

Preparing for Death

An English Translation of:

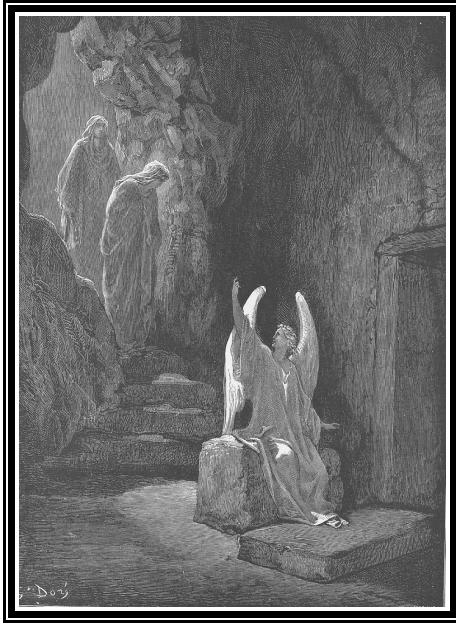
Handbüchlein zur Vorbereitung auf den Tod,
oder
Heilige Sterbekunst

by Pastor Martin Moller (1547-1606)

Translated by

Pastor Arthur E. Schulz
Stoddard, Wisconsin

1974



Angel at Sepulchre by Gustave Doré

Back cover art by Sharon Geiser †

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Preface

The author is probably unknown to our circle of readers. To introduce him, we transfer from the appreciative Preface of Rev. O. Willkomm the following biographical data: Martin Moller, a peasant's son, was born in 1547 at Leissnitz, near Wittenberg; studied at the latter place, became precentor at Loewenberg in Silesia in 1568; pastor at Kesselsdorf, near Loewenberg in 1572; diaconus at the latter place in the same year; pastor at Sprottau in 1575; pastor primarius at Goerlitz in 1600; lost his eyesight in 1605 but continued the active discharge of his pastoral duties until his death on March 2, 1606. He was the author of the well-known *Praxis evangelica*, a practical and popular exposition of the pericopal texts for Sundays and festival days.

He endeared himself to his generation, and to all generations of men since, especially by his book on "the holy art of dying." A book of this kind can never outgrow its usefulness in the Christian Church. The sad subject with which it deals is an ever-present reality with mortal men. And Moller is a most excellent companion to the dying Christian.

The theology which was able to produce this book three hundred years ago would obtain scant recognition in our day among "theologians." It is not scientific. Nor is death, nor hell, nor paradise. But this book exhibits that practical habitude of the mind to understand and to apply to men in their sorest needs the correction and comfort of the Divine Word, which only God can bestow and which alone constitutes a person a theologian.

* * * * *

The paragraphs above were written in 1910 by Dr. W.H.T. Dau in his review of the 1910 edition of *Heilige Sterbekunst* (*Theological Quarterly*, 1910, p. 254-255, published by Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo.). His words are so appropriate that they may stand as a fitting Preface to this edition in the English language.

Easter 1974

Pastor Arthur E. Schulz

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(Members of the Church of the Lutheran Confession – CLC)

Table of Contents

Chapter I - page 7

1. What a Christian should learn, retain and do from God's Word.
2. What a Christian life is.
3. What a blessed death is.
4. All men must die.
5. Four things that are hidden from us.
6. How we should rightly think on these things (the hour of death, the place of death, our circumstances at death, sickness at death).

Chapter II - page 13

1. Learning daily the right, blessed art of dying.
2. How a Christian prepares himself for a blessed death.
3. What proper, true, Christian repentance is.
4. Explanation of the first part of true repentance (knowledge and heart-felt sorrow over sin).
5. Explanation of the second part of true repentance (confident faith in Jesus, the Redeemer from sin).
6. Explanation of the third part of true repentance (new daily obedience toward God and men).
7. Our entire life must be a constant repentance.

Chapter III - page 27

1. The six parts of a Christian life.
2. Explanation of these six parts:
 - The Word of God
(Law and Gospel, and the proper use of both).
 - Holy Baptism.
 - The Lord's Supper
(remembrance of comfort, thanks, and love).
 - The daily cross and suffering of the children of God
(the seven rules of the cross).
 - The external calling of the Christ.
 - Daily prayer.

Chapter IV – page 49

1. Nine things to be observed in times of illness.
2. Explanation of these nine things:
 - Illnesses - God's rod.
 - Repentance - the soul's good health.
 - Prayer for deliverance.
 - Using good means.
 - Patience - a noble plant in illness.
 - Comfort in lengthy illness.
 - The need of trials.
 - Death or life.

Chapter V - page 61

1. Man's fear of death.
2. The distinct longing for death.
3. Whether a Christian can pray for a better life.
4. The motives for a willing death.
5. Preserving the heart against the attractive course of the world.
6. Comfort in forsaking of money and property, honor and joy of the world.
7. Comfort in forsaking of loved ones in poverty and unusual circumstances.
8. Comfort against love of life.

Chapter VI - page 73

1. How to quiet the fear of death and how one can attain a joyful and happy resignation toward death.
2. Practicing the constancy of faith unto the end.
3. Retaining the joy of faith in time of need and in feeling great weakness, yes, even in doubts concerning one's election.

Chapter VII - page 81

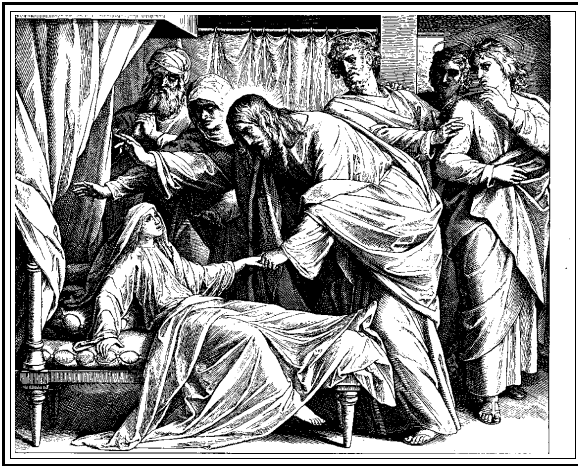
1. What death is for a Christian.
2. Comfort against the ugliness of the body in death.
3. Comfort against the hated names:
death, dying, grave, burial, decay.
4. Comfort against the painful movements of the dying.
5. Divinely approved medicine against the sting and bitterness of death.

Chapter VIII - page 89

1. The Articles of Faith and comforting sayings of Scripture, to use with the sick and dying.
2. Some beautiful little prayers for the dying (the Lord's Prayer, ten hymn prayers, six Psalms).
3. Some songs for the sick and dying.
4. Some short sighs for the dying to pray.
5. Conduct of the bystanders after a Christian's departure.

Chapter IX - page 117

1. Where the immortal soul goes and what happens to it after its departure from the body.
2. Whether the souls of the blessed long for their bodies, while the Resurrection is delayed.
3. The certainty of the Resurrection of the bodies of the dead.
4. The eternal joyful bliss of the eternal life.
5. The eternal pains of hell and damnation of the ungodly.



Jesus Raises Jairus' Daughter
by Albrecht Dürer

Preparing for Death

Chapter I

Summarizes the content of the book, and calls to mind that we humans are not only mortal, but are also completely uncertain as to how, when and where God will call us out of this world.

1. Briefly summarize for me: What must I learn from God's Word?

You should learn to *live* like a Christian and *die* blessed (Ps. 90:12; Eccl. 12:13).

Yea, unto this help me, my God, that I may learn here so to live, that I may also there live eternally. Amen.

2. What, then, is a Christian life?

A Christian life is that a person rightly learns to know God the Lord and himself (Jer. 9:23-24; Ps. 76:1; Ex. 20).

First, *God the Lord*, that He is one God in His essence (Deut. 6:4), and three-fold in persons (Matt. 28:19), namely, God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost (Ps. 67), and that of these three persons the middle one, the Son, was sent into this world, took human nature to Himself, and became our Savior (John 17:3; 1:14).

Next, each person must rightly learn to know *himself*, namely, that we are poor, great sinners in God's sight, and must be eternally lost (Ex. 20; Ezek. 18:20ff.) if we are not converted, believe in Christ, become new men, and from the heart serve God and our neighbor unto our end.

O one, eternal, almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, threefold in person and one in essence! I pray Thee, teach me rightly to know Thee and myself, grow daily in such knowledge, so that I may employ this my brief wretched life in praising Thee, serving my neighbor, and not being eternally lost myself, but live a truly repentant Christian life in Thy sight. Amen.

3. What does it mean to die blessed?

To die blessed means to conclude life in the true faith, to commend one's soul to the Lord Jesus Christ, and with heart-felt longings for eternal salvation gently and joyfully fall asleep and depart hence (Luke 2:29-30; Phil. 1:23; 2 Tim. 4:6-8).

Lord Jesus Christ! Thou alone knowest my last hour. I pray Thee, grant unto me also a blessed end and receive then my soul into Thine hands. Amen.

4. Must all people die?

Yes. For Scripture says thus: “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). Listen, my soul, and take this to heart: It is appointed unto all people once to die, so it will certainly come also to you. For so says the wise man Sirach: “Yesterday was my turn, and today is yours” (Ecclesiasticus 38:22). Yes, dear soul, mark well what Scripture says: **once** to die, not twice. If it were appointed unto us men to die twice, then it would be possible for a person to die better the second time, if he had not died well the first time. But no! To die badly once brings eternal destruction.

Lord my God, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, Thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth; and mine age is as nothing before Thee (Ps. 39:4-5). My God, teach me to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom (Ps. 90:12), and learn the truly salutary art of dying. Amen.

5. If only God the Lord had revealed the hour of our death, so that we could resign ourselves to it and be prepared for it at the right time!

Yes, my soul, not only is the hour hidden from you, but more besides. Elderly people say: “Not only the hour and time of our death

is hidden from us humans, but we also do not know in which place, under what circumstances, nor through what kind of sickness death will take us away.” These are surely weighty considerations, which you would do well to think about each day.

O Holy and wise God! Surely Thy thoughts are not our thoughts, and our ways are not Thy ways, for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are Thy ways higher than our ways, and Thy thoughts than our thoughts (Isa. 55:8-9). Grant that I, with heart-felt confidence, may daily walk before Thee, pray for a blessed hour of death, and have the firm trust that Thou wilt permit nothing to come upon me other than what is beneficial, good and blessed for me. Amen.

6. How should I, in my simplicity, rightly meditate upon these four considerations?

Thus. **First**, dear soul, you do not know in which **hour**, on which **day** or in which **year** of your life God will take you away; and whether it will happen by night or by day, in the evening or in the morning. It would have been a very easy thing for God the Lord to reveal this to us. But in His special wisdom and great goodness, He did not choose to do this. For behold, my soul, we miserable humans are so corrupted by sin and love the things of the world so much, that if we knew the hour of our death, then we would not think much about God, would neither fear nor love Him, nor pray to Him, nor repent, until the hour that was determined for us to die. If a person would repent only then, most people would still have to learn what true repentance is, and would keep on living evil lives. For that reason it is not detrimental to us humans, but salutary and good that we do not know the hour of our departure.

O my God, verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity! (Ps. 39:5) Surely, man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with Thee, Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass (Job 14:1,2,5). My God,

Who according to Thy wise counsel hast hidden from me the hour of my death, help me that I may live no day without true repentance. My Lord, Who hast remained silent concerning the hour of my departure, grant that I may so employ my entire life, that I may be found, day and night, yes, in all hours and moments, in true Christian readiness. Amen.

Secondly, you do not know at which *place* your end may be given to you: whether you will die at home or away, on your bed or in the field. Yes, my soul, the hour-hand of our life certainly never stands still, and no man knows when it will stop. For death is at our heel and pursues, to take us wherever he finds us. He waits for you in all places. If you are now a wise servant, then be prepared for him at all times with repentant heart (Matt. 24:44-47).

O my God, help me to know that in all places I am a wretched, mortal man and am nowhere safe from death. Since he follows me and everywhere lies in wait for me, help me to be a wise servant and wait for him in all places with a repentant heart. Amen.

Thirdly, my soul, you do not know in what *circumstances* the Lord your God will find you: whether He will find you asleep or awake, happy or sad, in worldly or spiritual affairs, drunk or sober, angry or peaceful. O dear soul, take diligent care of yourself, and do not permit yourself to be found for a single moment in any circumstances in which you would not gladly wish to die. Thus Sirach says: “Remember that death will not be long in coming, and that the covenant of the grave is now shewed unto thee” (Ecclesiasticus 14:12). Yes, dear soul, as the Lord will find you, thus will He also judge you (Luke 9:15,22).

Preserve me, my Lord Jesus, from carnal security, that I do not live thoughtlessly from day to day, as the ungodly who have no hope. Grant unto me, that I may so live day and night, may so be found in all my doings, that I may be ready in every moment and may have a blessed departure. Amen.

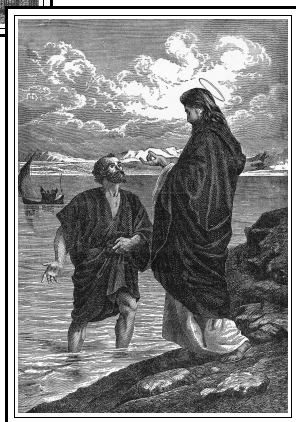
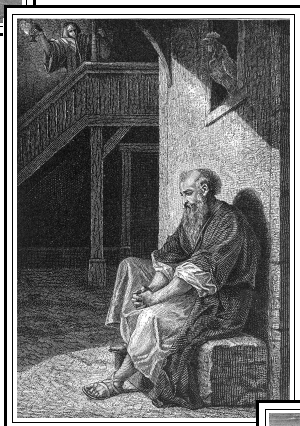
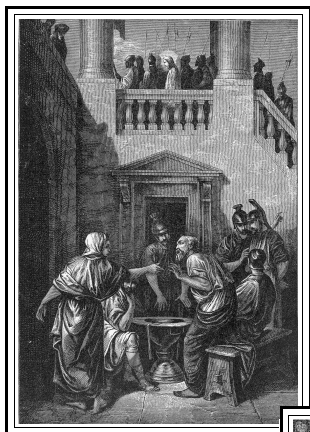
Fourthly, you also do not know, dear soul, through what *sickness* your God will permit you to die: whether through cancer or

heart attack, through disease or accident, whether you will die in flood or fire, by murder or wild animal, or the like. Yes, my soul, many indeed say: When I get sick, then I will repent and prepare myself. But no one knows whether God will thus permit him to get sick. Do we not have daily examples of that? In your memory, how many red lips have turned pale in death through a stroke, heart attack, etc., without experiencing a period of sickness!

My God! How unwise we miserable, careless humans are! How seldom we take these daily examples to heart! A bird is a creature devoid of reason. Nevertheless, when it sees that one next to it has been hit or shot down, it hurriedly flies away from there. Yes, when it sees that a man is stretching the bow and is taking aim at it, the bird doesn't wait but goes to another place where it is safe. O dear soul, that is what we humans should also do! Surely we see examples daily that death does not take a holiday, but shoots down one heart after another so that they fall. O arise, my soul, and flee from sin to righteousness, from hell to heaven, from the base evil world to the Lord Jesus Christ. There you can confidently say: Shoot now, death, whenever you wish. For if you now shoot my mortal heart and this temporal life, nevertheless by true faith I still have the Lord of eternal life by and in me, who gives me more than you can take away.

Therefore, dear soul, postpone not repentance while you are still able to sin. Let nothing hinder thee to pay thy vow in due time, and defer not until death to be justified (Ecclesiasticus 18:21-22).

Lord Jesus, my Savior! Preserve me from painful sickness and dreadful death. Overtake me not in my sins, and let me not die without repentance. But grant unto me a quiet, gentle end, without great anguish and pain, so that being in possession of my senses, I can with full deliberation have a good end, confess Thy Name in my last hour, and may commend my soul into Thy hands attentively and from the heart. Amen.



The Denial of Peter

The Repentance of Peter

Peter and His Lord by the Sea

by Alexandre Bida

Chapter II

Teaches the truly blessed art of dying, and considers the three parts of true Christian repentance.

1. Since we are never safe from death, it is necessary that both young and old, small and great, rich and poor, keep this in mind every day, and learn the truly blessed art of dying.

Surely. This is taught us by daily examples. And Sirach says: "Remember my judgment: for thine also shall be so; yesterday for me, and today for thee" (Ecclesiasticus 38:22). And again he says: "He that is today a king, tomorrow shall die" (10:10). Yes, dear soul, death is like a mower in a meadow, which cuts down everything with its blade, and cares not whether it be grass or flower, herb or rose. It does not ask how old, how beautiful, how precious it is. Death does likewise. For him nothing is too strong, nothing too young. For him no castle is too high, no fortress too strong. No money or gold is able to send him away. Yes, if it were possible for you to give him all of this world's goods, you could buy from him not one hour of delay to add to your pleasure. Everyone should remember that every day, and take it to heart, not laying his head down gently until he has learned rightly and well the blessed art of dying.

O my God! Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away (Ps. 144:4). He knows not whether he is to die young or old, and can protect himself against death neither with power nor riches. Help me, my God, that from my earliest youth I may evermore take such things to heart, walk blameless in my way, and take heed according to Thy Word (Ps. 119:9). Govern me through Thy Holy Spirit, that my heart may not be turned aside, that I may not boast of my youth, nor rely on my health and strength, on honor, riches and beauty. Grant that each day I may consider well the chief summary of all doctrine and commandments: Fear God, and keep His Commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil (Eccl. 12:13-14). My God, inscribe this in my heart, and grant that I may not only know, but also do, and direct me according to it unto my end. Amen.

2. How should I then prepare myself for a blessed death?

The proper preparation for a blessed end is a daily, Christian, repentant life. If you wish to die well and blessed, dear soul, then repent truthfully and genuinely, and persevere therein unto the end. For we read: “God givest repentance for sins” (Wisdom of Solomon 12:19). And again Scripture says: “He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Matt. 24:13).

Praise be to Thee, my God, that Thou hast no pleasure in our death and damnation, but wilt that we should return and live (Ezek. 18:23,32; 33:11). Help me, my Lord Jesus, that I may not postpone turning to the Lord, and procrastinate not from day to day (Ecclesiasticus 5:7). For Thou hast indeed assured me of Thy grace, but Thou hast not promised to give me tomorrow (Ps. 95:7). Yea, grant that I may today repent and turn, so that tomorrow I will not be seized in my sins and be cut off. Amen.

3. What, then, is genuine, true Christian repentance?

Repentance is nothing else than that a person desists from sins and turns in his heart to God. But it consists of these three parts:

First, that a person recognizes his sins and repents of them in his heart.

Secondly, that he does not despair in his sins, but believes in Jesus Christ who has paid for our sins, and gladdens and comforts His own in their hearts.

Thirdly, that he also show his faith with new daily obedience, both toward God and men.*

*Note: Repentance actually consists of only two parts, namely, of contrition and faith. The third part mentioned here, the new obedience, is actually a fruit of repentance, as John says: *Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.* Matt. 3:8. This fruit is an immediate and necessary result of true conversion, for faith without works is dead (James 2:20). That this is the intended meaning here can be seen from the conclusion of the following prayer, where the fruits of faith are spoken of as over against hypocritical faith.

Lord my God! I know that I cannot, by my own reason and strength, come to true repentance, nor believe in my Lord Jesus Christ. I pray Thee, stir my heart by Thy Holy Spirit, and grant that my conversion may not be hypocrisy and my faith not false, but honest and from the heart, and that it may at all times be perceived and recognized by its genuine fruits. Amen.

4. Explain to me the three parts of true repentance and instruct me how I should prove myself to be therein and daily live according to it.

Gladly. The *first* part is genuine true contrition and sorrow over sin. For without knowledge of sin, faith is only hypocrisy and is not honest. Therefore learn to know your sins, consider the wrath of God against sin, and heartily lament in this way:

O my Lord Jesus! How frightened my heart is when I think of the day of my death! My God! How alarmed my soul is when I consider the day of Thy terrible Judgment. I am not safe from death for even a moment, and know not in which hour Thou wilt stand me before Thine earnest Judgment.

O how completely corrupt my heart is! How greatly I have sinned! How evil I am, my God, in Thy sight. My Lord! Behold, here I have Thy Holy Ten Commandments before my eyes, yes, in my conscience, and know that they are the rules of Thine eternal justice. Thou hast shown me how I am to live in complete conformity to Thy Holy will, or else lose my salvation. Ah, the great corruption! Ah, the abominable ruination of all my powers! Ah, the great shame which has happened through Adam's fall and which we have all inherited. My God, how far my heart is from conforming with Thy Commandments!

Indeed I know and find that I am conceived and born in original sin, that I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me (Ps. 51:5). The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint, yes, from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it, nothing upright in me (Isa. 1:5-6), but all is corrupted through the sin that dwelleth in me (Rom. 7:17). Thou murderer in hell! How miserably you have dealt with me: You have darkened my understanding, perverted my will, ruined my heart and all my powers.

My God! I confess, I know, I perceive that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing (Rom. 7:18), but is all full of wounds and bruises and putrifying sores (Isa. 1:6). And even if I had committed no sin throughout my life, I would nevertheless be a child of wrath on account of original sin, and therefore I must be eternally damned and rejected from Thy sight.

But unfortunately it is not limited to original sin. From my earliest youth I have also transgressed all of Thy Ten Commandments, never keeping any of them. Because of the corruption of my nature I have not been able to keep them, but have sinned terribly and frightfully, against the greatest and the least with sinful lusts, sinful desires, sinful gestures, sinful thoughts, sinful words and works, sinful silence, and neglect of Thee, my dear patient God, and my neighbor. I also know and understand that no sin is so slight, no misdeed so small (even if it were only the slightest thought); I have therewith earned eternal death and damnation.

I am also grieved that many of my terrible sins are still hidden, yes, many sins of my youth which I can no longer remember and which I no longer even consider to be sins, but to be good works. All of these will afterward be fully revealed to me, will appear in their true color - coal-black, and will overtake me as from an ambush.

What should I do? Where shall I flee? My God! If Thou wilt enter into judgment with me, then I must be cast out eternally from Thy presence (Ps. 143:2). O my dear soul, thou unfruitful tree, O thou withered, worthless wood, thou art worthy to be hewn down and to be cast into the eternal fire (Matt. 3:10). O thou prodigal son, thou wayward child, how you have turned away from your pious father, eaten the husks with the swine and wallowed in the filth of sin (Luke 15:13-16). What will you answer on that day when you must give an account of your whole life, yes, even of every insignificant idle word? (Matt. 12:36).

O thou unprofitable, wicked servant, your debt is surely ten thousand talents, and you have sinned countless thousands of times against your God (Matt. 18:24). O thou unfaithful steward, how shamefully you have wasted the gifts of your reason and misused your noble senses and understanding (Luke 16:1). Cursed are you, if you have not kept everything that is written in the Law of God (Deut. 27:26; Gal. 3:10).

O woe to this wretched man! What have I done? O what evil I have done! O wrath of the Most High, fall not upon me! O anger of the Most High, who can endure it? O anguish, O terror, O soul corrupted by the filth of sin! Yet I am seldom sorrowful that I am such an abomination before my God. Yes, my God, I am not worthy to be called a man and that I should walk upon Thy ground and soil. It would not be surprising if the earth would open and swallow me up, that I should be lead living into hell.

O repent and mourn, thou wretched soul. O weep and lament, thou evil man! Yes, you should weep blood over your sins, if it were possible, and grieve with everything that is in you. O woe to thee, thou hardened heart! Can no terror soften you? Woe to thee, thou sleeping heart! Can no threatening awaken you? O thou deadly sleep, can you not be driven away by any lightning and thunder of the stern Law of God! Up, dear soul, arise! Hasten to repentance, that you will not be seized in your sins. See, the Day of the Lord is at the door; as a snare shall it come upon you! (Luke 21:35). See, death is grasping for you, and in a moment it will catch you!

Therefore I speak and am not silent. I confess and admit before my God all that I have in my heart. O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night over my sins (Jer. 9:1). O weep, dear soul, let your tears run down like a river day and night, give thyself no rest, let not eye cease weeping (Lam. 2:18), for the Most High is angry over your sins.

5. Should a person then be despondent in such sorrow and despair in his sins?

Yes, let this be done before God! But now follows the *second* part of true Christian repentance, which is the true, sincere faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, who has paid for our sins and reconciled us with God (Rom. 5:9-10). Here you should again refresh and learn to comfort yourself in your heart in your dear Lord Christ in this manner:

O dearly beloved Lord Jesus, Thou sweetest Savior! My heart is completely distressed within me, my soul is fearful in my body! My God, Thou hast crushed all my bones as a lion (Isa. 38:13). I pray Thee, that Thou wilt not despise my broken and contrite heart (Ps.

51:17). My Savior, reach to me Thy hand of grace, pull me out, and do not let me sink in over-much sorrow. Yes, my Lord, I thank Thee that Thou hast stirred my heart, granted me to know my sins, and bestowed heart-felt repentance. For I have been made sorry after a godly manner (2 Cor. 7:9), and not for my harm; for godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of (2 Cor. 7:10).

But where should I now seek comfort for my distressed soul? Where shall I find peace and rest for my broken heart? Yes, alone in Thee, my sweetest and most dearly beloved Savior. For Thou hast come into this world to save poor sinners (1 Tim. 1:15), and therefore Thy name was called Jesus, that is, a helper and Savior, in order that Thou mightest save Thy people from all their sins (Matt. 1:21).

