

natural has come upon you. Not alone, but "With all the saints," we will come to the knowledge of our God, and if in eternity it will be the wonderful exaltation of life together with all angels and all saints to glorify God forever, why, then, should we forsake and neglect the glorious power which already here on earth can unfold in our prayer, if by anticipation we live already here in the blessed communion, which awaits us up yonder. With all God's saints we are one body in Christ, as our head, but on earth we taste little of the fellowship of the whole body of the Lord. On the other hand, communion with saints and God's angels is continually open to us. Blessed is he who not only enjoys this in his own soul, but also knows how to inspire thereby the nearness of his God.

"STRIVING AGAINST SIN."

One who in mature years, and in his right mind, does not strive from time to time against some sin or other, can scarcely be imagined. The human heart is an impenetrable riddle. Even with sneak thieves and drunkards we are often amazed at a coy tenderness that shows disgust with one or more sins, which in better circles are altogether too frequently given free passage. But repression of some striking sin, in the case of oneself or of others, is by no means always yet what the apostle calls the struggle against sin. Everything here depends on what occasions the struggle against this or that sin. One will resist such a sin from concern about his health. This is often preponderant with respect to sensual sin. Another

takes care of himself, because, in case his sin became known, it would injure his good name. A third strives against a temptation because indulgence would ruin him financially. A fourth puts a mark against a given sin because in his narrower circle of life it is sharply condemned. Only think of Sabbath desecration. And in this way, by all sorts of persons, one sin or another is resisted from reasons that have nothing to do with the real struggle against sin. With not a few, indeed, there is no mention whatever of a conscious motive, and all their striving against this or that sin springs from a certain moral instinct, from the judgment of public opinion, or from the desire to be decent. In this way profanity has become noticeably less in our civilized circles, but far more because it is now considered coarse and uncivilized, than from fear of the holy God.

All such resistance against all sorts of sin, however, should not be judged from the heights as indifferent. Because of its very contagiousness every open sin is most dangerous. Apart from its guilt before God, sin by itself is moral sickness, and everything that opposes the outbreak or progress of this sickness is gain. Only the struggle against sin in any form, without higher motive, brings no spiritual gain. David's saying: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned," remains the fundamental rule. And only when we strive against sin, because sin opposes God, does our struggle obtain the holy, the higher character.

The struggle against sin, because sin strives against God and God strives against sin, brings us near unto God. The struggle then remains no longer merely moral, but it becomes religious—an

expression of godliness, and at the same time a precious means of cherishing nearness unto God. See it in the life of nations and associations, how waging a common war brings people together, closely unites them, and makes connections for the present and the future.

When France at length obtained Russia as an ally, Russian sailors in Paris were almost carried on hands. In the war of the Boers against England every Dutchman felt his heart beat in sympathy with that of his fellow countrymen in South Africa. From fear of Russia the English and Japanese have become brothers. The same is seen in the life of society and church. In times of election unions arise between temporal allies, which govern their entire future. It is seen in every domain that nothing unites so closely, and brings one so near to another, as the struggle against a common foe.

The same applies to the struggle against sin, when it is honestly carried, because sin is inimical to God. For then God and you fight the same fight. Then this fight of itself makes you join yourself to God. Then you do not fight alone, but with your God. With the weapons which God provides for this warfare, under Christ as your leader. And then nothing brings you so near unto God, and keeps you there, as the life-long continuance of the bitter fight against the enemy of God, and of your own soul, and of the soul of your loved ones.

And then it is not a life-struggle against one particular sin, but against sin, i. e. against all sinful influences, inspirations and workings, which go out from Satan upon yourself and your entire

surrounding. Indeed, there are bosom-sins, and it is no minor fault, when the heart is so little known to itself, that no confession can be made before God of the sin that most assaults and conquers self. And it cannot fail but that everyone who takes his private life seriously is more particularly on his guard against certain definite sins, and in his thoughts and prayers is more engaged with these, than with other sins. His struggle directs itself most against that evil which overcame and injured him most. And in memory thereof the shame and sorrow because of defeat in the struggle against this particular sin, will intrude themselves most strongly upon him. It was this sin which inflicted the most cruel wound, and left behind the blackest mark.

