "There were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways!" 2 Peter 2:1-2. "Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings!" Hebrews 13:9.

I beseech you also in the Lord, my brethren, that you do not carnally comply with, nor superstitiously conform to the *inventions of men*; but "stand fast in the liberty

with which Christ has made you free!" Galatians 5:1.

Thirdly, Beware of false WORSHIP. "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb!" Revelation 14:9-10.

"You Samaritans worship what you do not know. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." John 4:22-24.

As there are some in the world who worship a false god—so there be others who worship the true God—with false worship! Those who worship the beast—worship the devil! Oh! Do not meddle with false worship, with vain worship, and superstitious worship! Worship God as he teaches us to worship him. Our work is to depend on Christ's work; our outward working is to depend on God's inward workings.

Fourthly, Beware of false OPINIONS. Let your hearts be upright, your judgments sound, and your lives holy. Love the truth, and obey the truth, and hold fast the truth.

Now, beloved, let me beseech you for God's sake, and for Christ's sake, and for your souls' sake, keep yourselves from false teachers, from false doctrine, from false worship, from false opinions. If you will be tasting and sipping of Babylon's golden goblet—you must resolve to receive Babylon's plagues!

18. Be one with everyone—who is one with Christ.

"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." Ephesians 4:3. "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God. And everyone who loves the Father—loves his children, too." 1 John 5:1. "If anyone says, '*I love God*,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen." 1 John 4:20.

Oh! consider what a dishonor it is to the gospel, that those that profess themselves sons of the same God, members of the same Christ, temples of the same Spirit, heirs of the same glory—should be jarring one with another! It is strange and unnatural, that those who are *saints in profession*, should be *devils in practice* one to another; that God's diamonds, should cut one another! For *wolves* to devour the lambs is no wonder—but for *lambs* to devour one another, is astonishing, and monstrous!

Oh! Many professors, instead of *loving* one another—*hate* one another! Oh, how unlike are we to that God—whom we profess to be our God! He is full of love, full of goodness, and full of mercy and patience. Oh! but Christians cannot bear and forbear one with another. Oh! do not wicked men warm themselves at the *sparks of our divisions*, and say, "It is as we would have it!"

Oh! beloved, has not God made his wrath to smoke against us—for the divisions and heart-burnings that have been among us! Oh! that you would lay this to heart, and throw away discord and divisions, and heart-burnings, and labor for a oneness in love and affection, with everyone who is one with Christ. Oh, labor for a healing spirit.

You cannot love God—if you do not love the people of God, "If any man says he loves God, and hates his brother—he is a liar!" "Let brotherly love continue," Hebrews 13:1. "Those who feared the Lord, spoke often one to another," Malachi 3:16. *Christ's doves* flock together. There are many who cannot love a man—unless he is of their opinions. They cannot love a member of their church, though he is a member of Christ. Every man has a good opinion—of his own opinion! But, alas! beloved, it is not this opinion, nor that opinion; nor this way, nor that way, which will bring a man to heaven, without faith in Christ; and he that has faith in Christ, has a right to all the *ordinances* of Christ, and *promises* of Christ, and *privileges* of Christ. Therefore let me beseech you, to love every godly man—regardless of his minor differences from you. "All the believers were one in heart and mind!" Acts 4:32.

19. Love Christ with a love stronger than life—because he loved us with a love stronger than death!

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to seek and to save sinners," 1 Timothy 1:15.

Christ's love to us was stronger than death. He died for love! He laid down his life—to save our lives! He loves us—as the Father loves him, John 15:9, "As the Father has loved me—so have I loved you!" Oh, the Scripture has exceeding high expressions of his affection to us. Now, beloved, he died for us, and suffered for us, and set his heart upon us to love us and to delight in us; how ought we then to love him in return! "You shall love the Lord your God, with all your *heart*, and with all your *soul*, and with all your *mind*," Matthew 22:37. "Whom have I in heaven but you? I desire you more than anything on earth!" Psalm 73:25. "Unto you who believe—He is precious!" 1 Peter 2:7.

Oh! let your hearts be full of love and affection to Christ! Love will breed courage, and cast out slavish fear before God, and carnal fear before men! God can keep us from the torments of men—but men cannot keep us from the torments of God!

While we stand by God, God has promised to stand by us; therefore be not afraid of any authority that stands in opposition to the authority of Christ! None can *promise* better than Christ can; none can *threaten* us worse than Christ can. Can anyone *threaten* us with a worse thing—than eternal hell? Can any one *promise* us a better thing—than eternal heaven? Heaven will be the portion of those who love him; and hell will be the portion of those who hate him.

Oh! my dear brethren, let us love him with a love stronger than death! So did Paul and the rest of the apostles, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Romans 8:35, "Love is stronger than death; many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it!" Canticles 8:6-7.

20. Be every day as serious in your preparations for death—as if it were your last day.

"All the days of my appointed time will I wait—until my change comes," Job 14:14. "You fool! This night your soul shall be required of you!" Luke 12:20. "For what is your life? It is even a *vapor* that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away," James 4:14. "You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as *nothing* before you. Each man's life is but a *breath*. Man is a mere *phantom* as he goes to and fro: He bustles about, but only in vain; he heaps up wealth, not knowing who will get it." Psalm 39:5-6.

As no saint knows when that final time and hour shall be—so no wicked man knows when it shall be. To live without the *fear of death*—is to die living. To labor not to die—is to labor in vain. Men are afraid to *die* in such and such sins—but not afraid to *live* in such and such sins. Oh! the hell of horrors and terrors—which attends those souls who have their greatest work to do, when they come to die! Therefore as you would be *happy* at death, and *everlastingly blessed* after death—prepare yourselves for death.

Did Christ die for us—that we might live with him? And shall not we desire to die—and be with him? A believer's *dying* day—is his *crowning* day! "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. They will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them," Revelation 14:13.

Oh! I beseech you, my brethren, every day spend some time in *preparation* for, and *meditation* on:

death,

judgment,

hell,

heaven,

eternity.

Eternity is a sum that can never be numbered, a line that can never be measured! Eternity is a condition of everlasting sorrow, or everlasting joy.

Oh! think on this, and prepare for this every day, before the *night of death* comes!

Oh! think on this, and prepare for this every day, before the *night of death* comes!

And thus, my beloved, I have given you these twenty precious directions for your souls. I shall leave this book with you as a legacy of my dearest love. My desire in all this—is your *happiness* here, and your *blessedness* hereafter.

My earnest and humble desire of you is, that you would mind this book and my former treatises; not only *read* them—but *reform* your lives by them.

Oh! *do* your duty, *live* in your duty, and *love* your duty—that you may be made fit to be made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. This is, and shall be, the earnest and constant prayer of one who esteems it a most glorious privilege—to be of the number of those who "follows the Lamb wherever he goes!"

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