What am I, my Savior? Although I am a great sinner, yet I am repentant. See, I have heard Thy comforting voice, when Thou callest: *Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest* (Matt. 11:28). Behold, my Savior, I also come to Thee, yes, I come and bring Thee a greatly distressed, contrite, broken and fearful heart. O give rest to my miserable soul! O heal my sinful conscience! O Thou dear Holy Lamb of God, which beareth and taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29), bear and take away from me all guilt and sin, and forgive me all my misdeeds.

My Savior, Thou art the only sacrifice by which I am reconciled to my God. For just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so Thou was lifted up on the cross, that I and all who believe in Thee should not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:14-15). I also believe, my God, but help Thou my weakness (Mark 9:24). Yes, Lord, Thou knowest all things (John 21:17), Thou knowest that I believe in Thee, although with a weak faith. Nevertheless with this little faith I place all my trust and confidence in Thee. I believe and doubt not. I believe and trust that all my oppressive and stinking sins are most certainly atoned and paid for through Thy Blood and Death.

Yes, my Redeemer, I know and believe, I trust and am certain, that Thy pure conception has purified my sinful conception, Thy unspotted Birth has sanctified my impure birth, Thy holy conduct atones for my sinful conduct, Thy humiliation is my exaltation, Thy pains of hell are my comfort of Heaven, Thy bonds are my redemption, Thy dishonor my honor, Thy wounds and stripes my

glorious dress, Thy performance my acceptance, Thy suffering my payment, Thy merit my ransom, Thy bloody Death is the true guilt-offering for all my sins, Thy obedience is true satisfaction for all my misdeeds, Thy descent into hell is my deliverance from the power of hell and the devil, Thy Resurrection is my justification, and Thy Ascension is my assurance that I am surely an heir of eternal life and already possess Heaven through Thee.

Yes, my Lord Jesus, all of this Thou hast done for me. Thou hast presented and given it to me to be my own. And Thy Heavenly Father imputes it to me, and it is as certain as though I had earned it all myself and had accomplished the entire work of redemption myself (Phil 3:9). Yes, be of good cheer, my soul, and rejoice, for you have forgiveness of all your sins (Matt. 9:2), are righteous before God, have a gracious Father in Heaven, are an heir of Eternal Life, and have the pledge of your inheritance in your heart, namely, the Holy Spirit, Who giveth witness to your spirit that you are a child of God (Rom. 8:16). Who shall now lay anything to your charge, dear soul? It is Christ who has paid for us. Who will accuse you? It is God Himself who says you are absolved and free, holy and righteous (Rom. 8:33-34).

Do you still think back to the harm you suffered through the first Fall? Does that corruption which has come upon you through Adam still make you sick? O glorify and praise the Name of the Lord, for you have received more in Christ Jesus, your Redeemer, than you lost in Adam (Rom. 5:17-19). O wonder above all wonders! Who can comprehend it? Delight thyself, my soul, and meditate on this a little. Consider what you lost, and then remember what you have received.

1. Notice how the plotting of the devil did not succeed. For he intended to turn you completely away from God the Lord and to cause you to sink in God's eternal wrath and displeasure. By contrast, Christ your Lord has not only reconciled the Father again, stilled His wrath and earned eternal grace, but has also brought you to such an indescribably high honor, that you have become God's kinsman, because He has taken your flesh and blood unto Himself (Heb. 2:14,17). Surely you can come to no greater honor, for then you would have to be God Himself.

2. Satan intended to deprive you of the pleasures of paradise and rob you of the company of the angels. By contrast, Christ your Savior leads you not only into the heavenly Paradise and Eternal Life, but has also raised you above all angels and made you glorious, for He took not on Himself the nature of angels, but human nature (Heb. 2:16).

3. Satan intended to destroy for you the food of life. He succeeded also in this way: for God the Lord cast off men on account of their sins, that they should not eat from the Tree of Life in Paradise (Gen. 3). By contrast, Christ Himself has become our food (John 6:51) and is Himself the Tree of Life, which is much better than the former one, and spreads out His branches and arms, that we might recline beneath them, crawl under them, eat from them and be filled, and have rest and eternal peace under His shadow.

4. Satan wanted to deprive you of all your righteousness, hurl you into sin, rob you of your inheritance, within which you were created pure and without sin and an image of God. By contrast, the Lord gives you a much better righteousness, namely, His merit, His satisfaction, which is imputed to you fully through faith (Phil. 3:9), and is your righteousness which alone avails before God.

5. Satan has, through Adam's fall, robbed you of the image of God, wounded you in all your powers, ruined and left you half dead* (Luke 10:30), so that no power nor members were left that could do and fulfill God's will, and thus we would have to die eternally and be destroyed. By contrast, Christ the Lord has not only again clothed you with His own righteousness, healed your bruises

*Note: That fallen man lies there *half* dead is not to be understood as though there is still some spiritual life in him, or as though he still has some power for spiritual good. For Scripture says: *You were dead in trespasses and sins*, Eph. 2:1. But the meaning is that fallen man still has bodily life, although he is spiritually dead, as Lyra says: "Taken away was the life of grace, while the natural life remained." In other respects, one keeps in mind that parables can be the basis of no fixed doctrine, and should not be expanded beyond the point of the parable, as Moller here also does not wish to do.

with His own Blood and Death (Isa. 53:5-6), caused you to be born again through His Holy Spirit, and again restored the image of God. But He will also on the Last Day glorify your vile body and fashion it like unto His glorious Body (Phil. 3:21).

6. To sum it up, Satan intended to destroy all your glory and hurl you down with himself into eternal damnation. By contrast, Christ springs to your rescue, and not only takes upon Himself your flesh and blood, makes satisfaction for you, reconciles you with God, earns forgiveness of sins for you, presents to you His righteousness, gives you the Holy Spirit and Eternal Life, but also lifts you up to such great glory that now, before God, you are righteous, holy, free, a child of God, an heir of God, a brother of the Lord Christ, His member, His bride, His co-heir, a temple and dwelling of the Holy Trinity and an instrument of the Holy Spirit.

Surely it is true, dear soul: He hath done all things well (Mark 7:37). Yes, my Lord, Thy Name is therefore to be praised in all eternity. O my God, how lovingly Thou hast comforted me, how gloriously Thou hast refreshed my soul, how sweet Thy comfort is to me, how wonderfully my heart now rests content.

Thou art indeed the true golden portals of grace to Eternal Life. Thou art the Way, the Truth and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by Thee (John 14:6).

Thou art the *Way*. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

Thou art the *Truth*. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in Thy doctrine, he hath not God. But he that abideth in Thy doctrine, he hath both Thee and Thy Father (2 John 9).

Thou art also the *Life*. For he that believeth on Thee hath Everlasting Life. But that believeth not on Thee shall not see Life, but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3:36).

O Lord Jesus, Thou one, eternal, genuine ladder to Heaven, without Whom no one can come to the Father, grant that I by true faith may ever cling firmly to Thee, through Thee ascend into Heaven and receive Eternal Life. Amen.

6. Since I am now through Christ completely reconciled with God, justified before Him by faith, and already saved in hope, can I now live in whatever way I please until the hour of my death draws near?

O no, dear soul! If true faith is in your heart and if you have been born again through the Holy Spirit, then you will think altogether differently. For people who have been born again are minded after the new life (Rom. 8:5). And faith is ever on guard against willful sins and is averse and hostile to all ungodly ways. If a believer is overtaken by Satan and from his inborn weakness makes a false step (Prov. 24), then he immediately pulls himself together, repents daily of his fall, and comforts himself in his Lord Jesus. There is therefore no condemnation to him, for he clings to his Lord Jesus Christ by faith (Rom. 8:1).

And that is now the *third* part belonging to true Christian repentance, namely, the new obedience toward the Ten Commandments of God, in which faith daily demonstrates itself and thankfully and richly shows forth in all good works toward God and men. You should now daily exercise yourself in this way:

I thank Thee, My God, Heavenly Father, that Thou hast created me in Thine image, and since I have fallen into sins and Thy wrath, Thou has sent Thy dear Son to be my Savior. What shall I render unto Thee for all Thy benefits toward me? (Ps. 116:12). Govern me by Thy Holy Spirit, that I may delight in Thy Commandments (Rom. 7:22), for in vain does one worship Thee with the commandments of men (Matt. 15:9). Grant that I may no longer live after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Rom. 8:1), war a good warfare, and ever hold faith and a good conscience (1 Tim. 1:18-19). Grant that this mind may be in me, which was also in my Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:5), Who has left me an example, that I should follow His steps (1 Pet. 2:21). Strengthen me in my faith and hope, that I may wrestle and fight, resist Satan, not follow the evil world, for its course leads to hell. Grant that I may daily crucify my sinful flesh (Gal. 5:24), restrain and overcome the lusts of the flesh (1 Cor. 9:27), that I may die to sin from day to day (Rom. 6:11), and apply

myself to all discipline and virtue. Help me at all times, my Lord, from the heart to fear Thee, to love Thee with all my power, and find all my desire and joy in Thee. Grant that I, Thy creature, may rightly know thee, my Creator; be comforted and steadfast to the glory of Thy Name, and ever call upon Thee in humility. Grant that I may ever have desire and love for Thy Word and be obedient to all of Thy Commandments.

Lord Jesus Christ, inflame my heart with Thy love, that I may ever cling to Thee as my highest treasure, and regard nothing in this world to be as dear as Thee. Incline my heart to Thee, my Savior, that I may have no regard for the treasures of this world, but long for the eternal blessings. Preserve me from the miserable serving of the belly, and grant that I may place no trust on that which perisheth.

My Savior! Grant me true patience in all manner of cross and tribulation and steadfast courage and comfort in all temptations. Grant that I may not despair in misfortune, and be modest and restrained in prosperity. Incline my heart to godliness, and grant that I may ever do and think according to Thy will, and serve Thee with a pure, sober, devout, chaste, upright heart and a ready spirit.

My Lord! Teach me ever through Thy Spirit, and let me not fall in my weakness. Guide me with Thy right hand and lead me, that I may think and do in all things according to Thy good pleasure.

My God! Help me, that my heart may not be arrogant, that my heart may not waver from Thee, that my mouth may speak no malice nor misuse Thy Name; that I may live soberly and modestly, and not over-indulge my body so that it will not be wanton.

Grant unto me, my Lord, that I may not slander nor defame my neighbor, not overstep my calling, not seek after unjustly acquired riches, not strive after mere honor, not be a hypocrite nor a flatterer. My God, grant that I may not despise the humble, that I may gladly give to the needy and the poor, do not grieve the unfortunate, and not be miserly nor envious.

My Creator! Blot out from me all evil thoughtlessness, stubbornness, anxiety, wantonness, malevolence, idleness, laziness, negligence, foolishness, impenitent mind and unkind habits.

My God, my mercy, I pray Thee through Thy dear Son, grant me ever an obedient heart, that I may exercise myself in all manner of works of love, and show kind-heartedness toward all.

Help me ever to repay evil with good, leave all revenge to God, do good to my enemies, and honor all men. Help me to follow after the godly and to shun the ungodly. Grant that I may receive virtue unto myself, and flee all vice, and that I may die as a sworn enemy of all sin and shame.

Preserve my heart in the one true faith, that I fear Thy Name, in order that I may also examine and know myself, that I may walk on the right way, and may let my faith shine forth.

Finally, deliver me from all evil, and grant that I may despise the earthly and earnestly strive after the Heavenly. Amen.

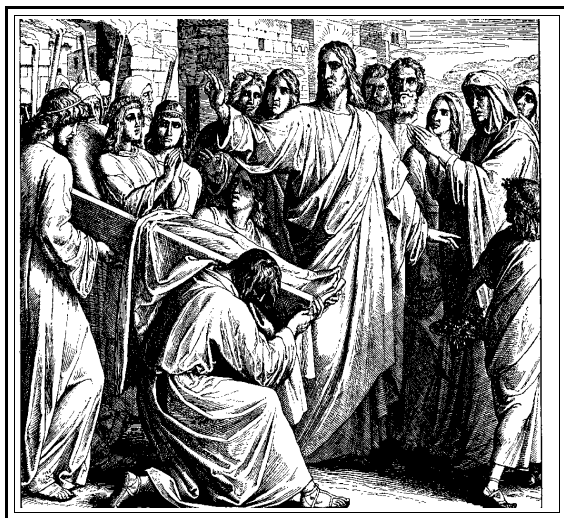
7. Is it then enough if a person repents once in a proper manner, or perhaps should this be done once a year?

O no! For Christ the Lord teaches us to pray every day and without ceasing: *Forgive us our debts* (Matt. 6:12). And St. Peter says: *Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ* (2 Pet. 3:18). Yes, also St. Paul prays to God the Lord on behalf of the Ephesians, that they might *be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man* (Eph. 3:16). And David says: *For this shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found* (Ps. 32:6).

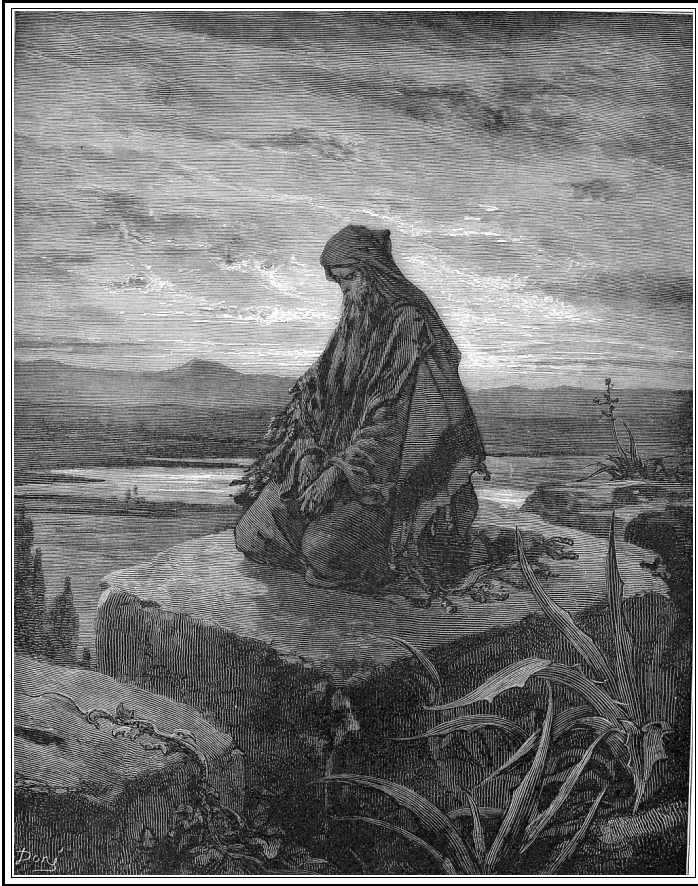
Do you hear, dear soul, that you are not to repent only once, nor even just once a year, and thereafter live again in wanton sins. Rather, your whole life should and must be one continuous repentance. For if it is to be a Christian life, then it must also be a repentant life. It was for that purpose that you were born again through Holy Baptism and became a child of God (Rom. 6), that the old Adam in you is to be drowned through daily contrition and repentance and die with all sins and evil lusts, and again a new man daily come forth and arise, who shall live before God eternally in holiness and righteousness. Therefore Solomon also says: *The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day* (Prov. 4:18).

O God and Father of all grace and mercy, Who hast called me in Christ Jesus to Thine eternal glory, and didst grant that I, through true genuine faith, could taste the sweetness of Thy grace

and knowledge, and have become a temple and dwelling of Thy Holy Spirit and an heir of the Kingdom of Heaven! Govern me ever by the same Holy Spirit, that I may ever continue in true repentance, fight unceasingly against all sin, grow in Thy knowledge, and as a newborn person increase in all godliness, and ever become stronger in faith. Grant that I may preserve my soul and not look back, so that the proverb may not be true of me: The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire (2 Pet. 2:22), and that the last may not be worse unto me than the first (Matt. 12:45). Yes, my God, with my own power nothing is done; how soon I am fallen. But it is Thou Who workest in me both to will and to do of Thy good pleasure (Phil 2:13). Yea, so wilt Thou also do, complete, strengthen, confirm, establish and complete this Thy work which Thou hast begun in me unto mine end. Leave me not, that I may not leave Thee. Withdraw not Thy hand from me, God my salvation! Search me, my Lord, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (Ps. 139:23-24). Amen.



Jesus Raises the Widow's Son by Albrecht Dürer



Isaiah by Gustave Doré

Chapter III

Comprises six chief parts which belong to a Christian, God-pleasing life.

1. If I then continue in daily repentance and perhaps have many adversities on the narrow path, how should I conduct myself so that I do not lose my faith and go astray?

That is indeed a necessary question, dear soul. For even though we are newborn people and have become children of God through faith, still we carry this noble treasure in earthen vessels (2 Cor. 4:7) and weak bodies, and the devil afflicts us and tempts us in all of his thousands of ways, and the world with its attractive ways gives many bad examples. That pleases our corrupt flesh and blood very much, which springs after them briskly and happily, and does not consider that such is the broad way which leads into the abyss of hell. Therefore, dear soul, if you wish to complete your race in a Christian manner and receive the end of your faith, even the salvation of your soul (1 Pet. 1:9), then keep these six things daily before your eyes and in your heart, that you may direct the course of your life according to them:

1. Hold fast daily to God's Word, and learn rightly to understand it, rightly to divide it, and rightly to use it;
2. Remember daily your Holy Baptism;
3. Partake of the Lord's Supper often and diligently;
4. Learn to prepare yourself properly for the cross and suffering;
5. Remain in your calling;
6. Pray without ceasing.

Help me, Lord Jesus Christ, that I, an unwise and foolish man, may ever follow Thy Word, direct my entire life according to it, faithfully preserve the covenant of grace concluded with Thee in Holy Baptism, partake of Thy Holy Lord's Supper often and worthily, willingly bear the dear cross, faithfully attend to my calling, and gladly pray from the heart; in order that I may pass the brief time of

my life in daily repentance and godliness, rightly serve Thee and my neighbor, and remain steadfast in the true faith unto the end. Amen.

2. Explain these six parts to me so that I may rightly understand them and may direct my life according to them.

Gladly.

1. The Word of God.

First of all I say: Hold fast to the Word of God (2 Tim. 1:13) and direct yourself according to it in all your purposes throughout your life. For Scripture says: *The Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path* (Ps. 119:105). If you, dear soul, will follow this light, then you will go blameless on your way and will not fall. But learn diligently to divide rightly the Word of the Lord (2 Tim. 2:15), and note well the distinction between Law and Gospel.

The *Law* of God, that is, the Ten Commandments, is that Word and doctrine wherein God commands and wills that we should be like unto Him both in heart and in our entire life. That is, that we should love God our Lord with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and our neighbor as ourselves (Matt. 22:37-40; Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:17). And even though no one is yet able to keep all of these, you should nevertheless daily consider the Ten Commandments, in order that from them you may learn to know your corrupt nature and your sins (Rom. 3:20), and afterwards you will also have a rule according to which you can direct your new conduct (Ezek. 20:11,13).

The *Gospel*, however, is that Word and doctrine in which God, out of pure grace and mercy, offers and promises forgiveness of sins and Eternal Life to all who believe in Jesus Christ (John 3:16). For to Him give all the prophets witness, that through His Name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins (Acts 10:43). Therefore you must not let this preaching of grace out of your sight, in order that your heart may have comfort against sin and against all temptations of the devil, and that you may joyfully surrender yourself to God in every need, even in death.

Mark this well, dear soul: Both teachings are God's Word, both have been commended to the Church of God from the very

beginning, both must also remain and neither can be done away with. Therefore learn both of them carefully, but at the same time, distinguish them rightly and use each at the right time.

When you, my soul, thus daily consider the Ten Commandments and learn from them how you may completely conform to the will of God, you will also see how you through Adam's fall are corrupt in all your powers, so that you can keep no commandment of God, and therefore with your sins deserve the wrath of God and eternal damnation. Do not then be overly fearful, but thank God for His Commandments and that He has, through them, brought you to a knowledge of your sins. For next to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, nothing better can happen to you than when you come to the knowledge of your sins. For Christ and His blessings taste good to no man unless he first knows his sins and has seen himself reflected in the wrath of God.

But when Satan comes and makes the sin appear very great to you, frightens you with the consuming wrath of God, with hell and eternal damnation, then comfort yourself from the gracious sermon of the Holy Gospel, and refresh yourself with these and other evangelically comforting passages: *For God so loved the world, that He gave His Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have Everlasting Life* (John 3:16). Again: *I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live* (Ezek. 33:11). Again: *I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death* (Hos. 13:14). Again: *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners* (1 Tim. 1:15). Therefore resist Satan steadfast in the faith, and he will retreat from you (1 Pet. 5:9). For these comforting sayings are certain for you and stand more firmly for you than heaven and earth (Luke 21:33). For His Word is truth (John 17:17).

But when Satan comes from the other side, he transforms himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14), makes your sin seem small and the wrath of God as something unimportant, makes you believe that sin is easily atoned for, that there is still enough grace on hand. Then be on your guard, dear soul, trust him not. Here think again of the sharp Law of God, in which all sins are so terribly indicted. Therefore they cannot be small nor unimportant. Then recall

the anguish of your dear Lord Jesus Christ and say in your heart: "Away with you, Satan, you liar! I see how hard and bitter it was for my Lord Jesus, Who under the curse of the Law, once atoned for my sins and bore His Father's wrath for me. Therefore I will grieve over each and every one of my sins throughout my life and be on guard against them as before the devil himself. I thank my God that He has redeemed me once from sins, which are the devil's bonds. Should I bind myself all over again in his snares? The snares are broken, and I am free, the Name of the Lord stands by me, the God of heaven and earth (Ps. 124:7).

But when Satan shows you the beautiful things of the world and entices you to their pleasures, then think of the earnest *Law* of God and consider St. Paul's words, when he says: *Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind* (Rom. 12:2). O be on guard, dear soul! You surely know your flesh and blood very well, how completely inclined to the world it is. Force yourself with the earnest voice of the *Law* and do not follow, for the way of the world leads to hell.

If he ridicules you because you are poor, suffer hunger and need, then say with the *Gospel*: *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God* (Matt. 4:4). And again: *Thou, Lord, hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased* (Ps. 4:8). These words do not deceive. For the Lord says thus: *I will not alter the thing that is gone out of my lips* (Ps. 89:34).

If he reproaches you, saying that you are miserable, sick, forsaken, then withstand him and say: *I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me* (Ps. 40:17). Therefore: *Whom have I in Heaven but Thee, my God? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but Thou, God, art the strength of my heart, and my portion forever* (Ps. 73:25-26). Depend on this, my soul, throughout your life. For the Lord says thus: *I will not alter the thing that is gone out of My lips*. And again: *I have sworn and will not lie* (Ps. 89:34-35).

If he frightens you with death, withstand him with a believing heart and say: Thus saith the Lord: *Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise* (Isa. 26:19). Moreover, I believe in a gracious forgiveness of all my sins, a Resurrection of the flesh

and a life everlasting. This is for me most certainly true, and I trust completely in this. For heaven and earth shall pass away, but God's Word shall not pass away (Luke 21:33), but it stands and endures in eternity (Isa. 40:8). And all who cling to the Word and hide in the Word will be preserved eternally together with the Word and in the Word.

Lord Jesus Christ, Thou King of the eternal Truth! Help me, that I may ever have Thy true and Holy Word, Law and Gospel, before my eyes, and that I may direct all my thoughts and actions according to it. Teach me through Thy Holy Spirit, that I may rightly understand, rightly divide and use Thy Word at the right time. Grant that I may have Thy Law daily before my eyes, so that I do not forget my sins and vanity. Inscribe also Thy words of comfort in my heart and remind me of them in all my anxieties, that they may ever be my weapons and arms to smite my enemy, my shelter and shield against the devil, my staff and stay by which I support and direct myself, my food and refreshment in all trouble and distress. Grant that I may completely hide and wrap myself in Thy Word, both when asleep or awake. Yes, that I live according to Thy Word, die according to Thy Word, and rise again according to Thy Word. And if my heart should be fearful in weakness, help me not to despair, for Thy Word does not deceive me. I know and believe, O God, that Thou dost keep Thy Word. Therefore I too will surely be preserved. I know and believe that Thou dost not lie, therefore I cannot be deceived. And whether my heart wavers and even says a clear "No", yet Thy Word and promise do not waver, and Thou art greater and Thy Word is more certain to me than my own heart (1 John 3:20). Therefore I am not afraid. Amen.

2. Baptism.

Secondly, dear soul, you should daily remember and take comfort in your Holy Baptism, in which the Lord your God cleansed you, received you as a child and made an eternal covenant of grace with you (1 Pet. 3:21), that He will be your gracious God and Father, and you should be His dear child and heir. Yes, my soul, in Holy Baptism the Lord Jesus called you by your name, before you had

known Him (Isa.45:4). Yes, He has given you a new name (Jer. 14:9) and permits you to be called a Christian after His Name, as a sure witness that you are Christ's brother and joint-heir with Him (Rom. 8:17) and are to have all those things which He has purchased and earned for you with His Holy Blood, namely, forgiveness of sins, justification, the Holy Spirit and Eternal Life.

Therefore, dear soul, as often as you daily say these articles of faith in your prayers: "I believe in God the Father" etc., "I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son" etc., "I believe in God the Holy Ghost" etc., then comfort yourself with the assurance that you belong to the number of those of whom the Lord says in Mark 16:16: *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*. On the other hand, you are separated from Turks, Jews, heathen and all the ungodly, of whom the Lord says in the same verse: *But he that believeth not shall be damned*. Yes, this your confession reminds you that, by virtue of Baptism and its covenant, you are obliged to live not after your fleshly will and lusts (Rom. 8:13), but to serve the living God in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life (Luke 1:75).