But do not fail to observe the danger which this implies. For is it not heart-breaking to see the number of lesser sins in their character to which even earnest Christians are stone blind? And the burden of this guilt rests for no small part upon this one-sided striving against a particular, great sin. Where a greater danger threatens, all sorts of lesser dangers that might harm are of themselves almost lost from sight. When a loved one lies at the point of death, no one inquires after the concerns of cellar and kitchen. When a runaway horse races through the streets, no one is on the lookout for muddy places, but makes himself scarce. When fire breaks out in the house, no one attends to the draught from an open window. In saving a man from drowning, no one is concerned about the incidental tearing of clothes. When war breaks out, of itself all sorts of other quarrels, however important, are silenced.

And thus a more serious evil will always cause the struggle against a lesser evil to weaken.

And such is also the case with respect to the soul. When the struggle is continued to resist and to repel the particular sin which tempts one the most strongly, a number of other sins have almost free play and their progress is unnoticed. He who perseveres in the main fight against arrogance and pride, against sensual propensity, or avarice, is thereby exposed to the danger that little untruths, dishonesties, infidelities, bitter-nesses, vanities, selfishnesses and so much more, become almost a second nature, strike root in his heart ever more firmly, and soil his inner life. This is only discovered when at last the chief enemy has been as good as worsted. Then tenderness of conscience begins immediately to work with these erstwhile neglected sins, and one is frightened at the sight of the luxurious growth of weeds in the garden of the heart.

And to what cause can this sad outcome be attributed save to this, that one struggled bravely indeed to free himself from his worst enemy, but utterly lost sight of the struggle against sin, because God strives against it. It continued to be an effort to set one's person free, to measure his strength of spirit and will against the strength of this particular sin; dissatisfaction with self, in case of defeat, and the determination not to rest until victory was gained. But all this went on outside of the secret walk with God. Divine help was invoked to worst the enemy of the soul, but there was no awakening of soul to beat off, as a poisonous adder, the enemy of our God. And, therefore, such a struggle could not bring you

nearer unto God, but every time threw you back upon yourself.

Should we then give up the struggle against the sin that tempts us most, that we might resist the numerous lesser sins? By no means. He who leaves the main entrance to a fortress unprotected merely to repel assaults at the side entrances, will, when presently attacked from behind, have to give up all further resistance. No, what you should do, is, with an eye open to the moral danger that threatens, by a far more serious exertion of strength, the sooner the better to make an end of the struggle against your chief sin, not by giving it free play, but by breaking with it once and for all. Thus alone will you obtain a free hand, in the Lord's strength, to bring spiritual harmony in the further discords of the soul. That this is possible is evident from the witness borne by many a disciplined child of God, who at length has put on the whole armor of God, and has triumphed gloriously. The mistake is, that one makes his leading sin his bosom sin, and then views it as an evil which by some fatality he is bound to resist until death. The enigma of our human heart is, that we resist our main sin most continuously and at the same time cozen it. A duality within, in which, through lack of heroic action, we accustom ourselves to what is deemed to be a necessity of life.

Then it is not the spirit within us, which, united with the Spirit of God, fights in our soul the fight of God against sin, for the sake of God, but a ience. This evil, however, must be broken. It must become a life-struggle against every sin and against the sinful nature, for the sake of the

holiness of God. In order to come nearer unto God, the child of God must take service under Christ in the warfare which God himself wages against Satan and his works, and thus obtain a twofold result: that whereas hitherto he suffered defeat, now he conquers, and that whereas he thus far wandered away from God, now he knows himself to be near unto God.

“LIVE IN PEACE.”

When Asaph wrote: “But it is good for me to be near unto God,” and thereby expressed in words a deep utterance of soul, which age upon age has found an echo in thousands of hearts, life had many more advantages for those who sought the Lord than it has for us now. In the East, where Asaph lived, it is still the custom that every event in life is put into relation with God; that in everything God is remembered, and the name of God is named. There is so much that draws us away from God, and therefore, pious usage prescribed, that from early infancy the child should be trained to remember God in every event of life. This is still the custom under Islam, where it is overdone, even to the extent that it must give rise to abuse.

But there is something attractive in the habit. The call to prayer from the pinnacle of the minarets has the same tendency. Where there is so much that draws us away from God and keeps us far removed, a counterpoise was sought in life by which to bind the soul to God. The Christian church did the same in the middle