I thank Thee, my Lord Jesus Christ, for these Thy unspeakable blessings, that Thou hast not only drawn me forth alive from my Mother's womb, but also, since I was dead in sin, didst permit me to come to Holy Baptism, whereby I was included in Thy covenant of grace, born again by Thy Spirit, snatched from the devil's jaws, and accepted as Thy child and heir of Heaven, before I knew Thee. My Savior, how can I repay Thee for what Thou hast done to me? I pray Thee, govern and preserve me through Thy Holy Spirit, that I may daily stand firm in Thy covenant of grace, comfort my heart therein, preserve my faith, cling alone to Thee, my God, have an aversion toward all idolatry, superstition and ways of the devil, and ever serve Thy Name, being fervent in spirit and joyful in hope.

Yes, my God, since, through Baptism, I am dead to sin and have been made a new person, therefore grant and help me, that henceforth I may walk in a new life, in order that my life may give a testimony both before God and men that I have received Holy Baptism as a necessary blessing. Lead and guide me in every way

through this weary vale of tears, and never again leave me, until Thou wilt bring me into the Kingdom of eternal salvation, and wilt there grant unto me all the treasures of grace and goodness, which Thou hast promised, given and sealed unto me in my Holy Baptism. Amen.

3. The Lord's Supper.

Thirdly, dear soul, continue always to partake diligently of the Holy Supper of the Lord. For this is the table which the Lord has prepared for His new-born children. This is the meal by which He refreshes and strengthens the baptized, new men. For the Lord, your Savior, says thus: *Take, eat; this is My Body, which is given for you for the remission of sins.* And again: *Take, drink ye all of it; this cup is the new testament in My Blood, which is shed for you for the remission of sins.*

Do you hear, my soul, what the Lord your Savior here gives you at His Table? Surely not mere bread and wine, but also His Holy Body and His Holy Blood. For the bread which we break is the communion of the Body of Christ; and the cup of blessing which we bless is the communion of the Blood of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16).

Therefore I believe and know that my Lord Jesus Christ, God and man, is Himself present in this His institution, and gives me, with the bread and wine, His true Body to eat and His true Blood to drink, according to His promise and arrangement.

Yes, my Lord Jesus, here Thou art Thyself the host and I am Thy guest. See, here I come, wretched one that I am, out of the wilderness of this evil world, full of hardship and grief, and bring Thee a hungry, languishing, thirsty, and yet believing heart. My Lord Jesus, refresh me at Thy Table and strengthen me with Thy meal, that I may be satisfied and blessed.

Up, my soul, and hurry to your Lord's Supper, in order that your faith may be strengthened and your heart refreshed. O be no longer faithless, but believing (John 20:27). For behold, here the Lord your Redeemer assures you, as though a sure sign, pledge and seal, that you, out of pure grace and mercy, should be a certain heir of all His blessings. He confers on you all that He has earned for you with the sacrifice of His Body and Blood, namely forgiveness of all your sins, righteousness which avails before God, and eternal life. All

of this should belong to you as certainly as if you yourself had hanged on the cross and earned all this yourself. Yes, He hereby declares that for His sake you are so righteous before God, so pure, esteemed to be so holy, so dear, so welcome, so blessed, as your Lord Christ Himself is.

And above all this, He Himself, through His Holy Spirit, enters into your believing heart and soul and would dwell in you with eternal living comfort, nevermore to leave you, and to work new life, light, and joy in you. Yes, my Lord Jesus, I am and remain in Thee, and Thou in me (John 17:23). I am connected to Thee, my Redeemer, as immovably as a living member belongs to a living body, as a bride to her bridegroom, and am thus flesh of Thy flesh and bone of Thy bone (Eph 5:23). Yes, I am in Thee and am connected to Thee as a branch to its vine (John 15:1,4-5), and as a branch to its roots. I desire from Thee and out of Thee ever new sap and power, new comfort and joy, new life and refreshment, and am united with Thee to such an extent in body and soul through true faith and connected through the Holy Spirit, that neither distress nor death should separate me and Thee eternally (Rom 8:38-39).

Praise to Thee, Lord my Savior, that Thou hast cared for me in such a fatherly manner and left behind this meal of grace for me, in which I can obtain food and refreshment for my hungry heart and comfort and renewal for my thirsty soul, in order that I may continue strengthened and firm in faith, confidently follow Thee, my Redeemer, abide firmly in Thee, and persevere continually unto the end. Amen.

Thou hast also said, my Lord Jesus: *This do in remembrance of Me*. My God, what a dear remembrance that can be! How ardently it can comfort my soul! Yes, my Lord Jesus, when I eat and drink at Thy Table, may I there cling to both the *remembrance of comfort* and of *giving thanks* to Thy Name.

First, I keep in *comforting remembrance*, and celebrate in my heart all the glorious high festival days of the entire year, consider all Thy benefits, dedicate myself to Thee, and comfort myself therewith.

1. At Thy Table I celebrate a joyous Christmas. For Thy Holy Supper assures me that Thou hast truly taken my flesh and blood on Thee and made friends with me in a way that is much closer than

with the holy angels. For Thou hast not taken upon Thyself the nature of angels, but human nature (Heb 2:16).

2. At Thy Table I also celebrate the dear Passion week. For Thy Supper assures me that Thou hast become the true guilt-offering for my sin. Yes, here I eat the true Paschal Lamb, namely, Thyself, Lord Jesus, Who wast sacrificed and slaughtered for me (1 Cor 5:7).

3. At Thy Table I celebrate also a joyous Easter. For since I am partaker of Thy Body and Blood and am Thy member, therefore I believe and hope that, just as Thou hast risen from the dead and live, so also I, as a member of Thy Body, will not remain in the grave, but will rise again, live and reign (1 Cor 15:22).

4. At Thy Table I also celebrate a joyous Ascension. For as Thou dost testify to me through this repast that I am in Thee and Thou in me and that I am a member of Thy Body, so will I also surely celebrate an ascension someday with my body and there live eternally, since Thou, my Lord and my Head, livest (1 Cor 15:23,51).

5. At Thy Table I also celebrate a joyous Pentecost. For Thy Supper assures me that Thou wilt dwell in my heart, uniting me with Thee through Thy Holy Spirit, and therefore wilt seal unto me my salvation, that Thy Spirit will ever remain in me as the pledge of my eternal inheritance (Eph 1:14), that He awakens life and comfort in me, kindles peace and joy, and beareth witness to my spirit that I am Thy brother and eternal joint-heir (Rom 8:16-17).

6. At Thy Table I celebrate also the festival of the Holy Trinity, and comfort myself that I should henceforth ever be a temple of God, and the entire Holy Trinity comes to me and wishes to make abode in me (John 14:23). Yes, that after this life I will possess eternal salvation, and will see the Lord my God face to face (1 Cor 13:12).

7. At Thy Table I also celebrate the festival of All Saints, and comfort myself in the lovely unity and fellowship which we, Thy dear saints, have with Thee, Lord Jesus, through faith, and through

Thee with the Father and the Holy Spirit. As Thou hast said, “He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in me and I in him” (John 6:56). And again: “That they all may be One; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also might be One in us” (John 17:21). Yes, my Lord, we being many are one Bread, and one Body; for we are all partakers of that One Bread: (1 Cor 10:17). O my Lord, how my soul rejoices at such Heavenly companionship! How joyfully I hasten to Thy Table, and know assuredly that I, together with all dear saints, shall inherit all Thy treasures and blessings and will possess them eternally.

8. Yes, my Lord Jesus, Thy Holy Apostle also says: “As often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do show the Lord’s Death till He come” (1 Cor 11:26). Therefore at Thy Table I also celebrate the festival of Thy Holy Second Coming, and rejoice at Thine appearing, when Thou wilt return visibly, and wilt abrogate this Holy Supper, together with the entire office of the ministry, and wilt take me unto Thee, that I may be where Thou art (John 17:24), since Thou hast prepared for me another, eternal, heavenly meal in Thy Father’s Kingdom, where I, together with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all Thy saints shall sit at the Table and shall eat the Bread of Life for all eternity (Matt 8:1). O how longingly I consider this at Thy Table and sigh from the depths of my heart: “Lord Jesus, come; yes, come quickly, my Savior, and do not delay long! Amen.” (Rev 22:20).

Second, my God, at Thy Table I celebrate the true *thankful remembrance* of Thy Name. For since Thou dost there so richly and gloriously feed me, my heart rightly burns in true thankfulness toward Thee. And I thereby thank Thee for each and every one of Thy blessings which Thou hast shown to me, a poor sinful person, throughout my life, both in body and soul.

Yes, I here celebrate again Thy high festivals and thank Thee from my heart for Thy Creation, for Thy Revelation, for Thy Incarnation, for Thy Redemption, for Thy Holy Word, for the faith which Thou hast given me, for Thy Holy Spirit which Thou hast poured out in my heart, for Thy precious Sacraments, and for all bodily and spiritual gifts and blessings. My God, how can I list them all? How can I, in this my weakness, consider what great things Thou hast done to my soul? (Luke 1:49).

Lord Jesus, my Savior, grant that I may often be found at Thy Table and celebrate with joy Thy remembrance. Behold, I am Thy brother and Thy joint-heir. My God, I am Thy child and belong in Thy Kingdom. Where else should I go than to Thy Table? Grant, Lord my Redeemer, that without ceasing, I may devoutly observe Thy Holy high festival days, strengthen my heart and faith, that I may have all my desire and highest joy in Thee, thank Thee from the heart for all Thy great blessings, serve Thee from the heart unto mine end, and after this vale of tears, that I may eat the Bread of Life together with all the elect in Thy Kingdom. Amen.

Finally, dear soul, when you eat of the bread of the Lord and drink of His cup, then do not forget your neighbor who is also eating alongside of you.

Yes, my Lord Jesus, I confess that he is also Thy member, Thy brother, a child of God and Thy joint-heir, just as I am. Therefore for Thy sake I have a heart-felt love for him and am prepared to show him the same kindness I show to myself.

And if Thou wilt bless my little fountain and multiply my food, then gladly will I permit the poor to enjoy it with me. For Thou feedest me with Thy bread and givest me to drink with Thy cup. Should not I then feed my brother, Thy joint-heir, with my bread and refresh him with that which Thou hast given me? Govern me, my Lord Jesus, with Thy Holy Spirit, that I may ever love my neighbor from the heart and have a heart-felt concern for the needy, that I may feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, gladly take in the stranger, clothe the naked, and gladly serve all the poor and needy (Isa. 58:7; Matt. 25:35ff.). Grant that I may ever be mindful of the great words which will proceed out of Thy mouth on that day: *Verily I say unto you, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me."* And again: *Verily I say unto you, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me"* (Matt. 15: 40,45). Amen.

4. The Daily Cross and Suffering of the Children of God.

Fourthly, my soul, learn to prepare for the daily cross, which the children of God must always bear after their Lord in this vale of tears. For the Holy Spirit says: *that we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God* (Acts 14:22).

Yes, my soul, the doctrine of the cross is one of the greatest mysteries to which human reason cannot become accustomed. As is the case with other mysteries, it is revealed alone in God's Word, and man must learn it therein. Thus it happens, dear soul, that the cross comes upon us so severely and we are alarmed by it, as though God has forsaken us or has become our worst enemy. This is portrayed very well in the two disciples who went from Jerusalem toward Emmaus in sorrow and grief (Luke 24:13ff). The Lord appeared to them in another form, and their eyes were held that they did not know Him. Behold, my soul, that is the form of the cross in which the Lord often disguises and hides Himself, that He appears as a stranger to His dear children. Nevertheless, His delight is with His believers and He rejoices with them in the habitable part of His earth (Prov. 8:30-31). Yes, at times He deals so harshly with them that they often think that God has forgotten all love and goodness (Isa. 64:12). But in His own time He again permits Himself to be recognized, so that their hearts may be filled with joy. Therefore, dear soul, learn to prepare yourself rightly for this mystery, and note well the following seven rules of the cross, for then your tribulation will not be half as severe to you.

The First Rule of the Cross

All believers are ordained of God to be cross-bearers of Christ. For St. Paul says thus: *For whom God did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren* (Rom. 8:29). Do you hear, my soul, that you were ordained to a cross and suffering, not only in the womb, but even before the world was formed, in order that you might be conformed and similar to your Lord Jesus? Yes, my soul, you are flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone. Do you not wish, then, to suffer with Him? He is the Lord, and you are His disciple. He is the Bridegroom, and you are His bride. He is the Head, and you His member. Why would you want to have things

better than He? Look on Him as the Lord of the cross, and notice how all dear saints have followed Him in tribulation. The Lord leads on with the greatest cross of all, and the believers follow after. And every one can bear his yoke in joyful hope, for here they are similar to the Lord Jesus in tribulation; therefore they shall also be conformed to Him in eternal glory (Rom. 8:17; 1 Cor. 15:49).

Ah Lord, my God, Who hast ordained and prepared me, Thy child, to be a cross-bearer. Give me an understanding heart that I may recognize such wonderful counsel, accept the cross with joy, follow after my Savior, and be conformed to Him here in time and hereafter in eternity. Amen.

The Second Rule of the Cross

It is the Lord Christ's will that His believers should bear His cross after Him. For He says thus: *Take My yoke upon you* (Matt. 11:29). And again: *If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me* (Luke 9:23). Yes, my soul, this command does not apply to the unbelievers, but to His saints and believers. For the cross of the Lord is such a precious jewel that the Lord will not entrust it to unbelievers. Yes, it is such a decoration that He will not grant it to any ungodly. Behold Simon of Cyrene! What an honor it was for him to bear His cross after the Lord! What glory will be his on the Last Day!

Ah, my Lord Jesus, Who hast commanded me to bear Thy cross! Give me also an obedient heart, that I may joyfully take Thy yoke upon me and willingly follow Thee in all suffering. Amen.

The Third Rule of the Cross

The Lord Christ has three schools of the cross. First, a **chastening** school, when He afflicts His own on account of their sins (1 Cor. 11:30-32; Micah 7:9). Secondly, a **testing** school, when He exercises their faith, hope and prayer (Ps. 119:71; Isa. 28:26; 26:16). Thirdly, a **martyr** school, when He permits them to be persecuted

and killed for His Name's sake (Ps. 43:22; Rom. 8:36). Hear, my soul, you are also a disciple and student of your Lord. Therefore you can be sure that He will lead you daily in one of these schools. If He chastises you on account of your sins, as with dear David, then thank Him for His chastening and say: *It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes* (Ps. 119:71). If He puts you to the test and leads you in a wonderful way, as with dear Joseph and Job, then remember that He is exercising your faith, arousing your hope and urging you to prayer. If He does you the honor that you should suffer persecution or death for His Name's sake, then rejoice in your heart that you are counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name (Acts 5:41).

Lord Jesus Christ, Who wast not ashamed to hang on the cross with mockery and pain! Grant that I may also not be ashamed to stand beneath the cross with the Virgin Mary. If it is Thy will to lead me in a wonderful way, then help me wonderfully to follow Thee, and be prepared even to lay down my life for Thy sake, if this be pleasing to Thee. Amen.

The Fourth Rule of the Cross

The cross of the believers is a sign, not of the wrath, but of the love of God. For the Lord says: *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten* (Rev. 3:19). And again: *The world shall rejoice, and ye shall be sorrowful* (John 16:20). Likewise: *The time is come that judgment must begin at the House of God* (1 Pet. 4:17). And again: *I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by My Name* (Jer. 25:29). Do you hear that, my soul? Yes, dear soul: Whoever loves his child makes use of the rod. For where is a father who does not chastise his son? But if you are without chastisement, of which all children of God have tasted, then you are a bastard and not a son (Heb. 12:6-8). Behold your Lord Jesus, the only Son of God. How severe His Father was to Him! How He bruised Him on account of sins that were not His own! (Isa. 53:5).

Help me, Lord Jesus, that I may not be frightened before Thy chastening rod, but rather kiss it as a devout child and evermore thank Thee for Thy chastening. Amen.

The Fifth Rule of the Cross

The greater the distress, the closer God is. For the Lord says: *I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him* (Ps. 91:15). O my soul, how hard it is for flesh and blood to believe this! When tribulation comes, we always think that God has forgotten us, that God has given us up to the devil and all misfortune. No, my soul although Satan is your worst enemy and is bent on your misfortune by day and by night, he cannot hurt a single hair on your head without the Lord's will (Matt. 10:30). Yes, dear soul, how can God forget us? How can He lie who is Himself Truth? And although He may hide Himself for a brief moment, He will again gather thee with great mercies (Isa. 49:15; 54:7-10). *Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous* (Ps. 112:4). If God be for me, who can be against me? (Rom. 8:31). What can I lose if I still have my God?

Lord Jesus! Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. Yes, my flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever (Ps. 73:25-26). Amen.

The Sixth Rule of the Cross

The cross of the children of God always serves for their good and never for their harm. For St. Paul says: *We know that all things work together for good to them that love God* (Rom. 8:28). And again: *Faithful are the wounds of a friend* (Prov. 27:6). Yes, my soul, the cross works for our good in different ways.

It teaches us to recognize sin. As it is written: *I will correct thee in measure and will not leave thee altogether unpunished* (Jer. 30:11).

It also drives us to the Word. For it is written: *It shall be a vexation only to understand the report* (Word) (Isa. 28:19).

It awakens our faith. As it is written: *But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead* (2 Cor. 1:9).

It also teaches us to pray rightly. For it is written: *Lord, in trouble have they visited Thee, they poured out a prayer when Thy chastening was upon them* (Isa. 26:16).

It teaches us to shun sin. As it is written: *Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you* (John 5:14).

It makes us weary of this life and awakens in us a longing for the Eternal Life. As it is written: *Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come* (Heb. 13:14).

Yes, my soul, all must work together for good to the believers in such a way, that St. Augustine writes: “Even sin itself serves for their good.” For through Christ we have received more than we had lost through sin.

Lord Jesus Christ! Inscribe this loving comfort in my heart and preserve me, that I may not despair in time of tribulation, but expect only the best things from Thee even unto death. For Thou art wonderful in counsel and excellent in working (Isa. 28:29). Amen.

The Seventh Rule of the Cross

Patience, prayer and hope permit no cross to become too severe. For the prophet Jeremiah says: *It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord* (Lam. 3:26). And David says: *Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me* (Ps. 50:15). And Sirach says: “Look at the generations of old, and see; did ever any trust in the Lord, and was confounded?” (Ecclesiasticus 2:10). Yes, my soul, if a person must bear a burden or load and only takes hold of it properly, then it will not seem half as heavy to him, especially when he has help and relief. Thus patience, prayer and hope are like hands or arms, in order that the believing heart may grasp its tribulation and can proceed well with it. For patience does everything gladly, with the result that it is not so severe. But prayer forces itself upon God, and surely receives either deliverance or relief. And hope maketh not ashamed (Rom. 5:5), but knows of a certainty that God is faithful and will permit no one to be tempted either too much or too severely (1 Cor. 10:13). Impatience, however, angers God and makes everything hard.

Take the example of your Lord Jesus and learn all of these

things from Him (1 Pet. 2:21). Look also at dear Job and learn to say also in your troubles: *Though the Lord slay me, yet will I trust in Him* (Job 13:15).

Lord Jesus Christ! Grant me at all times a patient heart, that can indeed wait and pray, in order that I may not become impatient in my heart, but be comforted and with full confidence cast all my cares upon Thee and in every moment hope for the best from Thee. Amen.

5. The Outward Calling of a Christian.

In the fifth place, dear soul, remain in your calling in which God has placed you. Attend to it diligently and faithfully, that you may give an accounting of all your actions before God and men. For God the Lord does not want men on earth to be idle, but has given some work to every person. For God the Lord Himself is not idle, but works, rules, supports, directs all things, protects, blesses, hears, saves all pious hearts. As Christ Himself says: *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work* (John 5:17). Yes, my soul, if God the Lord would be idle for only one moment, the whole world would collapse.

Likewise the holy angels are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14) Behold also the dear sun, the moon and all the stars, how they follow their orderly course and perform their calling (Ps. 19:5-6; 8:3).

Thus dear soul, every healthy person should daily pursue his calling with all diligence and zeal. He should also teach, preach, rule, punish, protect, keep house, build, improve, take care of his family, as though he were going to live here eternally and never die. He should do this according to God's command and out of love towards his descendants. But he should live thus every day, preserving faith and a good conscience (1 Tim. 1:19), that he may be prepared at every moment for a blessed journey home and can say with St. Paul: *The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing* (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

Therefore, my soul look diligently to your calling in which the Lord has placed you, that you may walk in it in a fitting manner, with all long-suffering and meekness (Eph. 4:1-2)

Make this your concern and “go on with thy business in meekness; so shalt thou be beloved of him that is approved” (Ecclesiasticus 3:17, 19). But if the Lord lifts you up and places you higher, then don't be proud; but “the greater thou art, the more humble thyself, and thou shalt find favour before the Lord” (Ecclesiasticus 3:18, 20). For He is a God of humility. And *who is like unto the Lord our God, Who dwelleth on high, who humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth* (Ps. 113:5-6).

Strive not in a matter which does not concern you, and seek not of the Lord pre-eminence; do not imagine that you are qualified for this. For many are deceived by their own vain opinion, and an evil suspicion hath overthrown their judgment (Ecclesiasticus 11:9; 7:4-5; 3:26). For it will be of no benefit to you that you look idly at that which is not commanded you.

Extol not thyself in doing thy work, and boast not thyself in the time of thy distress (Ecclesiasticus 10:29). But when you are confronted by a cross and adversity, then be comforted and withstand it at your work. “Who will honour him that dishonoureth his own life?” (Ecclesiasticus 10:32).

Be diligent in all things, and ask the Lord for His blessing. For *the blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it* (Prov. 10:22). “There is one that laboureth, and taketh pains, and maketh haste, and is so much the more behind. Again, there is another that is slow, and hath need of help, wanting ability, and full of poverty; yet the eye of the Lord looked upon him for good, and set him up from his low estate, and lifted up his head from misery; so that many that saw it marveled at him” (Ecclesiasticus 11:11-13).

Therefore, dear soul, “Grow old in thy work. Marvel not at the work of sinners. Trust in the Lord, and abide in thy labour; for it is an easy thing in the sight of the Lord on the sudden to make a poor man rich” (Ecclesiasticus 11:20-22).

My Lord and my God! I surely know that man's doings do not stand in his power, and stand in nobody's might, as he wanders and

goes on his way (Jer. 10:23). Rule me ever by Thy Holy Spirit, that I may look straight before me in my calling and faithfully await what is mine. Guide me ever on the right way, that I may waver neither to the right nor to the left.

Order my step in Thy Word; and let not any iniquity have dominion over me (Ps. 119:133). Govern me according to Thy will; for Thou art my God, Thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness (Ps. 143:10). I surely know, my God, that I am also called into Thy vineyard and have promised in my Baptism to work for Thee. I pray Thee, grant unto me a healthy body unto mine end, and strengthen me that I may willingly bear the burden and heat of my calling and ever remain faithful and dependent on Thee, my Lord.

But since the hour of my final departure is hidden from me, teach me that I may be ready every hour and moment, to have a blessed departure, be willing to leave the world, to fall asleep with peace and joy, and to keep with Thee and all the elect into the eternal day of rest and joy. Amen.

6. Daily Prayer.

But above all and in all things, dear soul, do not forget precious prayer. For there is nothing more miserable on earth than a man who does not pray and does not speak with his God. To be sure, a man can receive nothing unto himself, except it be given him from Heaven (John 3:27). *For every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights (James 1:17).* Prayer is, as it were, the vehicle by which we obtain unto ourselves the gifts of God. Yes, it is like a small pipe through which the blessing of the Lord flows toward us, both in our house and heart. The wise Sirach therefore said: “The prayer of the humble pierceth the clouds, and till it come nigh he will not be comforted, and he will not depart till the most High behold” (Ecclesiasticus 25:21).

Yes, dear soul, precious daily prayer is the most beautiful and glorious form of divine worship which God would daily receive from us. Therefore He not only exhorts and commands so often that we should pray gladly and without ceasing, but gives us also the wonderful promises that He will hear us and will give what serves the true welfare of our body and soul.

His command sounds forth: *Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me* (Ps. 50:15). Again: *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you* (Matt. 7:7).

But His promise reads thus: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name, He will give it you"* (John 16:23). Again: *And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear* (Isa. 65:24).

My soul, look at your Lord's example, who here shows you how to follow in His footsteps. How often, how earnestly, how gladly, how heartily He prayed! How He hurried into the wilderness in order that He might be alone to unburden His heart to His Father!

He Himself prays not only for His person, but He also teaches His dear disciples to pray, giving to them the Lord's Prayer. Thereby He has placed in your mouth and in that of all children of God the words with which you are to address the great majesty of God.

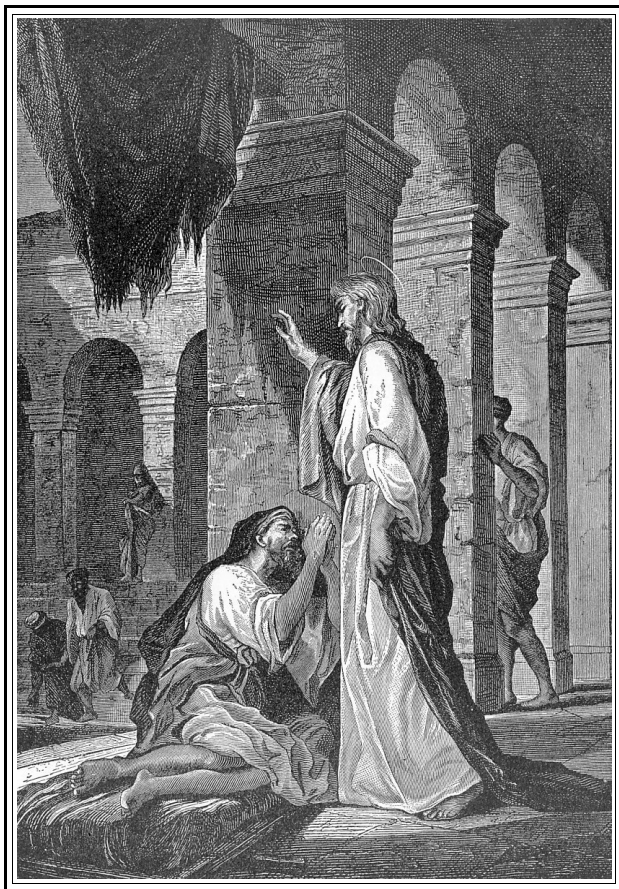
And in order that you might have no excuse, He shows you how you should stand before God and in whose Name you should speak to God, namely, *in My Name*, He says. Yes, in the Name of your Savior Jesus Christ, lift up your hands and your heart in true faith and heart-felt confidence. As surely as Christ is your Savior and sits at the right hand of His Father, so surely are your prayers and all your sighs also heard.

In addition to that, you also know what kind of gifts you should ask of God and what distinction to make. Pray for temporal gifts with the condition that it is according to God's will and is good and blessed for you (Matt. 8:2; 1 John 5:14). For the all-wise God knows best what His children need, and is so good that He will give them no bad, harmful gift (Luke 11:11-12), although at times they may foolishly desire such things of Him. Spiritual gifts, however, which are promised to us for our salvation and happiness, we as dear children should pray for and desire with all confidence and without any conditions, expecting these as our inheritance earned and prepared for us, namely, forgiveness of sins, righteousness, the Holy Ghost and Eternal Life.

O dear soul! Who wouldn't be alert and zealous in prayer, since all our sighs will surely be heard? Who would not seek, since

one will surely find all good? Who would not knock, since it will surely be opened to him? Yes, when someone runs to meet us in such a friendly manner and tosses into our lap that which is good for body and soul? Therefore, dear soul, pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17). Throughout your life call upon the Lord in all that you do, seek help and counsel from Him in every need, fear God, hope in God, trust in God and wait on Him, and then grace, comfort, blessing and life will ever be yours. For no one was ever put to shame who trusted in God and called upon His Name (Ecclesiasticus 2:11-12). For *the Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him; He also will hear their cry, and will save them* (Ps. 145:18-19).

I thank Thee, my Lord and my God, for Thine unspeakable blessing, that Thou hast not only commanded us to call upon Thy merciful Name in every need, but hast also revealed so graciously Thy fatherly, loving heart, that Thou dost surely hear us and desirest ever to give us at the right time all that is good and beneficial for us in body and soul. I pray Thee, my God, pour out upon me Thy Holy Spirit, the Spirit of prayer, that I may ever have a desire and love for prayer, and daily bow the knee of my heart before Thee, my loving Father, Who art the true Father of all who are Thy children in Heaven and on earth. Help me daily to come near, find comfort, and with all confidence to pray to Thee in the Name of my Lord Jesus Christ, call upon Thee, speak to Thee in every need as a dear child speaks to its dear father. Grant also that I may ever lift up holy hands to Thee, without wrath and doubting, and firmly believe that all my prayers, yes, all my sighs, going forth from my heart, are surely heard. Grant me to bear with patience when help delays in coming, that I may never dictate to Thee either time or manner, but await Thine own time. For Thou takest pleasure in them that fear Thee, in those that hope in Thy mercy (Ps. 147:11). Govern me also, my God, and remind me through Thy Holy Spirit, that I may think daily and often about the hour of my death, be well prepared at all times, and at every moment pray to Thee from the heart to grant me a blessed departure. Amen.



Healing of the Impotent Man at the Pool
by Alexandre Bida

Chapter IV

How a Christian should conduct himself when God afflicts him with sickness.

1. How should a Christian conduct himself when he is sick?

You do not know, dear soul, whether God will let you become sick or suddenly call you away without bodily infirmity. Therefore I have so often reminded you not to wait with your repentance until you become sick, but to repent daily in your healthy body, to stand in faith and constant readiness, and do not permit yourself to be found at any moment in a situation in which you cannot be sure that you would be saved. Remember the foolish, drunken, rich Nabal, and how quickly the Lord smote him, that he died (1 Sam. 25). Do not forget the rich man who denied poor Lazarus even the crumbs which fell from his table, and how quickly his life came to an end (Luke 16). Remember also the rich miser, of whom the Lord says that he calculated that with his many goods he would live for a long time yet and could lead a merry life. But suddenly God said to him: *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?* (Luke 12). Consider also, dear soul, from daily examples of how many people die without having been sick. Surely, my soul, you are no better than they in the sight of God, and you do not know what He may have in mind for you.

But when the Lord does afflict you with bodily sickness and lays you on your sickbed, then learn what is thereby happening to you.

1. Recognize the causes of your sickness, namely, your sins.
2. Seek forgiveness of your sins and be reconciled with God.
3. Call upon the Lord for His gracious deliverance and ask God's congregation to pray for you also.
4. Do not despise proper remedies and medicine, if you can have them.

5. If the sickness continues very long, then be diligent in patience and beware of impatience.
6. Always keep the comforting assurance in your heart, that even in the midst of the greatest weakness and pain, you are a dear child of God.
7. If Satan tempts you, withstand him in faith, and he will retreat from you.
8. If your final hour comes, then obediently surrender yourself.
9. But if the Lord again raises you up, then thank Him from your heart.

Preserve me, my Lord Jesus Christ, from an evil sudden death, and do not permit me to die in my sins. Grant rather that I may think day and night on my final hour, and stand prepared every moment in true repentance, strong faith, and firm hope, in order that I may be with Thee and fall asleep blessed, whenever it is pleasing to Thee. But if it pleases Thee to afflict me with bodily infirmity – here I am. I know that Thou art good and kind, that Thou dost not afflict me unless it is good and salutary for me. Grant unto me only this, that I may truly resign myself therein and be such a patient whose sickness may redound to Thy glory. Amen.

2. Now explain to me the above-named nine parts, so that I may learn well how to conduct myself in my sickness.

*First, dear soul, consider well: Just as death itself is the wages of sin, so also all sicknesses are God's chastening with which He afflicts us on account of our misdeeds. Be not, my soul, like the unbelieving, ungodly misers who, when they get sick, lift up their cries of bloody murder, caring only that now their business stands still and they can earn nothing. Or they only imagine and think that somewhere they must have eaten some spoiled food or drunk something that was harmful so as to cause the sickness. Remember first and foremost what the prophet says: *Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy back-slidings shall reprove thee; know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts* (Jer. 2:19). And Sirach says: "He that sinneth before his Maker, let him fall into the hands of the physician" (Ecclesiasticus 38:15).*

Do you hear that, my soul? You must understand this well. For when God does something and wishes to afflict us, all external medicine must serve this purpose. For when we humans do not want to recognize the sickness of our souls, then God lets us become sick in our bodies, in order that we may also think upon our souls and repent.

Yes, dear soul, just as our children may deserve the rod, so we also may deserve punishment and sickness from our God. O Thou Holy God, if Thou wouldst afflict us with sickness as often as we deserve, then we would not be healthy for one moment. But Thou dost chastise us only for a while, so that we should ever think on this and fear Thy Name.

God often chastises young innocent children, in order that we who are older may lament and repent. Behold, my soul, in that way sicknesses are like messengers sent from God, which are intended to lead us from sin and to repentance, that we may not perish in our sins. (2 Sam. 12:13-14).

Only remember, dear soul, how securely people live in those days when they have no cross or sickness (Ps. 39:5). They esteem neither God's Word nor His Sacraments, forget about faith in Christ and about precious prayer. Their souls thus stand in highest danger. For the less a father chastises, the more disobedient his child will become. The more good health and well-being people have, the more secure they become therein.

Lord Jesus Christ! Here I lie in my sickness and recognize that this is Thy fatherly will. For just as no hair can fall from my head without Thy will, how should I lose the noble gift of my health if it is not Thy will? Behold, my God, Thou hast put me into a condition that Thou deemest best for me. And just as Thou becamest a worm in Thy suffering, and not a man (Ps. 22:6), so Thou hast made me like unto Thee. My God! When Thou chastenest a person on account of his sins, then his beauty will be consumed as by moths. I thank Thee for Thy chastening, my God, and am certain that Thou dost intend it only for good. My Lord! Thou art surely a friend of men, but faithful are the wounds of a friend (Prov. 27:6). Therefore I am certain that this sickness will serve for my good. Whom Thou lovest, Thou chastenest (Heb. 12:6). Therefore it is good for me that I have been

chastened and afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes (Ps. 119:71). Grant, my God, that throughout my life I may think on Thy rod and beware of sin, so that something worse does not befall me. Amen.

Secondly. If you now, dear soul, perceive in your outward sickness that your soul lies sick in impenitence, then above all see to it that your soul becomes healthy. But the health of the soul consists in true repentance, genuine faith in Jesus Christ, through which you receive forgiveness of your sins and a gracious Father in Heaven. For through faith you are reconciled with God, are righteous before Him, and find peace and joy in your conscience. In that way your soul recovers, even though the body is still sick and very weak.

I confess to Thee, my Lord Jesus, with broken and contrite heart, that by my sins I have well deserved this sickness, and I am heartily sorry that I have angered Thy majesty and brought myself into such misfortune. My God and my Lord! Thou wilt not despise my sad and broken heart. Look on me in my distress and heal my broken heart. Forgive me all my sins and cleanse me from all my misdeeds, with which I have stirred up Thine anger. Lord, my Savior, Who spoke so comfortingly to the man sick of the palsy, comfort also my soul and speak into my heart this precious word: "Be comforted, my child, all your sins are forgiven" (Matt. 9:2). O how dear and precious the Word is to my heart, how well it refreshes body and soul, marrow and bone. Yes, Lord Jesus, if Thy Holy Word and promise of grace were not my comfort, then I must perish in my misery. I believe and am certain that through Thee, Lord Jesus, I have forgiveness of all my sins, am reconciled with my God, and am an heir of eternal salvation. Amen.

Thirdly. Call upon the Lord, your God, for deliverance and implore Him to restore you to health. For Sirach says: "My son, in thy sickness be not negligent; but pray unto the Lord, and He will make thee whole" (Ecclesiasticus 38:9). Let your need be made known to the entire congregation in order that they, together with you, may call upon God for help. For thus saith the Lord: *If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in Heaven. For where*

two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them (Matt. 18:19-20).

My soul, if you are too weak to pray with your mouth, then let your groanings go forth from your believing heart. For these go forth strong and powerful, are inexpressible and do not cease until the Lord beholds and rescues (Rom. 8:26; Ecclesiasticus 35:21).

Lord Jesus Christ! Thou hast sent Thy messenger to me, namely, this my sickness, and hast exhorted me to repent. Behold, my Lord, I recognize Thy good will, am obedient and turn to Thee. My God, in return I send a messenger to Thee, namely, my poor prayer and my sighs. O Lord, receive my supplication and let my sighs come before Thee. If it please Thee, my Redeemer; and if it is good and blessed for me that I should live, then lift me up and grant that I may live a new, healthy, Christian life unto my end. If it is not pleasing to Thee that I should live, but that this should be my end, then let it be a blessed end. Then come quickly, Lord Jesus, and take my soul in Thy hands. Amen.

Fourthly. Dear soul, you are permitted to use proper remedies and medicine. For the wise man furthermore said: “Then give place to the physician, for the Lord hath created him; and let him not depart from thee, for thou hast need of him” (Ecclesiasticus 38:12). But guard yourself, dear soul, that you do not seek physicians instead of the Lord. That is what King Asa did in his sickness. For that reason the Lord gave no blessing to his medicine and he must die (2 Chron. 16:12).

Do not use forbidden means and seek not remedy among the sorcerers and idolaters, and among those who wish to speak a blessing in the devil's name and help through misuse of God's Name. That is what King Ahaziah did when he sought help from the idol Baalsebub at Ekron. Therefore God said to him through Elijah: *Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baalsebub the god of Ekron? Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die* (2 Kings 1:2,5,6).

In particular, my soul, be on guard against ignorant, foolish doctors who have learned no skill. For man's body is a noble creature of God, and should be held in honor and not be ruined by neglect.

I thank Thee, my Lord Jesus Christ, Thou faithful Physician of my soul, that Thou hast helped my sick soul, purified it from sin, and refreshed my heart with the medicine of living comfort. I pray Thee, O Thou Creator of all things, bless also now this external medicine and the proper means which Thou hast created. Lord, if it be Thy will, they can be beneficial to me and serve for my health. But if it is not Thy will, they can be of no benefit to me. Lord, here I am. Deal with me in such a way that Thy Name may be glorified and what is good and blessed for me may be done. Amen.

Fifthly, dear soul, diligently pursue the blessed gift of patience and pray to your God to preserve you from impatience. O it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. For His compassions are new every morning, great is His faithfulness (Lam. 3:23,26). Look to your Savior Jesus Christ and follow His example. How very patient He was in all His suffering! Yes, my soul, do as our little children. When their head hurts, they come crying to Mother and lay their sick head in her bosom and ask for help. So also you, dear soul, cry to the Lord, cast thy burden into His bosom, and patiently await His help (Ps. 55:22).

Be diligently on guard against impatience. For impatience ruins everything, angers God the Lord, hinders prayer, and makes the sickness all the longer and more difficult. Patience is a noble, healthy plant, but impatience is poison to the heart.

Lord Jesus, take all impatience away from me and obliterate it from my heart. Preserve me evermore that it may never increase within me, so that I do not make my cross greater for myself. But plant this beautiful patience in my heart, that I may follow Thy example, be quiet and patient and wait for Thy help. Move the hands of Thy clock, let Thine hour come, for Thy time is the right time and Thy hour is the right hour. Grant that I may ever hope and be strong in sure confidence that Thou art faithful, and will not permit anyone to be tempted above that he is able to bear (1 Cor. 10:13). Yes, my Lord Jesus, bring to pass that all my cross and sickness may have an end that I can bear. I know that Thou will not permit it to be otherwise. Amen.

Sixthly, dear soul, if your sickness continues longer than you

had imagined, then do not think that the Lord has forgotten you, but know that even in the midst of cross and sickness you are a dear child of God and an heir of Eternal Life. For as little as a mother can forget a sick child, just so little can the Lord Jesus forget you. For He has graven you upon the palms of His hands (Isa. 49:15-16). Yes, my soul, the sicker the child is, the greater the love which the mother bears toward him, and the greater the attention she devotes to him. So also the Lord, your God, does toward you, giving you this comfort in your heart and saying, *Are you not my dear son and my beloved child? For since I spake against you, I do earnestly remember him still. Therefore my father's heart is troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him* (Jer. 31:20). And again: *Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him* (Ps. 103:13).

Lord Jesus, my Savior! I pray unto Thee weeping that my trouble presses me sore and my sickness continues long. I pray Thee, O Thou very Word of the Father, Thou speaker of true comfort, speak this comfort deeply into my heart, that I may ever be Thy dear child, even in the midst of greatest weakness, yes, in greatest pain and anguish of death, even in the midst of greatest weakness, yes, in greatest pain and anguish of death, that I may lie in Thine arms and on Thy bosom, and lift up Thy gracious countenance upon me in every moment. Yes, Lord Jesus, since Thou didst hang on the holy cross, bearing our pain, anguish and scorn, and wast forsaken by all creatures, nevertheless Thou wert the only-begotten Son of Thy dear Heavenly Father, and remain so to the present time. When dear Joseph lay in prison and saw no sign of human help, yet Thou wast with him, didst love him and rescue him at the right time. When Stephen was led to death and the stones were flying around his head, yet Thou didst love him and permit him to see Thee, so that he could say with joyful heart: "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). When Lazarus lay before the rich man's door and no man would help him, nevertheless Thy angels were near him, took his soul and carried it into Abraham's bosom and into the eternal paradise. O my God, I am also Thy Lazarus, lying here and knocking on Thy door with my sighs. The need is indeed very great, my Lord, the pains are many and the suffering will overwhelm me. But I know for certain and have

a thousand witnesses in my heart through Thy Holy Spirit, that Thou wilt not forsake me. Thine eyes are open upon me by day and by night, and I am Thy dear child and an heir of Eternal Life. Therefore Thou art with me in this time of need. Thou wilt deliver me and honor me (Ps. 91:15), either in this or in the next life, as it pleases Thee. This is most certainly true. Amen.

Seventhly, dear soul, Satan will hardly stay away, but will press you hard with his thousands of tricks and will wound your heart with his fiery darts. Here it is not advisable for you to engage in extended discourse, thoughts or disputing with him, for he is much to quick. You will never be able to overcome him with your own powers. Think of our first parents, Adam and Eve. They were deceived by his cunning and miserably enticed, even when they were without sin and were in their uncorrupted powers. How then would you, wretched, corrupted sinner be able to stand?

Look rather to your Lord Jesus Christ and comfort yourself first of all in this, that He overcame when He was tempted, conquered Satan for you, and has given you His victory, so that Satan, as mightily as he may attack you, will never be able to overpower you. Accordingly, look also at your Lord's example, how He soon sent Satan away with sayings from the Word of God and then remained safe (Matt. 4:1-11). When you too seize the sword of God's Word and resist him steadfast in the faith, he will flee from you (1 Pet. 5:9; James 4:7).

If he says: "Your sins are too great to be forgiven," then strike him with the true Word of God, shout and repeat without ceasing: "You are lying, Satan; for it is written: *Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound*" (Rom. 5:20).

If he says: "Christ's merit does not apply to you, you do not belong to the number of the elect"; then shout without ceasing: "You lie, Satan; for my Lord Jesus says thus: *Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*" (Matt. 11:28). And again: *As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive* (1 Cor. 15:22).

If he makes God's anger seem great to you, then say without ceasing: *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have*

everlasting life (John 3:16). And again: *But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us* (Rom. 5:8). And again: *Father, Thou hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me* (John 17:23).

If he shows you the abyss of hell, then protect yourself with the Word of God and say: *For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil* (1 John 3:8). And again: *I will ransom thee from the power of the grave (hell); I will redeem thee from death. O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction* (Hos. 13:14).

If he holds before you the weakness of your faith, then say: *A bruised reed shall the Lord not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench* (Isa. 42:3). Again: *A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise* (Ps. 51:17).

If he says: “You cannot pray”; then answer: “Yes, but I can groan, and am certain that these groanings of mine penetrate all the clouds.”

If he says: “Your sickness and cross will continue for a long time, for God has forgotten you”; then say: *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, saith the Lord* (Isa. 49:15-16).

If he says: “You must languish away in your poverty and you are forsaken by everyone”; then say: *When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up* (Ps. 27:10). And again: “If only I have Thee, my Lord Jesus Christ, I desire nothing else in Heaven or upon earth. *Yes, when my flesh and my heart faileth, then Thou, God, art the strength of my heart, and my portion forever*” (Ps. 73:25-26).

If he says: “Nevertheless you must die”; then say: *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth* (Rev. 14:13).

If he says: “Nevertheless you must be damned”; then say in all comfort: “You lie, Satan; for *whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life*” (John 3:16).

Lord Jesus Christ, Thou mighty conqueror of hell and eternal victorious Lord! Strengthen me in my weakness by Thy Holy Spirit, that I may take unto me the whole armour of God when the last evil

day comes. Give the shield of faith into the hand of my heart. Place on me the helmet of holy hope, and give the sword of Thy Word into my heart and mouth, that I may rightly withstand and quench the fiery darts of the wicked one, and, having overcome all, to hold the field and the victory. Amen.

Eighthly and Ninthly, dear soul, look to the end of your sickness. If you see that your life is not to continue, then surrender yourself patiently to the Lord, commend your soul to Him in every moment, and say with all confidence, yes, sigh with all your powers: Lord Jesus, receive my spirit (Acts 7:59). Then you will most certainly be eternally blessed.

But if He again raises you up, then be thankful to Him throughout your life in your heart, words and deeds. And be sure that the old saying does not hold true with you: “When the sick was healed, he became worse than he was.” But remember the Word of the Lord when He said: *Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee (John 5:14)*. Fall on your knees and say from the bottom of your heart:

I thank Thee, Lord, almighty God, that Thou hast afflicted and chastened me in such a fatherly manner on account of my sins. Yes, Lord, I am glad that Thou hast humbled me in order that I might learn what is pleasing to Thee. O my God, how often I have thought as did Thy servant, King Hezekiah; “Now I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world. Now my age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent. Now the Lord cuts off my life like a weaver, and makes an end of me from day even to night (Isa. 38:11-12).

But I see, my God, that my sickness has not been unto death, but to the glory of God, that Thou, my Lord Jesus Christ, mightest be praised thereby. For Thou hast been merciful to me and hast in love delivered my soul. Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back and extended my life (Isa. 38:17). How well Thou hast turned my sickness and so graciously helped me!

I thank Thee, my God, yes, I thank Thee from the bottom of my heart, that Thou hast again raised me up and strengthened me, that I can again visit the House of God, go my usual way and perform my work. It is Thy blessing, Lord, for otherwise I would be

done for. O how often I will remember Thy chastening rod, how I will be watchful throughout my life and be on guard against Thy anger!

Help now, Lord, my God, that I may also begin a new life with my new health. Grant that I may ever praise Thy Name and that Thy praise may ever be in my mouth. Govern me by Thy Holy Spirit, that I may live to Thy glory and no longer give my limbs over to the weapons of unrighteousness to serve sin, but to the weapons of righteousness to serve Thee, my God, that I may sing Thy hymns so long as I live, and glorify and praise Thee in Thy congregation. Amen.

613

Jerusalem the Golden

LIFE EVERLASTING

Rev. 21: 18

7. 6. 7. 6. D.

Urbs Sion aurea
Bernard of Morlas, c. 1140, cento
Tr., John M. Neale, 1849

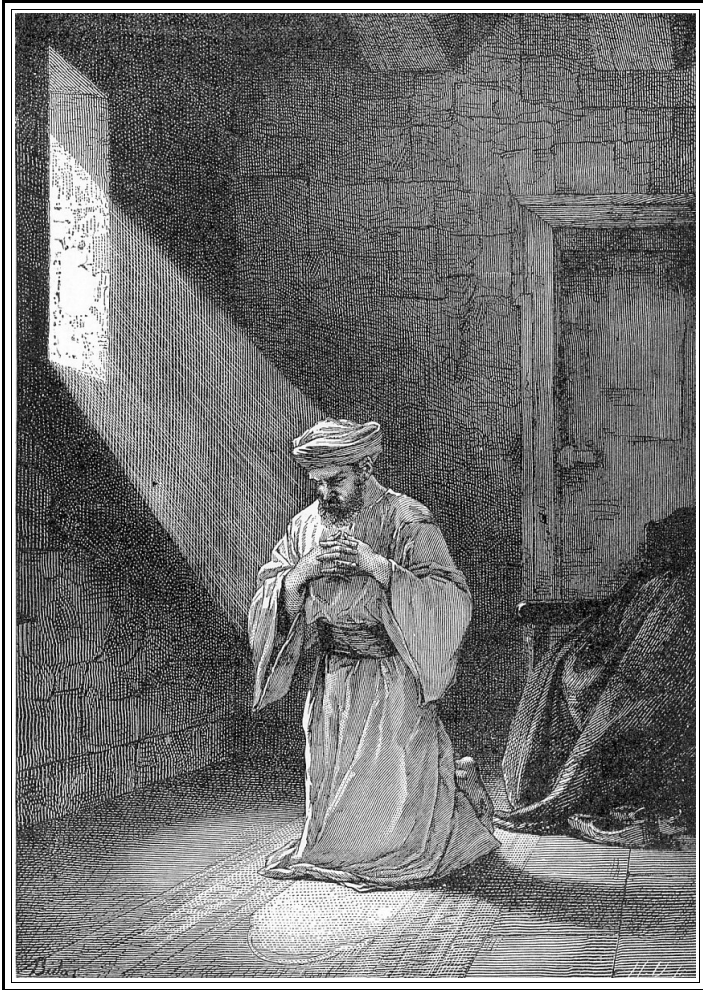
Ewing
Alexander Ewing, 1853

1 Je - ru - sa - lem the gold - en, With milk and hon - ey blest,
2 They stand, those halls of Zi - on, All ju - bi - lant with song
3 There is the throne of Da - vid; And there, from care re - leased,
4 O sweet and bless - ed coun - try, The home of God's e - lect!

Be - neath thy con - tem - pla - tion Sink heart and voice op - prest.
And bright with man - y an an - gel And all the mar - tyr throng.
The shout of them that tri - umph, The song of them that feast;
O sweet and bless - ed coun - try That ea - ger hearts ex - pect!

I know not, oh, I know not, What joys a - wait us there,
The Prince is ev - er in them; The day - light is se - rene;
And they who with their Lead - er Have con - quered in the fight
Je - sus, in mer - cy bring us To that dear land of rest,

What ra - dian - cy of glo - ry, What bliss be - yond com - pare.
The pas - tures of the bless - ed Are decked in glo - rious sheen.
For - ev - er and for - ev - er Are clad in robes of white.
Who art, with God the Fa - ther And Spir - it, ev - er blest. A - men.



The Prayer in Secret by Alexandre Bida

Chapter V

Treats of different worldly and fleshly thoughts which come to a person, often causing him much grief, when he daily studies the art of dying.

1. When a Christian, in his sickness or otherwise, thinks daily upon the hour of his death, it is often the case that the human heart is afraid of death.

That is natural, dear soul, for our nature was originally created for life, not for death. Death entered into the world because of sin and is the wages and punishment of sin (Rom. 5:12; 6:23). Yes, dear soul, just as death is a destruction of the living nature, so also the living nature is an enemy of death. Since man by nature loves life, it is no wonder and no sin, and a person is not to be faulted, if he is afraid of death and flees from it.

We have a noteworthy example in our Lord Jesus Christ, Who was Himself afraid of death. For although there were many other reasons for His sorrow and great anguish on the Mount of Olives, yet this is also a reason, that He was a true, natural, human being and had all the attributes of our nature in Himself. For that reason, when the God in Him, the Word, in that hour of the dread of death receded into the background and acquiesced to such complete obedience and let such anguish, fear and dread of death come upon His body (His human nature), still it all took place without sin and disobedience when His flesh had no pleasure in dying. Yes, He says at another place: *I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished* (Luke 12:50).

I thank Thee, Lord Jesus Christ, that Thou hast created me not for death, but for life, and hast instilled in my heart the love to live. I pray Thee from the depths of my heart, teach me to reflect on this, that death rules over me and will finally strangle me because of sin. Grant me through Thy Holy Spirit that, as often as death frightens me, I may be averse and hostile to all sins, avoiding them at all times like death itself, which comes upon me on account of sin.

But help me to cling firmly to Thee, my Lord, Who art Life itself, by true faith, to overcome all fear of death, and being comforted to say joyfully: "I shall not die, even though I am already dying, but shall live, and declare the works of the Lord" (Ps. 118:17). Grant that I may believe from the heart that through Thee, the Prince of Life, I am rescued from eternal death, and shall receive the true eternal life. Amen.

2. But one still finds many people who have an ardent longing for death.

Yes, to be sure. But here it is well to note that there are two kinds of people who wish for death. The unbelieving, heathen, ungodly hearts often wish for death, but only because of impatience, because of great distress, with which God punishes them on account of their sins. For since they are without knowledge of God and without true faith, they do not understand the fellowship of the cross of Christ, but despair in their impatience, murmur against God, and not only wish death for themselves, but often wantonly kill themselves as did Judas, Saul and Ahithophel. They think that they will thus relieve their misery or distress, but thereby they come into eternal misery and wailing. From this preserve us, dear Heavenly Father!

The children of God, however, the more they grow in the knowledge of God and increase in faith and in the love of Christ, will grow all the more weary of this miserable life, will long for the Eternal Life, sigh constantly, and say with St. Paul: *I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ* (Phil. 1:23). Yes, the Lord has also commanded them to pray and sigh thus every day: "Deliver us from evil." With these words they pray not only that God would deliver and rescue them from all temporal needs of body and soul, but also sigh from the heart for the final redemption, when God will either make an end to this evil world or else will come with a blessed hour of death and bring them into eternal rest.

Help, Lord Jesus Christ, that I may rightly resign myself to the mystery of the dear cross and learn of Thee how I should bear my yoke. Preserve me, that I may not, from impatience, wish for death or

even shorten the life which Thou hast given me. But grant that I may learn ever better from day to day to know Thee, to become ever stronger in faith, to love Thee more and more, in order that I may also learn to disdain the earthly and seek after the Heavenly. Amen.

3. Can a person with a good conscience pray for a longer life?

Paul has the answer to this, and wills that Christ should, at all times, be highly praised in our body, be it through life or through death. He says: *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour; yet what I shall choose I know not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith* (Phil. 1:21-25).

Here you learn, dear soul, that St. Paul was occupied with both kinds of thoughts, longing for rest, and considering that to be the best part of all. But he also saw that it would be good if he would live still longer. There is also the confidence that God would prolong his life in order that he could continue to serve God and men. In both cases there was the goal that through him only the Name of Jesus might be praised, whether it be through life or through death.

That was also the case with King Hezekiah. When the prophet told him on God's behalf that he would die, he wept and prayed to the Lord. The Lord prolonged his life another fifteen years (Isa. 39). We find also that Paul rejoiced greatly that God had delivered His servant Epaphroditus from a sickness that was unto death (Phil. 2:27).

If you follow these examples, dear soul, you will not err. If you can be of service to God and your neighbor, then you may properly pray that God would prolong your life, grant a healthy body, guide and rule you, that you may be a vessel and instrument of grace. But ever commend yourself to His will and be prepared each day to lay down your task, for the end is hidden from you.

Eternal, almighty God! Thou art my Life, and my times are in Thy hand (Ps. 31:15). For in Thee we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). I thank Thee from my innermost heart that Thou

hast until now preserved me, granted me a healthy body and a right understanding, and hast also placed me in such a calling and situation that I could serve Thee, my Lord and my neighbor. My God, Thou seest and knowest my heart, that I am ready and willing to continue faithfully in my calling and that I have no evil intention in my heart. I pray Thee, if it will glorify Thee and be a blessing for me, prolong my life and guide me by Thy Spirit, that I may continue to glorify Thee, learn ever better to know Thy Name, to serve my neighbor ever more faithfully, and to better prepare my heart through true repentance. But if this is not pleasing to Thee and Thou dost know what is best, O Thou wise God; then see, here I am. Relieve me of my labour whenever it is Thy will. I gladly do Thy will, my God. Amen.

4. What should generally induce a person to surrender himself willingly to death?

The obedience which he owes to his God. For we have life from God, and God also has power to require it from us again. No one places himself into this world. And no one can remain if it is no longer pleasing to God. He permits people to die and says: *Return, ye children of men* (Ps. 90:3).

But be on guard, dear soul, when your last hour comes, that you do not die unwillingly and do not murmur against your God. Do not say: "I must die whether I want to or not." That is the way of the unbelievers who have no hope and build only on this life. To those it will come about as the Lord says: *He that loveth his life shall lose it* (John 12:25).

But thou, my soul, give unto your Lord an obedient heart, to live as long as it is His will, or to die whenever it is His will. Do not permit yourself to go astray, not clinging to anything that is in the world. Regard your life as nothing compared to the rapturous glory which shall be revealed in you. Then you will experience what the Lord says: *He that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal* (John 12:25).

Lord Jesus Christ, Who wast so ready and willing for Thy suffering, and wast obedient unto Thy Father unto death, even the

death of the cross (Phil. 2:8) and didst say: "Father, not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39), I pray Thee, my Savior, grant me ever an obedient heart, that whenever my last hour shall come I may willingly surrender myself and die gladly. Lord, Thou knowest my timidity and that this is not possible for flesh and blood. Lord, guide me according to Thy will, lead me in Thy footsteps. Grant that I may completely trust Thee with my body and life. My Lord and my God, Thou Savior of all comfort! Thou art good and all that Thou doest is good, and hast never intended or done any evil. Thou hast permitted none to perish who hoped in Thee. Here I am, Lord, in Thy gracious hand. Whether I live, I live unto Thee; and whether I die, I die unto Thee. Whether I live therefore, or die, I am Thine and will not be eternally lost. This is most certainly true. Amen.

5. But it is still nice in the world and its course is beautiful. Who would not rather stay here?

All children of the world sing this little song. But you, dear soul, are not to be conformed to this world (Rom. 12:2). Do not say: "It is the way of the world," but remember that the way of the world leads to hell. For "we are children of the saints, and look for that life which God will give to those that never change their faith from Him" (Tobias 2:18). Listen to what Scripture says about the way of the world. St. John says: *The whole world lieth in wickedness* (1 John 5:19). And again: *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world* (namely, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life), *is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever* (1 John 2:15-16). And again: *Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it* (Matt. 7:13-14).

Listen, dear soul, what the course of the world is like. Notice where it goes and consider how far it strays from the way of life. Call upon the Lord your God, that He would remove you from the way of the world and direct your feet on the way of life.

Lord Jesus Christ! Open my ears and teach my heart, that I may accept Thy faithful warnings and be guided by them. Thou knowest me, my Lord, how my heart clings to the world, and how easily it is diverted from the narrow way of life. And Satan never rests. He arouses the lust of the heart, points out one opportunity after another to sin, and pursues me in many ways in an effort to seduce and entice my soul. O my Savior! Enlighten mine eyes that I may find Thy way. Govern me by Thy Holy Spirit that I may not stray. Strengthen my heart through the power of faith, that I may stand firm on the narrow path and permit neither pleasure nor adversity, neither distress nor death, to turn me aside from it. And whether body and life are slain or scattered in a thousand pieces, grant that I may overcome and obtain the victory. Grant that I may ever struggle valiantly, through death and life pressing on to Thee. Amen.

6. Be that as it may; yet it still must be difficult when one who has money and property, who moves about in honor and splendor and lives in pleasure and joy, must leave all of this and die!

It is indeed hard for those who are children of this world, who have their portion in this life (Ps. 17:14), and have their Mammon and idol in temporal things, as Sirach says: "O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that hath nothing to vex him, and that hath prosperity in all things, and that is yet able to take meat" (Ecclesiasticus 41:1-2).

But with the children of God, it is by no means so hard. For even though they have been blessed by God and have money and possessions, possess high offices and honor, and enjoy the good of the land with pleasure and joy, still they do not make an idol out of this, their heart does not cling to it, but they thank God and use it rightly. They know that these are possessions of this world, which are useful here, but have no value before God. And they unceasingly consider the Word of the Lord: *What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* (Mark 8:36).

Put this into practice, dear soul. If riches increase, set not your heart upon them (Ps. 62:10). If God gives you honor, then be humble. If you have joy, do not be certain that it will continue. Look at the

example of the saints: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David, Daniel, etc., yes, at Christ Himself, and follow in His footsteps. Always keep the Lord, your God, as your highest possession. Comfort yourself in His grace and rejoice in the eternal One, and then you can easily and without difficulty forsake everything when the time comes.

Help me, my Lord Jesus Christ, that I may use all possessions and splendors of this world as a pilgrim who will wander on tomorrow. Let my heart desire no more than the necessary daily bread. Grant that I may be contented, and like a lamb get along with smaller and few things. Preserve me from making Mammon out of anything and that I do not place my trust in anything transitory, so that I will not be hindered by these things in the hour of my death. Help me, my Lord, and incline my heart, that I may choose the truly good part (Luke 10:42), namely, Thee my Lord, my Redeemer, my Savior, and have all my desire and joy in Thee alone. Grant that I may be rich only in my soul, glorious in faith and joyful in Thee. Then I have enough, both here in time and hereafter in eternity, can willingly forsake the world and joyfully and without hindrance, separate from this place. Amen.

7. But it is sad when one must forsake her dear husband, another his dear wife and children, who are often left in poverty, in complicated business transactions and in debts.

These are only fleshly, suspicious thoughts with which Satan often disquiets the hearts of men and leads them astray, in order that it may have much trouble and work before surrendering itself and letting God rule. One also experiences that some hearts show themselves to be completely heathenish. They murmur against God as though He were treating them unjustly by permitting them to die right now, since they still have many things to make right, and should look after their dear ones in the best way. That is what the noble Roman Caius Marius did. Even though he was consul for the seventh time and was now a man of seventy years, he still murmured against his fate, that is, against his God, and complained that it was unjust that he should die, before he had put all of his operations into effect.

But the believing children of God don't concern themselves that way. They know that they are not their own God and cannot

provide for themselves, but are only stewards placed there by God for as long as it pleases Him.

And since they daily put their trust in the eternal, almighty, merciful, all-wise God and Father, therefore they also see Him in everything, commend everything to Him and entrust everything to Him in comforting confidence. Since He takes back their office of stewards and demands it, therefore He knows better how to care for those who are left behind. Yes, He Himself wishes to be their Father and guardian, since He so often extols Himself in Holy Scripture as the Father of the fatherless and helper of the widows (Ps. 68:5). Yes, both Scripture and daily experience testify that widows are often better provided for after their husbands' death, husbands often better after their wives' death, and children often better after their parents' death, than when they were still living. For God does not lie and deceive. He neither slumbers nor sleeps. He cares for each and every one who calls upon His Name. He will never permit it to be said of Himself that He neglected the welfare of a single person or overlooked anyone's well-being. For *He humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in Heaven and in the earth* (Ps. 113:6). Yes, dear soul, for that reason He permits poor widows and orphans to exist, in order that He can enlarge His blessings upon them and extol His faithfulness as a Father. For this is the sure basis and confidence of all the afflicted, that He so cares for them, and will advise, guard, lead and direct them, if only they let Him be a Father unto them, so that on the Last Day no one can bring any complaint against Him. This is certainly true.

Lord, my God, Who hast placed me in the position of steward (or stewardess), and hast commanded me to manage faithfully that which is mine, Thou knowest that by grace I have done this with all diligence, although in weakness, that I have preserved my conscience, guarded against unfaithfulness, and in all things which Thou hast commanded, both in bodily and spiritual matters. I have thought to do Thy will rather than my own, in order that all might turn out well with them as well as with me. Since I can no longer exercise such concern, as I am sick and lie here in Thy power, therefore I will now give the office back to Thee. Perhaps Thou wilt carry it out better through another person.

My God! If I should still live longer, let it be a Christian life. Lift me up, give new health and good understanding, that I may manage that which is mine with greater diligence than before. But if it should be my end, then may it be a blessed end. Here I am. I commend, entrust and give to Thee all that is mine, both large and small. Be Thou the Father, the Mother, the guardian, O Thou Father and helper of the widow and the orphan. Thou seest and knowest all the misery and anguish. The poor committeth himself unto Thee; Thou art the helper of the fatherless (Ps. 10:14). Yes, my God, they are poor and needy, thirsty and forsaken, but Thou carest for them (Ps. 40:17). I will not now occupy that office which is Thine. My office now is to be prepared every hour and moment for a blessed departure and to commend my soul to Thee. But it is Thy office to take my place and to be a Father.

Lord Jesus Christ! When Thy dear Mother was a lonely widow, Thou didst ordain a guardian for her; namely, St. John the evangelist. Rise now and send good-hearted people to my distressed widow, that they may take care of her, and that she may receive faithfulness and help from them.

Yes, Lord Jesus! Just as Thy Mother was a widow, so also you were fatherless. For your guardian Joseph did not live long for you. So you surely know what widows and fatherless are. Yes, what is hidden from Thee, O Thou discerner of all hearts? Ah, my Lord Jesus, since Thou didst become fatherless for the sake of all poor fatherless ones, I commend to Thee my fatherless ones. They are Thine. Thou wilt see to it that I and they will thank and praise Thee on the Last Day.

Fill and bless their hearts ever with true and genuine godliness, their bodies with continual good health, their lives with Christian discipline and honor, and grant unto them those things in which they may rejoice here in time and hereafter in eternity, and preserve them from all those things which would distress them here in time and hereafter in eternity. With long life satisfy them, and show them Thy salvation (Ps. 91:16).

Yes, my Refuge, Thou dost set apart them that are godly for Thyself (Ps. 4:3). Even so, teach and rule them at all times, that they follow Thee as godly ones. Grant them patience and grace, that they may never cease from following Thee, nor give up their faith and

obedience, until Thou wilt hereafter bring them to me in eternal paradise. Amen.

8. Say what you will; life is noble, life is dear.

I will not contradict those words. But I have already spoken enough on this previously. Surely life is dear and a noble gift of God. There is no creature so insignificant that he does not treasure his life, and resists death. However, dear soul, you must not love life more than the Creator, nor esteem the gift higher than the Lord who has given it to you. You must also not forget that He has earned something much better for you and has already occupied that which is the very best for you through His Ascension into Heaven, which is hid with Christ in God (Col. 3:3). When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory (v. 4).

But since you have built so much on this life and have come to love it so dearly, I must briefly describe it for you and show what this life is, in case you should become weary of it in days to come and begin to yearn for Eternal Life.

Listen, what does the patriarch Jacob say about it? He says: *The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years; few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage* (Gen. 47:9).

What does the well-experienced Job say about it? He says: *Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? Are not his days also like the days of an hireling? As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and as an hireling looketh for the reward of his work; so am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me* (Job 7:1-3). And again: *My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope* (v. 6). And again: *Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower; and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not* (Job 14:1-2).

What does Moses, the man of God, say about it in the Psalm? He says: *The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away* (Ps. 90:10).

What does the kingly prophet David say about it? He says: *Man is like to vanity; his days are as a shadow that passeth away* (Ps. 144:4).

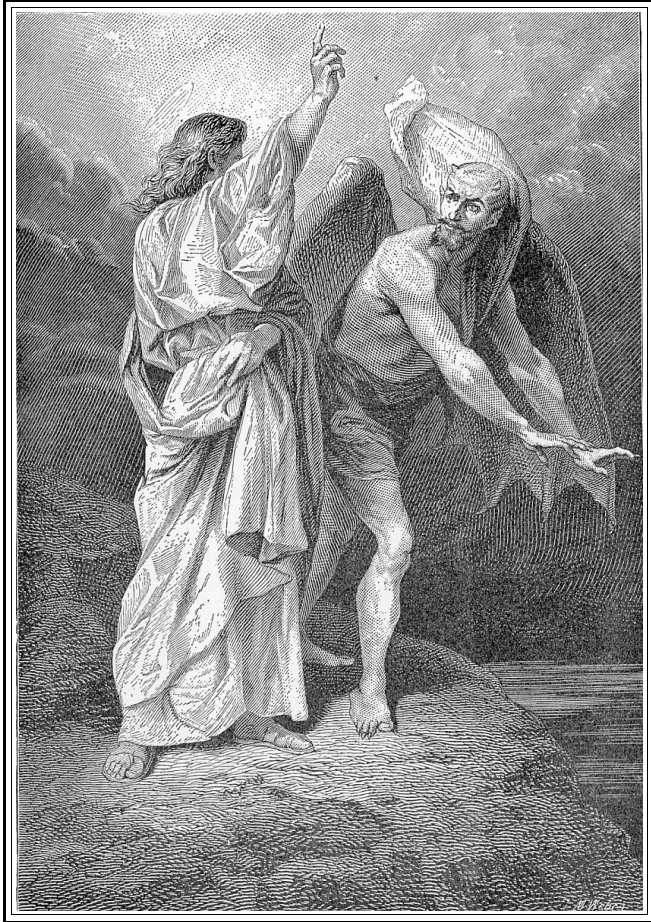
What did Solomon preach about it? He says: *All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it. And again: This sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith* (Eccl. 1:8,13).

What did the dear old teachers in the Church hold in regard to this? St. Augustine says: "My life is a miserable life, a needy life. The older I get, the less important it becomes. The further it lengthens out, the nearer it comes to death; a deceitful and transitory life, full of the snares of death." And again: "Ah Lord, how weary I am of this life and this difficult pilgrimage! For it is a miserable life, an uncertain life, a difficult life, an impure life, a life in which the wicked rule and the arrogant increase. It is full of tribulation and error, and should not be called life but death, in which we die every moment in all kinds of sicknesses and infirmities in many ways."

Dear soul, note what the saints and children of God at all times have said concerning this miserable life, and how quickly they became weary of it. But because you still have love for it and regard it so highly, then you should understand that you are still earthly minded, sinful desires still rule in you, and there must not be much knowledge of God and little repentance and faith in your heart. O change your mind for the better, dear soul, do not be so fleshly minded. *Set your affection on things above not on things on the earth. If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God* (Col. 3:1-2).

Lord Jesus Christ, my God and my salvation! Surely I confess to Thee and lament to Thee concerning my corrupt flesh and blood, that I am so very earthly minded and love so dearly the transitory things of this life. I pray Thee, my God, enlighten mine eyes that I may rightly view this life, consider its misery and vanity and recognize its perilous toilsomeness. Strengthen me, my God, by Thy Holy Spirit, that I may overcome my flesh and blood, extinguish my desires and deaden my lusts. Grant that I may see the unworthiness of all transitory things and the bitterness of all joys of this world. Implant in me rather the desire for those things which will not pass away, and grant me a foretaste of Eternal Life, in order that I may

grow weary of this life, become desirous of death and be certain in my heart of Eternal Life. Amen.



The Temptation by Alexandre Bida

Chapter VI

Discusses how a Christian can cheerfully and joyfully surrender himself to death, conquer all bitterness of death, and how he can and should remain steadfast in the faith unto the end.

1. Now tell me: With what can and should I quiet the fear of death, that I may surrender myself so cheerfully and joyfully to my God?

In former times the heathen scholars taught that when it comes to dying, no better advice can be given than that a person takes fresh courage, scorns death and remembers that now it cannot be otherwise, that it will last for only a brief bad moment and then it will be over with. They consider this to be a great art and wisdom. That is what the heathen king Agag did when he saw that the prophet Samuel intended to cut him in pieces. He came cheerfully to Samuel and said: *Surely the bitterness of death is past* (1 Sam. 15:32).

Even today we often hear the same thing from those who call themselves good Christians. When a person speaks of death, they turn up their nose and say that it is only a matter of courage and that it involves only one evil moment.

Dear soul, those are miserable fleshly thoughts. An imagined courage brings no comfort to the heart and has no hope of Eternal Life. Their heart is full of fear and anguish, and they do not know how to commend their soul to anyone.

By contrast, the believing children of God have a much better medicine against the fear of death, a very certain art which is revealed from Heaven; namely, true faith and heartfelt confidence in our Lord Jesus Christ. Whoever has this and clings firmly to Jesus has the real, genuine medicine against death and all its bitterness. Yes, my soul, what is there in death to be afraid of? You know very well who you are and what you are. Truly, you were bought with a price. What reason do you have to tremble before death? Behold, Christ is your life. Why are you fearful? To die is gain for you (Phil. 1:21). Are you not sure of the way? Behold, Christ is the Way and the Guide to Heaven. When you have that, then death cannot harm you. When you have Christ you can lose nothing, even though body and life depart, for Christ stands by you in all things.

Yes, my Lord Jesus Christ! Thou hast died for me, Thou hast reconciled me to Thy Father, Thou hast atoned for my sins, Thou hast swallowed death and earned for me Eternal Life. I believe this in my heart and cling firmly to Thee. Therefore in my heart I have peace and joy, comfort and delight, and do not regard death so forebodingly. Yes, Lord Jesus, through Thee I have forgiveness of all my sins and am righteous and pure before God. I have in Him a loving gracious Father, am His dear child, and am an heir of His Heavenly Kingdom. My Lord Jesus, I am Thy possession. Thou hast bought me with Thy Blood and redeemed me from hell. Yes, Thou art my Brother, and I am a fellow-heir with Thee. For all that Thou hast is also mine. Yes, I am Thy beloved bride, Thy delight and joy, Thy treasure which Thou hast dearly purchased. In addition, I am also a temple and dwelling of Thy Holy Spirit, through which I am sealed and assured in faith. Yes, the Holy Spirit has bound, united and so firmly joined me with Thee, my Lord, that I am bone of Thy bone and flesh of Thy flesh, and all creatures must perish before anything would separate me from Thy love. For what can death do to me? Nothing more than to bring me closer to Thee, my Lord Jesus. Therefore I regard death as nothing, but have life in my heart and speak of nothing other than life. For Christ is my Life, and to die is gain for me (Phil. 1:21). Yes, I say and sing with Job: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another" (Job 19:25-27).

Lord Jesus Christ! Thou knowest that I believe in Thee and cling firmly to Thee in faith. Yes, I also know that I believe in Thee, and find the sweetness of Thy comfort, yes, the foretaste of Eternal Life, in my heart. Thou art in me and I in Thee. All that is Thine is also mine; namely, life and eternal joy and gladness. What do I care about transitory things? If only I have Thee, I have all that can gladden me here in time and hereafter in eternity. Away with all temporal pleasures, with all glory of this life and all temporal things! Lord Jesus, Thou art my delight, my joy, my money, my goods, Thou art my honor, my glory, my splendor, my desire and eternal wealth. I love Thee from the heart, my buckler, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my refuge in Whom I trust, my buckler, and the

horn of my salvation, and my high tower (Ps. 18:1-2). Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever (Ps. 73:25-26). My heart has received such faith, such love, such ardour toward Thee, my Lord Jesus, and thus I have been strengthened so that I fear neither distress nor death. For I am certain that all things, even death itself, must work for my best. Let my last hour come whenever it is Thy will. I know and am certain that in Thee and through Thee I have life and complete eternal satisfaction.

Come, Lord Jesus, come, Thou faithful God,
And bring Thou me to my goal,
For Thou the sting of death hast trod,
From all anguish relieve my soul,
Bring me to my real Fatherland,
Where I shall join the glorious band,
Let me go in peace to my home. Amen.

Thus a person can drive away the bitterness of death.

2. That does indeed bring life and comfort to the heart. If only I am able to remain steadfast so that my faith does not cease.

Here you have a great guarantee from your Lord Jesus Christ, which is only good for you. For He says thus: *All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from Heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise Him up at the last day (John 6:37-40).*

Dear soul, you hear these words from the mouth of Him Who is the Truth. What comforting words they are! What joy and courage they bring to our heart! Here the Lord, Who cannot lie, testifies to you and says: "Your faith will not cease. You will not be lost, but will be kept steadfast unto Eternal Life."

Again the Lord says: *I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not* (Luke 22:32).

And again: *My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give unto them Eternal Life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one* (John 10:27-30). Likewise He also says: *Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her* (Luke 10:42).

Note well, dear soul, how can the Lord assure you more beautifully, since He promises you that He will, through the power of the Holy Spirit, see to it that your faith will not cease, that no one will pluck you out of His and His Father's hand, and that the good part which is in your heart will not be taken away from you. Now you are certain, dear soul, both of the Eternal Life and of remaining steadfast unto Eternal Life, that by His grace you will remain steadfast unto the end. He will not leave you, and you will not leave Him.

Therefore take comfort and rejoice, and say with St. Paul: *I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day* (2 Tim. 1:12). And again: *I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Rom. 8:38-39).

Lord Jesus Christ! Thou alone art my true and eternal portion which I have chosen, and I am certain and convinced in my heart that it will not be taken away from me. O Thou great warrantor! Who will despair in Thee? O almighty Shepherd! Who will pluck me out of Thy hand? O Thou loving Savior, Who art Love itself! Who shall separate me from Thy love? Thou art mine and I am Thine. Thou livest in me and I in Thee. Thou hast already implanted in my heart the foretaste of eternal bliss, and hast permitted me to experience many moments of joy. Yes, Lord Jesus, I feel the witness of Thy Holy Spirit in my heart, which gives witness to my spirit that I am a child of God and Thine eternal joint-heir (Rom. 8:16-17).

Thou art the Vine, and I am a branch on Thee. Thou art the Tree of Life, and I am firmly engrafted to Thee through my living faith. Thou art the Bridegroom, and I, Thy trusting heart, am united with Thee, joined to Thee by an eternal, indissoluble covenant, which will be severed neither by distress or death, by the devil, by fear nor by terror for all eternity. My Lord, my God, my refuge, my comfort, my desire, Thou delight of my heart, Thou joy of all my powers, how my heart burns for Thee! How shall I sufficiently delight myself in Thee? When shall I come and appear before Thy comforting countenance? (Ps. 42:2).

O Thou most beautiful, most sweet, most loving, most kindly Lord! Unto Thee I live, unto Thee I die. Dead or alive, I am Thine. I am completely assured, sealed, confirmed, established and convinced in my heart that I am an elected heir of eternal salvation. Praise the Lord, my God, Who hast assured and comforted my soul so well! Amen.

3. But what should a Christian do when he finds not only such joy of faith, but great weakness, anxiety and trembling, and often even has doubts whether he is elected unto salvation or not?

Such an one should on no account brood over his doubts and weaknesses, but consider what the Lord says: *The Kingdom of Heaven is gotten by force, and the violent take it by force* (Matt. 11:12). Yes, he should consider the exhortation of St. Paul: *I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee* (2 Tim. 1:6). He should also comfort himself in the salutary promise which the Lord spoke: *A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench* (Isa. 42:3). He should revive his soul with the Word of the Lord, when He says: *Be not afraid, only believe* (Mark 5:36). And again the Lord says to the man sick of the palsy: *Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee* (Matt. 9:2).

Then too, dear soul, there is that which we experience every day. The more a person clings to God's Word and considers its comforting sayings, the more comfort arises in his heart. But he considers especially the holy call of the Lord and His friendly voice: *Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest* (Matt. 11:28).

Just listen, my soul, at how charmingly and lovingly the Lord calls you, how He attracts you as a hen gathers her wandering chicks

and as a faithful shepherd gathers his wandering sheep. Remember that even now you are one of the weary and heavy-laden, to whom the Lord's voice is directed. Therefore answer the Lord with an obedient heart that would gladly believe, and offer up unto the Lord a contrite, anxious and broken heart. That will be pleasing to Him and He will not despise it, as He has promised: *To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My Word* (Isa. 66:2).

Do you not know, dear soul, that the Lord receives the weak in faith? Your weak faith is still true faith if it only struggles, wrestles, continues and does not cease, and clings to the Word of promise. For that beloved man, Dr. Martin Luther, said: "If God would not keep His promise, then our salvation would already be lost. But God keeps His Word and does not lie. Therefore, even though our heart wavers, we can still take refuge in Him Who does not waver. For He says *"I am the Lord, Who lieth not."* And again: *God's gifts and calling cannot be changed.* So far Luther.

Note this, dear soul, and cling firmly to the Word. Let His Word make you certain that even though your heart says a loud "No," you should not let that make you afraid. For God is greater, and His Word is much more certain than your own heart (1 John 3:20).

But learn also to know the way of the Lord. His delights are with the sons of men (Prov. 8:31), He loves and plays with them as parents do with their dear children. At times He withdraws His hand a little from them and exercises them, not for their ruination and downfall, but in order that they might learn not to put their trust in themselves, but in God the Lord Who raiseth the dead (2 Cor. 1:9), and Who is certainly able to strengthen the weak.

He does not want us to be presumptuous, but wills that we should serve Him with fear, and rejoice with trembling (Ps. 2:11). How things go with the presumptuous, who build on their courage and powers can be seen even in St. Peter and in Thomas. No one knows himself as he really is; only to God are we manifest. Therefore pray to God always for a gracious rule and preservation unto the end. Be assured that if you have felt His comfort at any time, He will surely come again. If the Lord has ever gladdened your heart, He will surely do so some more. Yes, even if you had never felt a single spark of comfort throughout your life, do not despair. Pray, believe,

hope, be patient. The comfort of the Lord will surely come, it will not tarry (Hab. 2:3), especially at the very end of your life.

Consider the example of the Canaanite woman. See how the Lord played with her, how He even refused her three times. The first time He remained completely silent and answered her not a word. The second time He permitted her to hear Him say that He had not come for her benefit, but for the children of Israel. The third time He called her a dog who was not worthy of His comfort. What did she do? After the first time, in the face of His silence, she maintained a patient heart that could still wait and hope. After the second time, she placed before the Lord a firmly believing heart, which enclosed itself in the Word and wished to have a part in the promise. After the third time, she placed before Him a humble heart and was glad to be a dog, desiring only the rights of a dog; namely, the crumbs which fell from the table. That is, she only wanted a little help, only a small spark of comfort. With that, both she and her daughter would have enough. In the end, the Lord could no longer restrain Himself, and poured out the full measure of His help upon her, and said: *O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt* (Matt. 15:28).

But if you say: “Yes, she was strong in the faith, but I am very weak,” then you should know that our faith is like that of a wrestler. A wrestler always fears that he might lose and be weaker than his opponent. So also our faith. If it wrestles and fights, we think it will be too weak and will be defeated in the battle. But it is not so, for victory belongs to faith. It comes in its own way, for victory belongs also to weak faith. It will hold the field, and be kept by the power of God unto salvation (1 Pet. 1:5). Remember also the battle of the patriarch Jacob, how he wrestled with God and continued, not giving up, and said: *I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me* (Gen. 32:26).

Lord Jesus Christ! Thou dost surely know that I believe in Thee, even though with a weak faith. Yet with this faith of mine I rest all my confidence in Thee. Extend Thy comforting hand to me and draw me to Thee. My Lord, I am very weak. O increase my faith! O strengthen my confidence! Be not Thou a terror unto me, my refuge, for Thou art my only hope (Jer. 17:17). Otherwise where shall I go. Enflame the tiny spark in my heart through Thy Holy Spirit. See, to will is present with me, but Thou must bring it to fulfillment. Yes,

Lord Jesus, Thou art my Life, my Comfort, my Salvation. When I have Thee, I have everything. Now indeed I have Thee, although with a weak hand. But I do still have Thee. If my hand is weak, then Thy hand is all the stronger. O do not let loose of me with Thy hand, so that I do not let loose of Thine.

Now, Lord Jesus, look on me as Thou didst look on Peter, on Mary Magdalene, on the Canaanite woman and on the patriarch Jacob. Scatter the darkness of my heart and grant unto me a little spark of comfort. Here I am, a poor dog, waiting for the crumbs from Thy gracious table (Matt. 15:26-27). Here I move like a poor creature of the sea on dry land in my distress, and ardently long for the heavenly dew of Thy grace. See, I am wrestling with Thee, as did Jacob. O Thou mighty Lord, enter Thou into my heart. Grant Thyself to me, for Thou knowest that the victory will be mine. I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me. I will not give up until the sun of Thy comfort rises upon me.

Lord Jesus Christ, Thou Who didst pray for Peter, that his faith would fail not! (Luke 22:32). Thou dost now sit at the right hand of Thy Father and intercedest for us. I believe and know that Thou wilt also reach me, and grant that the bruised reed of my heart will not be broken and the smoking flax of my faith will not be quenched. Thou sleepest not, my Refuge. No, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep (Ps. 121:4). I know that Thou hearest. Arise, my God, and command the violent storm in my heart to be still, and find the sweetness of Thy Word and holy comfort, and learn to trust in Thee with all my might.

In conflict I so weak must stand,
My Savior, help in weakness,
To grace alone myself commend,
With Heav'nly strength Thou wilt bless,
When trials come, keep Thou me firm,
They shall not overwhelm me,
Thou canst foresee, That naught shall bring me harm,
Thou never wilt forsake me. Amen.



Chapter VII

Contains some beautiful meditations in which the believing heart can find comfort against the ugliness of the dead body, against the unfriendliness of the cold grave, against the gulping and twitching of the dying, and finally preserves him with the beneficial medicine of God with which he will not taste the bitterness and sting of death.

1. But it is obvious that a man dies.

Man does indeed die and must give up his life on account of sin. But whoever has the sweet comfort of Jesus Christ in his heart, and rejoices in things eternal, such an one looks upon death merely as a separation and release from this vale of tears, as being unyoked from this toilsomeness, and as a journey home to our eternal Fatherland. For Christ, Who dwells in them, has tasted death for them, deprived it of its power and broken its sting, so that death can no longer do anything more to the believers than merely to separate body and soul and deprive them of this fleeting life. But just as all things must work together for their good, so even death serves them in this way, that it releases them from all evil and brings them to rest.

Scripture testifies powerfully to this. Christ Himself says: *I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also* (John 14:3). So listen and learn, dear soul, what your death is. It is nothing more than a separation, a journey to peace. Yes, for believers, dying means nothing else than that the Lord Christ comes and takes them to Himself.

Lord Jesus Christ, Thou eternal Light! Enlighten mine eyes that I, as a new-born creature, may look upon death with new eyes, not looking upon it as being my ruination, but only as being Thy messenger through which Thou dost call me away from this vale of tears and dost bring me into rest. Ah, then come, Lord Jesus, whenever it is Thy will, unyoke me, release me, take me home, let Thy servant depart in peace who longs for Thy rest. Amen.

2. But death makes us very horrible and detestable, cold and misshapen, we must grow stiff and decay in the grave.

That is also a penalty which God has permitted to come upon the body on account of sin. But the believing children of God do not look only at how horribly death treats them. They look further and try to imagine how beautiful, how lively, how lovely, how charming, how pure and glorious their bodies will be on that Day when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality. *Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"* (1 Cor. 15:54-55).

That was Job's comfort when he was full of boils and misery. He commended himself to God, looked beyond, and said: *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth* (Job 19:25). O dear soul, how beautiful, how pure, how clean our bodies will be on that Day. There is no star sparkling and glittering in the heavens, not even the sun and the moon, that will shine and glimmer like our bodies, when the Lord shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious Body (Phil. 3:21), yes, when we shall be likened not merely unto the angels, but unto the Lord Himself.

Now we are the grains of wheat of our Lord God, which He sows in His acre of ground. But when God's springtime begins, the true warmth will come and the true sun will rise. Then we shall grow forth and arise and bear truly eternal fruits. *For it is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body* (1 Cor. 15:42-44).

Strengthen me, my Lord Jesus Christ, that I may not be frightened at the misshapen appearance of dead bodies, and may not dread to think that my body will become a cold corpse, that it will decay in the grave and return to dust and earth. But help me, that in joyful hope I may much rather look at the glory and purity which will be revealed not only in my soul, but also in my body. Grant that I may rejoice over this in my heart, and every day sing and say:

No fruit the grain of wheat brings forth
If it falls not in the ground:
So must this body, formed of clay,
In dust and ashes be found
Before it can that glory share,
Which Thou, Lord Jesus, didst prepare
By going to Thy Father. Amen.

3. But there are still frightful things to hear, not to mention to experience, for example, death, dying, grave, tomb, burial, filling the grave, decay, rotting.

Such words are still frightening to our flesh and blood because death is our enemy and we are still subject to death. Our mortal nature thinks of death as we have deserved it according to the Law; namely, that we will die not only here in time on account of our sins, but will be destroyed also eternally, that we will sink into the pit of hell and be enveloped in the fire of hell, if Christ our Savior would not help us. It is from this that such fears come and cling to us even unto the grave. It is like a person who has been rescued from death by fire or water, but who still trembles whenever he thinks about it. So also our whole nature and all our powers tremble violently when we think of the great misery in which we were to have been destroyed, and consider that we must still suffer the sting of death on account of our sins and must die.

In contrast to this, the children of God should learn an entirely new language and see what the Holy Gospel says about this. For the Gospel calls the death of the believers a sleep, and it calls the grave a chamber of rest. For since Christ has endured the punishment of death for us, suffered the anguish of hell for us, satisfied the justice of God for us and has earned life for us, therefore in the Gospel the Holy Ghost abolishes the ugly names and comforts His believers with an entirely new language. For the Lord says thus: *Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast* (Isa. 26:20). And again: *Many of them that slept in the dust of the earth shall awake* (Dan. 12:2). And Christ Himself says: *Our*

friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep (John 11:11). And again: *The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth* (Mark 5:39). The Passion History also says: *Many bodies of the saints which slept arose* (Matt. 27:52).

Therefore, dear soul, learn to comprehend these new Gospel expressions with new devotion. Behold, through His Death the Lord has changed your dying into a gentle falling asleep, and has made your grave into a soft bed of rest. When you die, that is called falling asleep. When you are laid in the grave, that is called going to bed. When someone fill the grave with dirt, that is called closing the door behind you. When your body decays, that is called resting and hiding yourself, until the indignation be overpast.

Lord God, Holy Spirit! Take possession of my heart and fill it with the comforting grace of my Lord Jesus Christ! Teach me again to distinguish rightly between Law and Gospel. Suppress in me the fear and horror of death, and teach me the beneficial and comforting sayings of Thy Gospel. Grant that I may not only hear with the ears and repeat it with my mouth, but also that I may believe and experience it in my heart, so that when my last hour comes I may not die, but gently fall asleep; not be laid in a grave, but in my little chamber; not decay, but rest and repose until Thou wilt again awaken me. So I now lay me in Thine arms, Lord Jesus, as a child rests in the arms of its Mother. I commend my soul to Thee, fall asleep and rest in peace.

No one can me awaken
But Thou, Lord Jesus, God's Son;
Hereafter my grave Thou wilt open,
Lead me into Eternal Life. Amen.

4. What you say sounds good, but I still see the dying man. He must suffer pain. Sometimes they shake vehemently, twitch, hiccup, cross their eyes and break out in a cold sweat.

To be sure. A person sees this, not only in the children of this world who die without repentance, but often also in believers themselves. Thus the sinful, mortal body must feel the sting of death and receive the wages of sin. But even though a person may see in

them also the anguish and pains of death, still the children of God are not aware of it themselves, for their heart is preserved and secured by the sweetness and power of the grace of Jesus Christ. Their hearts are so occupied, permeated and therefore filled with the Gospel, that they feel no anguish of death, no bitterness in the sweetness of His comforting power, and they cannot be aware of the shaking and the cold sweat. For the comfort of Jesus Christ is so great that there is enough for all and against all terror. And the Name of Jesus Christ is so sweet that it counteracts all bitterness, so that even in the midst of death the believer is given a foretaste of eternal joy and salvation.

Lord Jesus Christ, Who for my sins hast tasted the bitterness of death, and in Thy anguish of death hast grieved, trembled and been fearful in my stead; I pray Thee, preserve me from an uneasy and painful death. Fill my heart with living faith and rich comfort, that I may not have too great a fear of death, and may not be so greatly horrified at its sting. O Jesus, refresh my soul with Thy sweet Name in my hour of death. Amen.

5. Is there no medicine available which a person might take, with which he need not taste so greatly the sting of death?

Yes, indeed, dear soul. For the Lord your Savior says: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, "If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death"* (John 8:51).

Here, dear soul, you hear from the mouth of your Heavenly Physician. Be sure that you learn to take this medicine rightly, for it can dispel the pains of death. This medicine is the Word of your Lord Jesus Christ. Not Moses' word, which is the Law of God. Not the word of men, not magical superstitious words, but your Lord Christ's Word. This is the gracious preaching of His Holy Gospel, in which He proclaims, promises and grants to all believing hearts the forgiveness of sins, righteousness which avails before God, the comfort of the Holy Spirit and Eternal Life.

This Word and heavenly medicine the Lord gives to His believers from out of His heart and His mouth. That is, they hear it, keep it and preserve it in a truly good heart, cling to it and depend upon it in life and in death. Yes, they grasp it in their heart with a genuine, true and strong faith, and in the words they taste Christ

Himself and His comfort, so that when they have thus received it they will not taste the bitterness of death because of the sweetness of the Word and comfort of Jesus Christ.

For Christ is in the Word, and the Word leads to Christ and His power. Whoever would have the Lord must have the Word. And whoever has and keeps the Word has also the Lord Himself together with all the sweetness of His grace and comfort. He will not see death, that is, he will not feel nor experience nor be aware of nor taste its bitterness and pains. For the Lord Himself explains it thus: *Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom* (Matt. 16:28). And again He says: *I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Kingdom of God* (Luke 9:27). That is, they build on His sure Word, venture out upon it, taste Christ and His comfort in the Word, commend themselves with their body and life to the true God, and rejoice and comfort themselves in their Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, they wrap themselves in the Word, as a person wraps a dead body in a shroud. Thus everything befalls them just as Christ's Word says, and they feel Christ and His grace together with a foretaste of Eternal Life in their hearts.

O Thou noble, beautiful, glorious, blessed medicine, which is certain and does not deceive. What more do you want, dear soul, and what do you seek? Take this heavenly medicine into your heart, use it well and preserve yourself with it every day and every moment. Just see how the world boasts when it knows of some medicine for a fever or for a toothache or for bad eyes. How precious and valuable people esteem such things! How much more should you boast with this heavenly, divine medicine of your Savior, Who even takes away death and Who is a Father of all sicknesses.

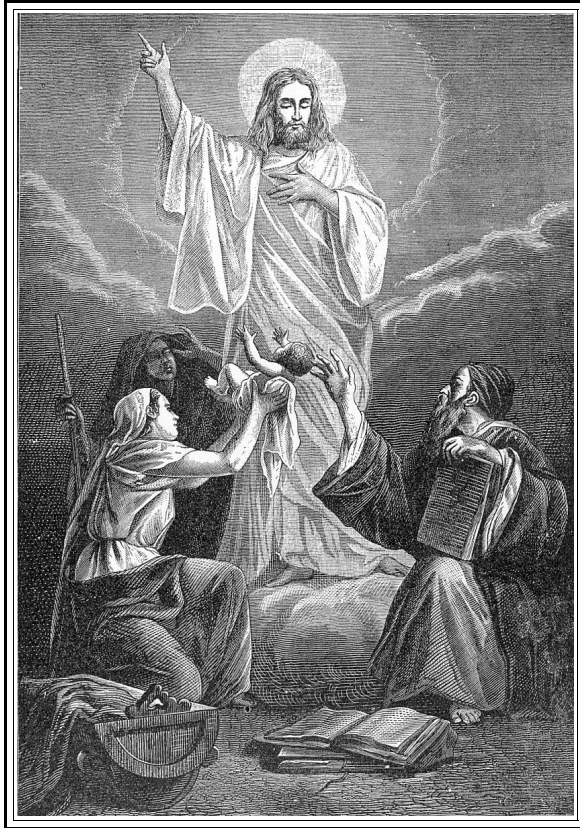
Do not ask, dear soul, whether this remedy is proved and certain. One need only look at the example of the saints who have used this medicine. St. Stephen was full of faith and comfort of Jesus Christ, and he could therefore fall asleep blessed and say: *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit* (Acts 7:59). St. Paul too preserved his heart with this heavenly medicine. Therefore he could daily bid defiance to death and say: *I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ* (Phil. 1:23).

That is also what the dear martyrs did. Ignatius was filled with the sweetness of the Name of Jesus Christ, so he paid no attention to any torture. Polycarp was inflamed with the love and ardour of Jesus Christ, and he therefore went comforted to the fire. Laurentius had the treasure of life in his heart, and therefore scorned the tyrants in all things that he had to suffer. And when he saw that he was going to be martyred in a horrible manner, he said: "I have long wished for the refreshment." Vincentius felt in his faith the foretaste of Eternal Life. Therefore, when he was tormented in many ways, he was filled with joy and thanked God that he was counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake.

Philip Melanchthon reports that he, together with others, had heard and seen that beloved man of God, Dr. Martin Luther, as he lay in a fatal sickness. He repeated often this saying of St. Paul and comforted his heart with the words: *God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all* (Rom. 11:32). Yes, dear soul, such comforting sayings of Scripture are refreshment to our souls. Thereby true comfort is preserved in the heart through the power of the Holy Spirit, and the heart is refreshed even unto the end.

Lord Jesus Christ! Thou hast indeed the words of Eternal Life (John 6:68). My soul longs and yearns for Thy comfort. Yes, my Savior, whoever keeps Thy Word and leans upon it has the genuine heavenly medicine which does not deceive against death and distress and against all the gates of hell. O my Lord Jesus, fill my hungry heart with Thy Word and fill me completely with Thy comfort. Behold, my God! Just as my dead body is wrapped in a white shirt and is carried away, even so wrap my soul up in the Word of Thy comforting promise. Thy Word is truth and endureth forever. Therefore I too will be preserved eternally through faith in Thy Word. Yes, my Lord Jesus, whoever believes Thy Word believes also in Thee. Whoever keeps Thy Word keeps also Thee. And whoever has Thee has life also. And whoever has life can and will not taste death eternally. For Thou sayest: "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die" (John 11:25-26). Believest thou this, my soul? Yes, Lord Jesus, Thou knowest all

things. Thou knowest that I believe in Thee, have Thee in my heart, comfort myself with Thy words, and depend completely upon Thee. Therefore I am sure that I am also one of those who will not see death nor taste its bitterness and will not feel its sting. Help and grant this unto me, Lord Jesus Christ, for the sake of Thy true and Holy Word. Amen.



I Am the Way and the Truth and the Life
by Alexandre Bida

Chapter VIII

Contains many beautiful sayings from Holy Scripture, as well as some devout prayers and sighs which a person should read to the dying. It also tells how the bystanders should conduct themselves who have waited and prayed with the dying.

1. Then tell me some passages from God's Holy Scripture, that I may become familiar with them and can comfort myself with them when my end comes and refresh my soul.

First of all, every Christian should know how to comfort himself with his articles of faith, in which the sum total of all doctrine and comforting sayings are contained. He should consider in particular the last three articles, where we say: "I believe in the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting." And when the believing heart has drawn all these articles unto itself, it believes that all will work for his good and will bring him unto comfort and happiness, as certainly as if he were the only one in the world who is to have and enjoy all of this.

In order to strengthen such faith afterwards, God has instituted His Holy Sacraments and has connected them to His articles of faith as a comforting sign and seal of His grace. Each one can thus find comfort in his Holy Baptism, that therein he was received as a child of God. In Baptism an eternal, indissolvable covenant of grace was concluded, and he was purified and washed with the Blood of Christ.

Then he should comfort himself in the Lord's Supper, that as a child of God, he is permitted to eat and be refreshed at his Father's table. Now he is assured that he is a true member of Christ with his body and soul and that he is a sure heir of all that which Christ has earned by the sacrifice of His Body and Blood. Yes, he knows that in the Sacrament the Lord enters into his heart, strengthens him at all times through His Holy Spirit, preserves him steadfast in the faith and wishes to dwell in him with everlasting comfort.

The patient can then read many beautiful passages for himself or have someone read them to him, such as the following:

- *The Seed of the woman will bruise the head of the serpent, and the serpent will bruise His heel (Gen. 3:15).*
- *For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8).*
- *Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Isa. 35:10).*
- *Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust (Isa. 26:19).*
- *Come My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be over-past (Isa. 26:20).*
- *Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return hither. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord (Job 1:21).*
- *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another (Job 19:25-27).*
- *“Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my heart is troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him,” saith the Lord (Jer. 31:20).*
- *“As I live,” saith the Lord God, “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live” (Ezek. 33:11).*
- *I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction (Hosea 13:14).*
- *As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. What shall I come and appear before God? (Ps. 42:1-2).*
- *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet*

praise Him, Who is the health of my countenance, and my God (Ps. 42:11).

- *Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever (Ps. 73:25-26).*
- *The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die; and their departure is taken for misery, and their going from us to be utter destruction; but they are in peace (Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-3).*
- *We are children of saints, and look for another life which God will give to those who remain strong in the faith and remain steadfast in Him (Tobias 2:17-18).*
- *He that endureth to the end shall be saved (Matt. 10:22).*
- *Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light (Matt. 11:28-30)*
- *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29).*
- *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).*
- *Verily, verily, I say unto you, "He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life (John 5:24).*
- *I am the Bread of Life; he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst (John 6:35).*
- *All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out (John 6:37).*
- *This is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day (John 6:39).*

- *Verily, verily, I say unto you, "He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life" (John 6:47).*
- *I am the Light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of Life (John 8:12).*
- *Verily, verily, I say unto you, "If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death" (John 8:51).*
- *My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give unto them Eternal Life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one (John 10:27-30).*
- *I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this? (John 11:25-26).*
- *In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also (John 14:2-3).*
- *I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me (John 14:6).*
- *This is Life Eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent (John 17:3).*
- *Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast give Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world (John 17:24).*
- *Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12).*
- *To the Lord Jesus give all the prophets witness, that through His Name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins (Acts 10:43).*
- *Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound (Rom. 5:20).*

- *If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, Who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us (Rom. 8:31-34).*
- *I am persuaded that neither death nor life ... nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:38-39).*
- *God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all (Rom. 11:32).*
- *For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's (Rom. 14:7-8).*
- *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive (1 Cor. 15:22).*
- *For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (2 Cor. 5:1).*
- *God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (1 Cor. 10:13).*
- *Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour; yet what I shall choose I know not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better (Phil. 1:20-23).*
- *Our conversation is in Heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious Body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself (Phil. 3:20-21).*
- *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I*

am chief (1 Tim. 1:15).

- *The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing (2 Tim. 4:7-8).*
- *Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on Eternal Life, whereunto thou art also called (1 Tim. 6:12).*
- *I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day (2 Tim. 1:12).*
- *Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead (2 Tim. 2:8).*
- *Ye are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation (1 Pet. 1:5).*
- *The Blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin (1 John 1:7).*
- *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:9-10).*
- *Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come (Heb. 13:14).*
- *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten (Rev. 3:19).*
- *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life (Rev. 2:10).*
- *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My Throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His Throne (Rev. 3:21).*
- *They overcame by the Blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death (Rev. 12:11).*
- *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth (Rev. 14:13).*

From these and other comforting passages, dear soul, select those which are the most comforting to you. Make yourself as familiar with them as with the Lord's Prayer. Yes, just as people were accustomed some years ago to get their shroud ready and to preserve it until it was necessary to wrap the body in it; so you also should choose some certain passages and learn to understand them well, so that, at your end, you can wrap your soul in them and not lack in comfort. For very often the understanding is diminished and the memory fails. Then a person cannot hear long sermons. A person also does not care for flowery and airy words, but a comforting saying, a comforting word which proceeds from the mouth of God; that is what rejoices, refreshes, feeds and quickens the heart, body and soul. But if a person is first going to learn this on his death-bed, it becomes more difficult and very often a person then waits too long.

Lord Jesus Christ, open Thou mine heart through Thy Holy Spirit, that I may gladly hear the sayings of Thy Holy Word, note them well, repeat them often and enrich my heart with them. Grant that I may keep Thy Word, and not be like a pot that leaks and can retain no doctrine. Open Thou mine understanding, strengthen my memory and remind me unceasingly of Thy comfort. Help me to retain Thy Word in a sincere, good heart and bring forth fruit in patience unto eternal salvation. Amen.

2. Teach me also some little prayers with which I can comfort myself on my sickbed, and which I can also recite to other dying people.

I have previously recited for you many beautiful little prayers which one can use with profit. However, I will also give you some others which have been prepared by other spiritually-blessed people.

1.

The first and most important prayer is the Lord's Prayer, which the Lord Himself has taught us. Therein all our needs are comprehended in the fewest words possible, those things which concern and depress us both in life and in death. The Lord says *After*

this manner therefore pray ye: "Our Father Who art in Heaven; Hallowed by Thy Name; Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

2.

O Lord, my God, I cry to Thee;
In my distress Thou helpst me.
My soul and body I commend
Into Thy hands; Thine angel send
To guide me home and cheer my heart
When Thou dost call me to depart.

O Jesus Christ, Thou Lamb of God
Once slain to take away our load,
Now let Thy cross, Thine agony,
Avail to save and solace me,
Thy death, to open Heaven, and there
Bid me the joy of angels share.

O Holy Spirit, faithful Friend,
Grant me Thy comfort to the end.
When death and hell assail me sore,
Leave me, oh, leave me, nevermore,
But bear me safely through the strife,
As Thou hast promised, into life.

3.

Help, helper, help in fear and need
Have mercy, faithful God, give heed!
I know Thou lov'st me still as Thine,
Though 'gainst me world and hell combine.

I trust in Thee – Whom I adore;
If I have Thee, what need I more?

And, my Lord Jesus, this I laud:
That Thou art mine, my Savior-God.

This blest assurance cheers my heart,
To bide Thy time – till clouds depart;
I'll rest the while me on Thee, then,
Cry: Helper, help! and say: Amen!

4.

O Lord, be Thou my confidence,
When from my mouth no word goes hence;
And when my ears no more can hear,
Through Thy Spirit fill me with cheer.

O Lord, my Rock, my strength and grace,
Soon death shall come to end my race,
Do Thou in love mine eyes upturn,
And for my home in Heav'n to yearn.

My spirit I to Thee commend,
Thy gracious look upon me send,
Through all Thy woe and agony,
Let me serve naught but only Thee.

The foe wants me from faith to fall,
Lord, keep me Thine, my All in all,
Thy Word of comfort grant to me,
May it fore'er my solace be.

Let conscience also give me rest
As now I lean upon Thy breast,
O faithful God, for this I pray,
Let patience bless my dying day.

Through Jesus Christ grant Thou my prayer,
Let me through death be free from care,
From all distress deliver me,
Until my Heav'nly home I see,

Where with Thy angels there on high,
I live Thy Name to glorify. Amen.

5.

A sinner poor I am indeed,
But God's dear Son has filled my need,
To earth He came, my Substitute,
And has redeemed me through His Blood.

O God the Father, rule Thou me
With Thy true Spirit constantly,
Let Thy dear Son, within my heart,
E'er dwell in peace and ne'er depart.

And when the hour is at hand,
Let me, Lord Jesus, near Thee stand,
For I am Thine and Thou art mine,
O, take me to my home sublime.

Lord Jesus, Savior, help Thou me,
That I a branch abide in Thee,
And in the end rise from the grave,
For I the bliss of Heaven crave,
And with the angels Thee adore,
To laud and praise Thee evermore. Amen.

6.

Thou art my Treasure, faithful Lord,
Thou Son of God, eternal Word,
My comfort, solace and true joy,
When griefs and sorrows do annoy,
My Refuge and my confidence,
Thy strength and light to me dispense.

Great is Thy goodness and Thy love,
Endless Thy grave from Heav'n above,

Though Thy mercy and compassion
Sadness into joy dost fashion.
All sick with sin I am indeed,
Ah, comfort me in time of need.

O cleanse me, Lord, and make me pure,
With Thy red Blood my sins obscure;
Thy suffring in Gethsemane
From death eternal rescued me;
Let my heart share angelic joy,
My lips Thy praises e'er employ. Amen.

7.

Lord Jesus Christ, true man and God,
Who borest anguish, scorn, the rod,
And diedst at last upon the tree
To gain Thy Father's grace for me;
I pray Thee, through that bitter woe,
Let me, a sinner, mercy know.

When comes the hour of failing breath
And I must wrestle, Lord, with death,
When from my sight all fades away,
And when my tongue no more can say,
And when mine ears no more can hear,
And when my heart is racked with fear;

When all my mind is darkened o'er,
And human help can do no more;
Then come, Lord Jesus, come with speed,
And help me in the hour of need;
Lead me from this dark vale beneath,
And shorten then the pangs of death.

All evil spirits drive away,
But let Thy Spirit with me stay,
Until my soul the body leave;
Then in Thy hands my soul receive

And let the earth the body keep
Till the Last Day shall break its sleep.

Joyful my Resurrection be,
Thou in the Judgment plead for me
And hide my sins, Lord, from Thy face
And give me life, of Thy dear grace!
Implicitly I trust Thee, Lord,
For Thou hast promised in Thy Word:

“In truth I tell you, who receives
My Word, and keeps it, and believes
Shall never fall God's wrath beneath,
Shall never taste eternal death;
Though here he must return to dust,
He still is noways therefor lost;

For I will with a mighty hand
Deliver him from death's strong band
And lift him hence that he shall be
Forever in My realm with Me,
Forever living there in bliss.”
Oh, let us not that glory miss!

Dear Lord, forgive us all our guilt,
Help us to wait until Thou wilt
That we depart; and let our faith
Be brave and conquer e'en in death,
Firm resting in Thy sacred Word
Until we sleep in Thee, our Lord. Amen.

8.

Lord Jesus Christ, into Thy hand
My spirit I do now commend,
My soul is Thine, take it to Thee,
That it may e'er in Heav'n be free!

It is besprinkled with Thy Blood,
Which doubtless is my highest good.
I die, and then will be with Thee,
From tears and pain fore'er set free.

My life on earth will soon be past,
Though it for many a year may last,
Lord, help me when I think on this,
Commend myself to Thy free grace.
Jesus, I know and trust in Thee
That Thou wilt show Thy grace to me. Amen.

9.

O Jesus, God's dear little Lamb,
Alive or dying Thine I am,
I pray Thee, in Thy boundless love,
Grant me a place in Heav'n above.

For this Thou gav'st Thyself to death,
And on the cross didst yield Thy breath,
That I to Heav'n may come at last
When trial and sorrow all are past.

Thy Body men did crucify,
And in the grave three days didst lie,
Thru death Thou hast my death o'erthrown,
Thou art still sitting on Thy Throne.

Therefore, O Jesus, near me stay,
For help and comfort do I pray;
Leave not to drown within the flood
Whom Thou didst purchase with Thy Blood.

Let me in peace now go to sleep,
Thou wilt give rest unto Thy sheep;
Let me Thy countenance behold,
A blessed end in streets of gold.

All this I pray for Jesus' sake,
Of Heav'nly joy I'll soon partake,
Then will I praise Thee evermore,
With saints and angels Thee adore. Amen.

10.

Here I now lie, a little worm,
Both hand and foot are so infirm;
From pain my body seems to burst,
Death now to life will do its worst;
My senses have forsaken me,
Of life I now so weary be;
To see and hear, I can't attain,
A blessed death shall be my gain.

Therefore, Lord Jesus, hasten now,
Hell's fiery arrows breakest Thou,
Which now about me hurt and tear
Like roaring lion and dreadful bear;
Naught shall me sever from Thy love,
Not pain nor trial nor height above.

Let me soon in the Kingdom Thine
Thy lowliest servant recline;
A steadfast faith grant Thou to me,
That I righteous and blessed be;
Bought with Blood, not silver and gold,
Sin, death and hell have no more hold.

When soon my little hour draws nigh,
Let Thy dear angel stand me by,
And lead from out this tearful place,
My soul to Heav'n to see Thy face,
That I will Thy saints above
May sing with angels of Thy love,
Sing praises to Thy Name again
For all eternity. Amen.

11.

O God, my days are dark indeed,
How oft this aching heart must bleed;
The narrow way, – how filled with pain,
That I must pass, ere Heaven I gain!
How hard to teach this flesh and blood
To seek alone th' eternal God!

Ah! whither now for comfort turn?
For Thee, my Jesus, do I yearn.
In Thee have I, howe'er distress,
Found ever counsel, aid and rest!
I cannot all forsaken be
While still my heart can trust in Thee.

Thine office and Thy person show
That Thou great miracles canst do;
Miraculous was, Lord, Thy Birth
When Thou wert born a child on earth.
And by Thy Death Thou mak'st me free
So strangely from all misery.

Jesus, my only God and Lord,
What sweetness in Thy Name is stored!
No grief can ever be so sore
But Thy sweet Name can cheer me more;
So keen no sorrow's rankling dart
But Thy sweet Name can heal my heart.

Although my flesh and heart may fail,
I'll heed it not, I shall not quail;
My Savior, if I have but Thee,
I shall be blest eternally.
With heart and soul I'm Thine fore'er;
Sin, death and hell I need not fear.

The world can show no truth like Thine,
And therefore will I not repine.
I know Thou wilt forsake me not,
Thy truth is fixed, though dark my lot;
Thou art my Shepherd, and Thy sheep
From harm forever Thou wilt keep.

Jesus, my Boast, my Light, my Joy,
The Treasure naught can e'er destroy,
No words, no song that I can frame
Speak half the sweetness of Thy Name.
They only all its power shall prove
Whose hearts have learned Thy faith and love.

How many a time I've sadly said,
Far better were it I were dead;
Far better ne'er the light to see
If I had not this joy in Thee;
For he who hath not Thee by faith,
His very life is merely death.

Jesus, my Bridegroom and my Crown,
If Thou but smile, the world may frown;
In Thee lie depths of joy untold,
Far richer than the richest gold.
Whenever I but think of Thee,
Thy dews drop down and solace me.

Whene'er I hope in Thee, my Friend,
Thy comfort and Thy peace descend.
Whene'er in grief I pray and sing,
I feel new courage in me spring;
Thy Spirit witnesses that this
Is foretaste of eternal bliss.

Therefore, while life remains in me,
I'll bear Thy cross and follow Thee.
Grant me a patient, willing mood;

I know that it shall work my good.
Help me to do my task aright,
That it may stand before Thy sight.

Let me this flesh and blood control,
From sin and shame preserve my soul.
O keep me steadfast in the faith,
Then I am Thine in life and death.
Jesus, my Comfort, bend to me;
Ah, would I were e'en now with Thee! Amen.

These and similar little prayers a person should learn well, commend himself daily to God with them, and pray for a blessed hour of death. Here belong also:

Psalm 6

*O LORD, rebuke me not in Thine anger,
neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure.
Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak:
O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed.
My soul is also sore vexed:
but Thou, O LORD, how long?
Return, O LORD, deliver my soul:
oh save me for Thy mercies' sake.
For in death there is no remembrance of Thee:
in the grave who shall give Thee thanks?
I am weary with my groaning;
all the night make I my bed to swim;
I water my couch with my tears.
Mine eye is consumed because of grief;
it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.
Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity;
for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping.
The LORD hath heard my supplication;
the LORD will receive my prayer.
Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed:
let them return and be ashamed suddenly.*

Psalm 23

*The LORD is my Shepherd;
I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the
paths of righteousness for His Name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley
of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil:
for Thou art with me;
Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me
in the presence of mine enemies:
Thou anointest my head with oil;
my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the House of the LORD for ever.*

Psalm 25

*Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.
O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed,
let not mine enemies triumph over me.
Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed:
let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.
Show me thy ways, O LORD;
teach me Thy paths.
Lead me in thy truth, and teach me:
for Thou art the God of my salvation;
on Thee do I wait all the day.
Remember, O LORD, Thy tender mercies and Thy
loving-kindnesses; for they have been ever of old.
Remember not the sins of my youth,
nor my transgressions:
according to Thy mercy remember Thou me*

*for Thy goodness' sake, O LORD.
Good and upright is the LORD:
therefore will He teach sinners in the way.
The meek will He guide in judgment:
and the meek will He teach His way.
All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth
unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies.
For Thy Name's sake, O LORD,
pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.
What man is he that feareth the LORD?
him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose.
His soul shall dwell at ease;
and His seed shall inherit the earth.
The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him;
and He will show them His covenant.
Mine eyes are ever toward the LORD;
for He shall pluck my feet out of the net.
Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me;
for I am desolate and afflicted.
The troubles of my heart are enlarged:
O bring Thou me out of my distresses.
Look upon mine affliction and my pain;
and forgive all my sins.
Consider mine enemies; for they are many;
and they hate me with cruel hatred.
O keep my soul, and deliver me:
let me not be ashamed;
for I put my trust in thee.
Let integrity and uprightness preserve me;
for I wait on thee.
Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.*

Psalm 32

*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.
Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no guile.*

*When I kept silence, my bones waxed old
through my roaring all the day long.
For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me:
my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.
Selah.*

*I acknowledge my sin unto Thee,
and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said,
I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD;
and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.
For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee
in a time when thou mayest be found:
surely in the floods of great waters
they shall not come nigh unto him.
Thou art my hiding place;
Thou shalt preserve me from trouble; Thou shalt
compass me about with songs of deliverance.
Selah.*

*I will instruct thee and teach thee
in the way which thou shalt go:
I will guide thee with mine eye.
Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule,
which have no understanding:
whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle,
lest they come near unto thee.
Many sorrows shall be to the wicked:
but he that trusteth in the LORD,
mercy shall compass him about.
Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous:
and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.*

Psalm 42

*As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.
My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God:
when shall I come and appear before God?
My tears have been my meat day and night,
while they continually say unto me,
“Where is thy God?”*

*When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me:
for I had gone with the multitude,
I went with them to the House of God,
with the voice of joy and praise,
with a multitude that kept holy-day.*

*Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou
in God: for I shall yet praise him
for the help of his countenance.*

*O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore
will I remember thee from the land of Jordan,
and of the Hermonites, from the hill of Mizar.*

*Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts:
all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me.*

*Yet the LORD will command his loving-kindness
in the day time,
and in the night his song shall be with me,
and my prayer unto the God of my life.*

*I will say unto God my rock, "Why hast thou forgotten me?
why go I mourning because
of the oppression of the enemy?"*

*As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me;
while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?*

*Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
and why art thou disquieted within me?
hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him,
Who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*

Psalm 51

*Have mercy upon me, O God,
according to Thy loving-kindness:
according unto the multitude of
Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.*

*Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.*

*For I acknowledge my transgressions:
and my sin is ever before me.*

*Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil
in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when Thou
speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest.*

*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity;
and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

*Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the
hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom.*

*Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean:
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*

*Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones
which Thou hast broken may rejoice.*

*Hide Thy face from my sins,
and blot out all mine iniquities.*

*Create in me a clean heart, O God;
and renew a right spirit within me.*

*Cast me not away from Thy Presence;
and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.*

*Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation;
and uphold me with Thy free Spirit.*

*Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways;
and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.*

*Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God,
thou God of my salvation:
and my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness.*

*O Lord, open Thou my lips;
and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise.*

*For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it:
Thou delightest not in burnt offering.*

*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit:
a broken and a contrite heart,
O God, Thou wilt not despise.*

*Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion:
build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.*

*Then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifices
of righteousness, with burnt offering and
whole burnt offering: then shall they offer
bullocks upon thine altar.*

3. Many patients enjoy hearing someone sing. What kind of songs might a person sing to them?

Experience proves that a person can sing away much sadness and melancholy with beautiful songs, when they are sung in a devotional manner. So also much beautiful comfort can be sung into them, so that their hearts are filled with joy and hope. Thereby they are reminded of the heavenly music of the angels, which we shall there join in singing, and together with them praise God in eternal joy. A person should be guided by the wishes of the patient, and sing what he would like to hear, such as the following:

The Lutheran Hymnal

- # 137 – In Peace and Joy I Now Depart
- # 231 – We Now Implore God the Holy Ghost.
- # 247 – God the Father, be Our Stay
- # 251 and 252 – We All Believe in One True God-pleasing
- # 319 – In The Alone, O Christ, My Lord
- # 329 – From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee
- # 377 – Salvation Unto Us Has Come
- # 458 – Our Father, Thou in Heaven Above
- # 590 – In the Midst of Earthly Life
- # 592 – I Know of a Sleep in Jesus' Name
- # 594 – When My Last Hour is Close at Hand
- # 596 – This Body in the Grave We Lay

A person can look for these or other songs in the hymn book. One can also go according to the time of year, and sing Christmas, Easter or Pentecost hymns, according to the desires of the sick person.

4. Tell me also some short sayings (sighs) which a person might use if the sick patient is very weak, is short on breath, cannot speak and especially such words with which a person can commend his soul to God.

- *Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy Word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation (Luke 2:29).*
- *Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit (Luke 23:46).*
- *Into Thy hand I commit my spirit; Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth (Ps. 31:5).*
- *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit (Acts 7:58).*
- *Lord, abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent (Luke 24:29).*
- *I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ (Phil. 1:23).*

Ah, Thou sweet Lord Jesus Christ,
 God and man Thou did exist
 Do Thou preserve me from hell.

Lord Jesus Christ, with us abide,
 For round us falls the eventide;
 Nor let Thy Word, that Heavenly light,
 For us be ever veiled in night.

Ah, dearest Jesus, Holy Child,
 Make Thee a bed, soft, undefiled,
 Within my heart, that it may be
 A quiet chamber kept for Thee.

Jesus, the sweetest Name Divine
 In death refresh this soul of mine.

Devout I'm not, that saddens me,
 Confess my sin, seek grace from Thee,
 In Christ I, all unworthy, trust
 His Blood alone doth make me just.

From evil, Lord, deliver us;
 The times and days are perilous.
 Redeem us from eternal death,
 And when we yield our dying breath,
 Console us, grant us calm release,
 And take our souls to Thee in peace.

Amen, that is, So shall it be.
Confirm our faith and hope in Thee
That we may doubt not, but believe
What here we ask we shall receive.
Thus in Thy Name and at Thy Word
We say: "Amen. Oh, hear us, Lord!"

The soul which Thou hast dearly bought,
Grant to it, Lord, Thy comfort sought.

Lord Jesus, my comfort and joy,
My thoughts Thee do ever employ,
Come take me where sins can't annoy.

Come, Lord Jesus, come, Thou faithful God,
And bring Thou me to my goal,
For Thou the sting of death hast trod,
From all anguish relieve my soul,
Bring me to my real Fatherland,
Where I shall join the glorious band,
Let me go in peace to my home.

A heart now laden with sorrow,
Be-sprinkled with Christ's precious Blood,
Which sighs to God, help to borrow,
Like a cooing dove also would;
In the end it is truly freed,
From all anguish and need redeemed.
Therefore believe, pray, hope and be patient,
God's kindness is yours in Heaven;
Then wilt thou ever praise His grace
In His Church and His great congregation.

The blessing of God the Father,
And the Lord Jesus' precious Blood,
The Spirit's comfort and courage,
Will be mine forever above.

Jesus, Savior, quickly come,
Take me to my Heavenly home,
Take my soul in Thy loving hands. Amen.

5. What should the bystanders do when they see that a Christian has bade them farewell, was comforted unto the end and has fallen asleep blessed?

Mourning and weeping should not be considered wrong, for it is natural. But they should be on guard against heathenish grief, loud outcries and other unruly behavior. After all, we are Christians, and should permit ourselves to be comforted as those who believe, and have this strong, firm, unquestioning hope, that our dead do not die but fall asleep, are not lost but are redeemed from all evil and brought home to the Lord. They would not take a thousand worlds, if such a thing were possible, in exchange, and come back to this misery.

Therefore we should much rather thank God for such a blessed departure, and also learn from it to live like a Christian and die blessed. For it is written that we should behold the end of the saints or believers, and follow after their faith. Yes, we should fall on our knees and speak thus:

We thank Thee, Lord Jesus Christ, Thou eternal Lord of life, that Thou hast preserved this dear person steadfast in true repentance and faith and carried him to a blessed end. O how lovingly his dear soul is now being carried to Heaven; how well off he is! For we are told concerning the soul of dear Lazarus when he died before the rich man's gate: his soul was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom (16:22). Therefore I believe and know for certain, even though I cannot see it with my mortal, physical, befuddled eyes, that many holy angels are there who have been waiting around the bed for his soul. Now it will be carried home, now it will be led into eternal paradise. Now it rests in the arms and on the bosom of its Lord Jesus. Now all its grieving has come to an end; now the Lord has wiped all tears from its eyes, and has bestowed eternal peace and comfort and joy and bliss upon it.

Eternal joy and bliss will be over his head, bliss and joy will take possession of you. But distress and sadness is far from you. O dear soul, how well off you now are; you have carried Christ's yoke, have died and still live.

Ah, Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy also upon us who still live here and are left behind. Comfort us in this vale of tears, and help us patiently to bear the hardships of this misery unto the end. Grant that we also may follow after the example of such faith, and be ready every day and every hour, so that we too, like this dear person, may have a blessed end and follow after in peace and joy. Amen.

Blest Be the Tie that Binds

464

Eph. 4: 3
John Fawcett, 1772, alt.

S. M.

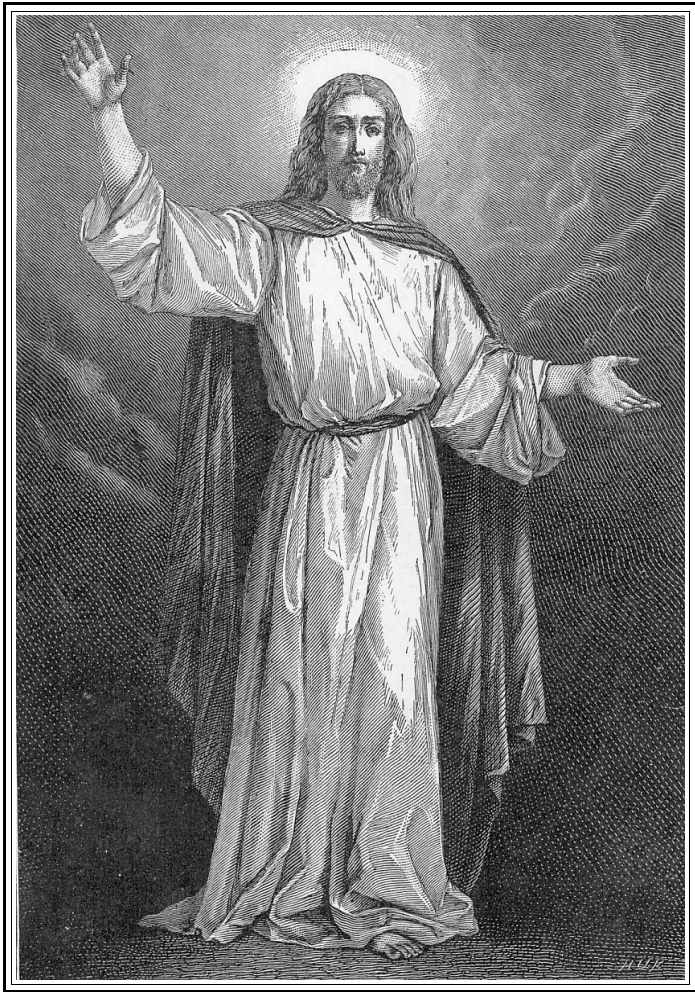
Boylston
Lowell Mason, 1832

1 Blest be the tie that binds Our hearts in Chris - tian love;
2 Be - fore our Fa - ther's throne We pour our ar - dent prayers;
3 We share our mu - tual woes, Our mu - tual bur - dens bear,
4 When here our path - ways part, We suf - fer bit - ter pain;

The fel - low - ship of kin - dred minds Is like to that a - bove.
Our fears, our hopes, our aims, are one, Our comforts and our cares.
And of - ten for each oth - er flows The sym - pa - thiz - ing tear.
Yet, one in Christ and one in heart, We hope to meet a - gain. A - men.

5 This glorious hope revives
Our courage by the way,
While each in expectation lives
And longs to see the day.

6 From sorrow, toil, and pain,
And sin we shall be free
And perfect love and friendship reign
Through all eternity.



Jesus the Christ by Alexandre Bida

Chapter IX

Discusses where the immortal soul goes after its departure and what its state then is. Considers also the Resurrection of our bodies, the joy of eternal bliss, and the torment of eternal damnation.

1. Since souls are immortal, where do they go and what happens to them, when they depart from the body?

Scripture informs us about this in a most beautiful and comforting manner in the following passages:

- *Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather, fear Him which is able to destroy soul and body in hell (Matt. 10:28).*
- *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God Who gave it (Eccl. 12:7).*
- *I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better (Phil. 1:23).*
- *The repentant malefactor, when he gave up his spirit, said to the Lord: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom." And Jesus said to him: "Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise"(Luke 23:42-43).*
- *The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die; and their departure is taken for misery, and their going from us to be utter destruction; but they are in peace (Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-3).*
- *But the righteous man, if he be prevented with death, shall be in rest (Wisdom of Solomon 4:7).*
- *There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God (Heb. 4:9).*
- *And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." And again: Now he is comforted, and thou tormented (Luke 16:22,25).*

- *In My Father's House are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also (John 14:2-3).*
- *For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (2 Cor. 5:1).*
- *We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8).*
- *Ye shall see Me; because I live, ye shall live also (John 14:19).*
- *Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth (Col. 3:2).*
- *But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all (Gal. 4:26).*
- *Thou wilt show me the path of Life; in Thy Presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore (Ps. 16:11).*

Notice, dear soul, that these wonderfully beautiful and highly comforting passages, which have proceeded from out of the mouth of God, assure us that the souls of men are entirely different from their bodies. For they are spirits like the angels and are immortal. And when the souls of the righteous are separated from the bodies, they will be brought by the holy angels and carried to God, and will there be at home with the Lord, with Christ. There they live in paradise, in Heaven above, and move in indescribable glory and joy, and will be lovingly comforted in purity and glory, and are in rest, in peace, in God's hand, without all distress, anguish, grief and want. For when the souls separate from the bodies, they are then free and do more without the body than they did before. For in this life the body makes it very difficult for the soul, and is a hindrance. But since they now here on earth in their mortal, miserable bodies praise God, call on Him, serve Him, rejoice and comfort themselves in Him, and delight themselves in all His works; how much more gloriously will not they do such things outside of the body, since they are without sin, without weakness and have no hindrance whatsoever. Listen

carefully, dear soul, this can certainly be beautiful and comforting. Who would want to be afraid of death?

By contrast, the souls of the unbelievers come directly into the power of the devil, and will be carried into the place of torment, as can be seen in the case of the rich man's soul. They are there in unrest, discord, distress, in pain and woe, without any comfort and grace, in stench and darkness, and in constant weeping and gnashing of teeth until the Last Day. Then their misery and wretchedness will become really great and will never have an end.

Lord Jesus Christ, my comfort and my delight! How my soul longs for Thee! Yes, as the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for Thee, my living God; O when shall I come and appear before Thee? (Ps. 42:1-2). O how fed up and weary I am of this dreary vale of tears, wherein I work for Thee, my God, in the service of Thy Church. I must also say with dear St. Paul: "But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour; yet what shall I choose I know not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better" (Phil. 1:22-23). Lord Jesus, Thou eternal Wisdom, Thou knowest my time. My days are in Thy hands. Unyoke me, my Lord, when it is Thy will. My heart longs for rest, yes, for eternal, living rest, to come out from this darkness into light, from sadness into joy, from unrest into peace, from weariness into glory, from weakness into perfection. Lord Jesus, Thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that my soul truly loves Thee and longingly awaits that time when I shall see Thee face to face. Just see, dear Savior, how the tears of love flow from my eyes! See that my eyes weep for joy and my heart is sick with love, that it sighs, thirsts, desires and wishes to be at home with Thee and to rest on Thy bosom, in Thy arms. My Lord and my God, how fine I will be there! Surely my soul will cry out with great joy and say: "Here it is good! Here it is good! Lord Jesus!" Remember me in Thy Kingdom and say to my soul: "Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Amen.

2. Don't the souls long for their bodies, since they know that their bodies are decaying so pitiably in the cold ground? And doesn't the time seem long to them because the Last Day and the Resurrection of the bodies are delayed?

I myself must confess that such thoughts often trouble a person. But then we are to remember this, first of all: Since our souls, after their departure, are with Christ and dwell in purity and glory, they will therefore have a much greater understanding and wisdom, and will know much more clearly the wonderfully righteous counsel and will of God. Therefore they know well and completely that no misfortune whatever will befall their bodies in the ground, but that they rest very softly and quietly, and that ever speck of dust and every tiny portion of their bodies will be preserved by the almighty power of God, so that nothing will be lost until the time of the Resurrection comes.

Secondly, the souls of the blessed are also in a place of such joy, that no impetuous or sorrowful longings and desires can come to them. For even though they unceasingly think about their bodies and anticipate God's Judgment Day, as can be seen from the Book of Revelation (6:9-10), yet their thoughts and anticipations are not sad, but are a part of the bliss in which they move and to the glory and praise of God, to Whom they give the honor, and are governed by His will.

Children of God still do such things in this miserable life, since they still wander about in their bodies and long for the final redemption and sigh after the coming of Christ. And whoever does not have such longings certainly has not love for his Lord Jesus. Then should not the dear souls with Christ wish that finally all the sinful ways in the world shall cease, and ask for the eternal perfection? But that such longings and anticipations should bring sadness, distress or painful desires is not possible, for they are with the Lord God, outside of this world. There no time and no distinction of years and days exists. But where there is no time, there can also be no troublesome longings nor desires. For Scripture says: *A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night* (Ps. 90:4). And again: *Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day* (2 Pet. 3:8).

Therefore, dear soul, put away such thoughts and give yourself into the hand of the Lord. He is your Creator, your God, your comfort, your rest, your shelter and your full satisfaction, both during and after this present life, and hereafter in all eternity.

Lord Jesus Christ! Thou seest and knowest that I love Thy appearing in my heart (2 Tim. 4:8). With all my power I pray that Thou wouldst destroy this ungodly, sinful world by Thy coming, bring down Thy righteous judgment upon the devil and all our enemies, and let the Eternal Life of joy begin, where Thou wilt be all in all. Yes, my Lord Jesus! All other creatures earnestly expect and long for it, as St. Paul says (in Rom. 8:19-21) , that they might be freed from the vanity to which they are subjected in hope; should not we children of God also long for our final redemption? If it be Thy Holy will, Lord Jesus, and if Thou hast decided that I should live to see Thy joyful coming, then so be it, my Lord and my Redeemer. O how I will listen to Thy trumpet with such great joy and will leap exultingly to meet Thee in the air. But if Thou wilt let me fall asleep before that time and take my soul to Thee in blissful Paradise, then see, here I am, and will gladly go with Thee. But there too I will not cease to exhort Thy Name with joyful sighs, and say: "Hurry and come quickly! Yes, come, my Lord Jesus, come to judge the living and the dead." Amen.

3. Do you believe for certain that these bodies of ours will again rise from the dead and live eternally together with the souls?

Yes indeed. I confess this in my Articles of Faith and say: "I believe in the Resurrection of the body and the Life Everlasting." For when our Lord Jesus comes again on the Last Day for judgment, then before Him shall be gathered all nations, dead and alive, wicked and godly (Matt. 25:32). Then the earth will deliver up its dead and the sea will give up its dead (Rev. 20:13). In a moment the souls will again enter into their deceased bodies and will appear alive before the Lord. And we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them, to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:17). Then the Lord will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats, and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Thereupon He will render His judgment and say to those on His right hand: *Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* But to those on the left hand He will angrily say: *Depart*

from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into Life Eternal (Matt. 25:32-46).

Dear soul, if you wish to have further testimony of Scripture on this, then give heed to these following words:

- *Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust (Isa. 26:19).*
- *But as touching the Resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, "I Am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?" God is not the God of the dead, but of the living (Matt. 22:31f.; Ex. 3:6).*
- *And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to Everlasting Life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt (Dan. 12:2).*
- *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another (Job. 19:25-27).*
- *Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live (John 5:25).*
- *This is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have Everlasting Life; and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:40).*
- *I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die (John 11:25-26).*

Look also at the examples, dear soul, and notice how easy it is for the Almighty Lord to raise the dead. In every case it was necessary for Him to say only a word. Notice that when He raised the young man, the only son of the widow of Nain, He said: *Young man, I say unto thee, Arise!* (Luke 7:14). And at once the dead arose and was alive. So also He awakened with one word the little dead daughter of the ruler of the synagogue at Capernaum, and said:

Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise! (Mark 5:41). The same thing happened with Lazarus at Bethany, who had already lain in the grave for four days. The Lord said: *Lazarus, come forth!* (John 11:43), and immediately he came forth alive from his grave.

Yes, my soul, such things seem impossible to the eyes and powers of men, but with our Lord and God nothing shall be impossible (Luke 1:37). Just as a mother knows very well in which room or bed she has placed her little child to sleep, so that in the morning she comes again, wakens and lifts it up; so also the Lord knows where our bodies (which were made His temple and dwelling) are sleeping. And it will be very easy for Him to make alive once again our dead, cold, and even decomposed bodies and limbs, just as a mother awakens her sleeping infant in the cradle.

But in addition to this, we have also our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Head of His Church. He is not only an example, but is also a forerunner, yes, is the cause and source of our resurrection (1 Cor. 15). For He died on account of our sins and was laid in the grave, but on the third day He joyfully rose again for our justification (Rom. 4:25). He now calls to us all and says, *Because I live, ye shall live also* (John 14:19).

Yes, my Lord Jesus, because Thou livest, we too will surely live. For Thou art the Head and we are Thy members. Since Thou art now risen, so we too shall most surely rise again. Since Thou as the Head now livest, then should not we, as Thy members, also live? For that reason, my Lord Jesus, I hope for Thy joyous coming, and every day sigh thus:

God's Judgment Day will soon be here,
In which the Lord, as Peter taught,
Will burn with fire the heav'ns and earth.

Then will the world be terrified,
When they see the Lord of glory
Coming so quickly and so soon.

How wonderfully all men will see
The dead arising from their graves
And standing all before the Judge.

There will then be no hiding place,
Each must stand and hear the verdict,
And listen as his sentence sounds.

Then will be plain for all to hear
What hitherto was in secret,
All things will be clear on that Day.

The Judge knows what is in the heart,
He hears not only spoken words,
He will make no mistake that Day.

I think on this by day and night,
Since I so great a sinner am;
What shall I do? Where shall I go?

O Jesus, precious Savior mine,
Thou wilt Thyself the last Judge be,
Show me that Day Thy faithfulness.

Remember all Thy blessings great,
Which made me free from all my sins,
Ah Lord, cast me not off from Thee.

Thy death and pain and sore distress
Which Thou didst bear upon the tree,
Let it not in me be for naught.

I pray and cry, O God, my Lord,
Help that I e'er with Thee remain,
Before death quickly comes to me.

Although my sinning knows no bounds,
Yet Thy free grace much greater is,
I will not yield to despair.

When Mary lamented her sin
And the robber prayed unafraid,
To none didst Thou deny Thy grace.

Through all this Thy boundless blessing,
Which abundantly shows itself,
Preserve me from the fires of hell.

Grant that I stand at Thy right hand
Among the blessed sheep and lambs,
Let me be far from all the goats.

When some, all lost, shall go their way
From Thee to suffer pains of hell,
Then lead me, Lord, to life above.

Lord Jesus Christ, my joy and peace,
I wait for Thy time to take me,
Come when Thou wilt, I am prepared! Amen.

4. Will Eternal Life really be a life of glorious joy that is beyond all human comprehension?

Yes, indeed, dear soul. You have well said “beyond all human comprehension.” It is indeed beyond all that man can believe, think and imagine. For Scripture itself says: *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him* (1 Cor. 2:9; Isa. 64:4).

Eternal God! What joy, what bliss, what glory, what loving-kindness will be there! (Ps. 16:11). Yes, my soul, who would not daily wish to think on this? Who would not gladly wish to hear about it, sing about it, talk about it? Who would not rather be there and possess such joy? But who will tell us about it? And where shall we hear something about it, that our hearts may rejoice and yearn for it?

Dear soul, although the great prophet Isaiah, as well as the great apostle Paul (as already mentioned) grow silent about this and do not know how to describe it, still there are many beautiful passages in Holy Scripture in which the Holy Ghost tells us

something about eternal bliss, and which a person should consider well; namely:

- *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2).*
- *Yet in my flesh shall I see God (Job 19:26).*
- *Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father (Matt. 13:43).*
- *And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever (Dan. 12:3).*
- *God will be all in all (1 Cor 15:28).*
- *So shall we ever be with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:17).*
- *The Lord shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious Body (Phil. 3:21).*
- *In the Resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in Heaven (Matt. 22:30).*
- *And I, John, saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great Voice out of Heaven saying: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." And He that sat upon the Throne said: "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev. 21:2-5).*
- *Again: And I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the Glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there (Rev. 21:22-25).*

- Again: *The Throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face and His Name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign forever and ever (Rev. 22:3-5).*

Dear soul, these are all short passages, but nevertheless full of indescribable loveliness. For if Scripture similarly had great long sermons on this, then our miserable heart would be too weak and our understanding too inadequate to grasp it. Therefore the Holy Ghost has opened only a little window for us in these short passages. He permits us to have a little glimpse, so that we may know what we are to believe and hope for, and so that we might have some basis for our joy. But when we get there and take possession of this bliss, then surely each one of us will say to the others, as aged Elisabeth once said to the holy Virgin Mary: *Blessed is she that believed!* (Luke 1:45).

O eternal life, O glorious life, O everlasting joy and bliss! O eternal Jerusalem, thou holy city of God, thou beloved bride of my Lord Jesus Christ! I love thee in my heart, and my soul longs for thy beauty. O how beautiful, how glorious, how noble thou art! Thou art beautiful in every way and there is no blemish in thee. When I think about thee, O Jerusalem that is above, then my heart longs for thee; yes, for Jerusalem, my Mother; for Jerusalem, my fatherland; and for Thee, Lord Jesus, Who dwellest therein as the Head, the light, the Lord, the eternal Shepherd!

O holy life, O blessed life which God has prepared for them that love Him. O thou living life, thou quiet life, thou peaceful life, in which there will be no death, no sadness, no sin, no pain, no anguish, no infirmities, no fear, no change. It will be a life full of all elegance and glory, where there are no adversaries, no sinful lusts, where there is perfect love and no fear, where there is one eternal day and one Spirit in all, where one sees God face to face, and every heart is filled to overflowing with the food of Life. I desire to look upon Thy purity and my heart longs greatly for Thy bliss. The more I think about Thee the sicker I become out of love for Thee.

O blessed art thou, my soul, when thou art released from thy earthly body and can freely go to Heaven. How blessed thou wilt

arrive there, how lovingly thou wilt be received! For all eternity thou wilt be still and safe, and need fear neither enemies nor death. Yes, thou wilt be with the Lord, thy God and Savior, forever. There He will always be near thee and thou canst look upon Him without ceasing, He who is the fairest among the children of men (Ps. 45:2). Dost thou not hear, my soul, how He calls to thee and says with His charming voice: *Rise up, My love, My fair one and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. Arise, My love, My fair one and come away. Come away, My elect ones. I desire thy beauty. Come and be joyful before My countenance, with My angels, whose fellowship I have promised you. Come hither out of your manifold labour and danger, and enter into the joy of your Lord* (Song of Solomon 2:10ff.).

O rejoice, my soul and be happy, thou beautiful daughter of a prince. For the King desires thy beauty, and the fairest among the children of men loves thy ornament. Blessed art thou, my soul, blessed art thou forever and ever! O thou glorious life, if only I could behold thy glory, thy blessedness, thy beauty, thy gates and walls, thy streets and manifold dwellings, thy citizens and thy mighty King, my beloved Lord Jesus Christ, in His adornments. For thy walls are of noble stones, thy gates of costly pearls, thy streets of pure gold, from which one sings unceasingly the beautiful “Hallelujah!” There is nothing of that which we suffer here and which we see in this miserable life. In thee there is no darkness, no night and no change of the times. In thee one does not go about with lanterns and neither moon nor stars are shining, but God of God, Light of Light and the Sun of righteousness is thy light eternally (Mal. 4:2). The snow-white and unspotted Lamb of God is thy bright and beautiful light. The countenance of thy most beautiful King (which you always behold) is thy sun, thy purity and all thy delight. Yes, the King of all kings is Himself within you and His servants are round about.

There is the choir of angels, which praises God. There is the fellowship of the citizens of Heaven. There is the everlasting, loving festival of all those who have come out of this sad pilgrimage to thy joy. There are the sheep and the lambs that have come out of the snares of this world, and who ever rejoice in their eternal fatherland. Their adornment and glory is by no means equal, but they live in equal joy. There full and perfect love rules, for God is All in all.

Whom they behold unceasingly and with constant contemplation from the heart they love and praise, praise and love, and all their activity consists in praising God without end, without interruption and without tiring.

O blessed shall I be in eternity, when after this life I shall hear the heavenly music, which will be presented by the citizens in the heavenly fatherland together with the holy angels, to the praise and glory of the eternal King. O blessed, blessed shall I be, when I can also take part in this, and stand next to my King, next to my God and Lord, and behold Him in His majesty, as He Himself has promised me and said: *Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given me* (John 17:24), *the glory which I had with Thee before the world was* (John 17:5).

As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, Lord, my God. My soul thirsteth for Thee, my Lord, the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? O Thou fountain of Life, Thou well-spring of all comfort and all joy, when shall I drink of the living water of Thy comfort? When shall I leave this miserable vale of tears and behold Thy glory? My Lord and my God! How my soul yearns for it! How it thirsts for Thee! When shall I come and appear before Thee? (Ps. 42).

Lord Jesus, my comfort, my joy, my delight! Thou dearest, fairest and most loving One in my eyes, let me see the day of eternal bliss, the day of joy and salvation which Thou hast made, that we may rejoice and be glad in it (Ps. 118:24). O what a glorious, beautiful, bright, precious day that will be, which will last forever and will have no evening, in which I will hear joy and delight, exultation and giving of thanks into all eternity.

Enter thou, my soul, into the joy of thy Lord! Enter, my soul, into His eternal bliss, into the House of the Lord thy God, which is full of great joy, which is glorious and indescribable and has no end. Enter into His joy, where there will never again be sorrow, but eternal bliss. There you will have all that your heart desires and no heartache can enter there!

That will be the living life, the most loving and joyful life, the one which lasts eternally. No enemy will be there to persecute us, and no evil lusts to seduce us. But there will be great peace and certain

rest, soft, quiet and loving bliss, joyfulness and precious glory, eternal blessedness and the Holy Trinity, one eternal Godhead in three Persons, and three Persons in one eternal Godhead, Whom we shall behold in eternity and rejoice eternally in the Lord our God.

O joy above all joys! O bliss above all bliss, which is beyond comparison! When shall I enter into thee, that I may behold my God Who dwells in thee? I wish to go there and behold such great glory!

Come, dear Lord Jesus, come and delay not! Come, Lord, my Savior; come, Lord, Thou comfort of all the heathen! Come, my Light and my Redeemer, deliver my soul from the prison of this misery, that I may come and praise Thy Holy Name!

O eternal kingdom, never-ending Kingdom of Heaven! In thee is the eternal light and the peace of God, which passeth all knowledge and understanding (Phil. 4:7). In thee rest the souls of the saints. Eternal joy is upon their heads, and they are surrounded with gladness and exultation, but anguish and misery is far from them (Isa. 35:10). Lord, my God, how glorious Thy heavenly Kingdom is, in which all saints reign with Thee! They are clothed with light and bright splendour, and carry golden crowns upon their heads. They see Thee face to face, and Thou causest them to rejoice ever and again with Thy peace!

There is eternal bliss and no sadness. There is eternal joy and no suffering. There is eternal blessing and no tribulation. There is an eternal loving-kindness and no hardships. There is the eternal light and no darkness. There is eternal life and no death. There is eternal good and no evil. There is constant youth and no old age. There is constant life and no end. There is constant adornment and no change. There is constant embellishment and no deformity. There is constant love and no hatred. There is constant good health and no sickness. There is constant exultation and no end to it. There one experiences no pain, one hears no wailing, one sees no grief. They move in eternal joy and need not fear any evil.

For there is the eternal good, which is nothing else than to behold the Lord God and see Him face to face. Blessed are they in eternity who have been rescued from this hard and dangerous life, and have come to Thy great eternal joy.

Joyfully I'm moved to sing
When I Thy goodness see:
Let my exultation ring,
My heart is filled with glee,
Praises be to Christ my King,
From sin I'm now set free,
May I to this treasure cling,
This is my heart-felt plea. Amen.

5. But where will the ungodly go and how will it go with them?

They will go with body and soul into everlasting punishment (Matt. 25:46). Yes, dear soul, just as the eternal joy and bliss which will be the portion of the elect neither can nor may be adequately described, so also no one can imagine the indescribable anguish and torment in which the ungodly and damned will be eternally punished and tormented. When the fathers speak of the eternal pains of hell of the damned, they summarize it all in three words and say: "There the punishment will be diversity, bitterness and eternity."

First, the pain and anguish of the damned in hell will be in so many various forms that no one can count them. For Scripture says that they will be cast into outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 22:13). *He was in hell and in torments* (Luke 16:23). *Upon the wicked the Lord shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup* (Ps. 11:6). *Their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh* (Isa. 66:24). *And they shall be afraid; pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth; they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames* (Isa. 13:8). *The worm is spread under them, and the worms cover them* (Isa. 14:11).

See, dear soul, with these and similar threats Scripture shows to the ungodly that all cross, all misery, all lamenting, all tribulation, all torment, all pain, hunger, grief, anxiety, distress, thirst, heat, cold, sickness, aches, dying, destruction, languishing, despair and everything else that cannot possibly be named or listed – this will be their eternal companion, and all of the abominable devils will be their hangmen.

Secondly, they say: “The manifold anguish and torment of hell will be so great and frightful, so bitter and acrid, that none of the damned can endure them, and yet they must endure all these things eternally. For Scripture says: *In those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them* (Rev. 9:6).

Yes, my soul, for them there will be neither life nor death, but they will be tormented and tortured between life and death in indescribable agony and grief. Just like glowing iron in a melting furnace, so the damned will be thoroughly heated and moved to anguish, beaten, smitten and hammered for all eternity.

Thirdly, the fathers say: “Their manifold and unbearable anguish and torment will not last only for awhile, or even for a long time; for a long time is not eternal. The Lord says: *These shall go away into everlasting punishment*. Yes, my soul, if it would last only for a long time, then it would finally come to an end; but eternity has no end. *The land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up forever* (Isa. 34:9-10). Yes, *the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day nor night* (Rev. 14:11).

Just consider, dear soul: If a person were to lie eternally on a soft bed, eat only wonderful food and refreshment in a wonderfully beautiful room, and yet would be tied up on that bed and never again be permitted to leave it – surely, a person would not wish for that kind of life! But there the damned are not dwelling in sensual delights, but in the eternal fires of hell, in everlasting wailing and anguish, in fearful stench and darkness, and will receive no crumb nor drop of refreshment throughout all eternity.

O listen to this, you poor miserable child of the world. Listen and take this to heart! You love the world and its pleasures, and say: “In the world it is good; in the world it is good!” Remember, the time is coming and is certainly not far away, when you will say with the rich man in hell: “O, I suffer great torment in these flames!” Yes, you will lament and say: “O, here it is not good; here it is not good!” And yet you must be there eternally. You will suffer there eternally and can nevermore avoid it. You’ll be destroyed eternally and yet nevermore die, in unspeakable pain, yet there will be no end!

O Lord Jesus Christ! Grant Thou ears to hear and hearts to understand, that I may diligently hear Thy faithful servants and messengers, repent and ever separate myself from the children of darkness. Help me never to conform to this unbelieving world, so that I may not, with it, be thrown into the eternal torments of hell. Govern, teach and guide me by Thy Holy Spirit, that I may daily learn to live like a Christian and, when it is pleasing to Thee, die a blessed death, so that I may not come to the place of everlasting pain and torment, but be with Thee, Lord, my Savior and with all Thy saints, and possess the joys of Eternal Life.

Lord God, through Thy great mercy,
 Lead me the narrow way;
Lord Christ, do Thou preserve me,
 Else I shall go astray;
Keep me in true faith constant,
 When evil times annoy,
Grant that I nothing more want
 Than Heav'nly festive joy!

AMEN, AMEN, AMEN!



