

# Insight Into



Special Edition January 2018

## Say “No!”

32 Short Meditations  
on Dealing with Sin

## General Information

***Insight Into*** is the official youth periodical of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations in the United States and Canada.

As a Reformed magazine, ***Insight Into*** seeks to promote the knowledge of the truth and to give biblical guidance to young people in their daily lives.

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# Say “No!”

32 Short Meditations  
on Dealing with Sin



## At Your Disposal

More and more young people, but also older ones, are fighting a life-and-death battle with addictions, including people you would never expect. Anyone can fall into the clutches of this enemy. There is no one too good for this. Young and old, man or woman, converted or unconverted, everyone is open to temptations, often related to the seventh commandment. One after another falls, like a row of dominoes. Frightening! The poison permeates the whole world.

You can keep this booklet of meditations titled *Say "No!"* at your disposal for those moments when the evil one wants to drag you along. Sin lies at the door. In those unguarded moments, he enters. Don't expect any statistics or psychology in this booklet. Don't expect any therapy. I just want to hand you God's Word, in order to help you in this battle. *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour"* (1 Peter 5:8).

Rev. P. Van Ruitenburch  
Chilliwack, BC, January 2018



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# There is Forgiveness

During a Bible study, two prisoners were talking together. "I will never be able to forgive myself for what I have done," said one of them. "My sins haunt me every day," he added.

"That is good to hear!" his friend answered. "I have relatives who feel no guilt at all. At least you realize what you have done, and therefore you need the Lord Jesus more."

When I heard this, I had to think of Paul. He continued to feel himself to be the least of the apostles. Sexual addictions can also lead to this. It continues to sadden you. This is good, as long as it doesn't suffocate you. Cain ran away from God, because he had murdered his brother.

Perhaps your past depresses you. Well, you don't have to be despondent, because there is forgiveness. Our God pardons "abundantly." Staying humble and small is a good thing, however. We must never act as though nothing has happened. But the Lord is able to cast our sins behind His back, make them sink to the bottom of the sea, and dissolve them as a morning cloud. Don't you believe this? Seek the Lord. He can be found in the Scriptures. Ask for eyes; ask for the Holy Spirit and for faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

To think that there is no forgiveness for you will only make things worse. If you become discouraged because you have sinned so dreadfully, you run a greater risk of falling back into sin. After all, what difference does it make if you are lost anyway?

*With Him there is forgiveness.*

*Why? Because God wants to show that He is able to forgive.*

*Why? To make people astonished at such a great God, that He may be feared, as it says in Psalm 130.*

*Out of the depths of sadness: the feeling that you may as well quit praying, that you will soon end up in doubt and despair.*

*For such people there is a church, to praise that God together, because He can do what we cannot do: forgive.*

*Why? Because Christ, who had no sin, was forsaken of God. So that if we believe in Him, we will receive God's grace.*



This Jesus also stretches out His arms to you, my friends.

*“Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little” (Luke 7:47).*

*“For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (1 Corinthians 15:9).*

*“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Ephesians 3:8).*

*“For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it” (Galatians 1:13).*



# Called from Two Sides

I am thinking of the two invitations in Proverbs 9, which come from totally opposite directions, but are word for word nearly identical.

Here's the first one. Wisdom has prepared a delicious banquet in her palace. The table is set, and delicious meats and wines mingled with warm or cold water are placed upon the table. It seems like a royal wedding will be celebrated. Wisdom has sent her maidens to proclaim in the open air an invitation to everyone. Especially the simple ones are called, foolish ones, inexperienced ones, and those whose understanding is darkened, who are actually sleeping. Everyone within hearing, in other words. Wisdom calls them to turn from the foolish, to forsake the foolish and live.

Who is this Wisdom? Read Proverbs 8:14-31, and it will become clear that it is God's Son. He calls just like in Isaiah 55:1 and John 6:35. He wants to give food to foolish ones. He wants to give eternal life.

Compare this gospel message with verses 13 to 17. There is a rival! I hear the sultry voice of a foolish woman, one without wisdom. But she copies wisdom almost word for word. She directs herself to the same people and says that her bread is much more delicious. However, she does not say that her guests descend into the depths of hell. What a liar! There are two invitations and the competition is fierce. The world calls and draws. God's Son calls and draws. Remember that when the adulterous woman calls, another voice calls as well. The best remedy against sin is not found in practical tips but rather in the gospel. Be sure to read it! Whoever does not seek life in the Son of God is open to sexual idolatry.

*"My son, give Me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe My ways. For a whore is a deep ditch; and a strange woman is a narrow pit" (Proverbs 23:26, 27).*

*"Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city, Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled" (Proverbs 9:1-5).*

*"A foolish woman is clamorous: she is simple, and knoweth nothing. For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city, to call passengers who go right on their ways: Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: and as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant" (Proverbs 9:13-17).*

# False Promises

The devil exists. It is not only our sinful heart and the influence of the world that gets the best of us, but Satan is also very real. I know that we cannot simply shift the blame away from ourselves, but we do have to be very much on guard for the Prince of Darkness. He is a murderer, a tempter, and a liar. He seeks our destruction. This liar makes fair promises and uses bait to lure people into his trap, after which he will laugh loudly. Think of the empty promises he made to Eve. She would be as God. What did he promise Christ? That He would receive all the kingdoms of this world and that the angels would carry Him in their bosom. Satan tried to make sin as attractive as possible. All Christ had to do was to bow for a moment.

The devil knows the sinful heart. He tempts us with empty promises. He does not mention the results of sin, or that our sin increases our guilt before God. He is a liar who tries to destroy us. He tries to disrupt our marriage. He wants us to harden our hearts.

Do not believe him, and be aware that he lies in wait for us, to devour us like a roaring lion. Watch him, because he puts up a nice front. "You have already sinned so often; just do this, too. You can always ask for forgiveness later. Everyone does it these days; you are no exception. You need some leisure time. You're so stressed that you deserve a little recreation." In every possible way, Satan tries to downplay sin and get a firmer grip on sinners. Consider within yourself that there is spiritual wickedness in the air, that Satan has many devils at his beck and call, and that he will not leave you alone. "Come on," he says. "Look just a little longer, just five more minutes." What a sly fox! Resist the devil and make him flee.

*"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44).*

*"And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:4,5).*

*"And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel" (1 Chronicles 21:1).*

# Feeding Your Flesh

We must take good care of our pets. That is even our Christian duty. “A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast,” we read in Proverbs 12:10. You regularly clean the cage, provide food and drink, and shelter from the wind and the sun. You don’t neglect an animal or let it starve. The same applies to people. In Romans 12:10, we read that we must “be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love.”

There is one beast you are allowed to hurt. You may hack away at it, pluck out its eyes, and cut off its hands. I am talking about the sinful “I,” which the Bible calls the flesh, the old man, or the body of this death. Do everything in your power to control and restrain this beast. Take away all opportunities and make it very difficult to sin. Don’t just burn what you need to get rid of but also use filters. Make an agreement with your husband or wife never to erase your search history. Give your friends access to your computer.

Don’t forget that the beast is clever. It can escape through tiny holes. Be alert, watch and pray, not in your own strength, but in prayerful dependence. Crucify your flesh; kill it. It can be exhausting, because it is not something you will ever be done with. It is not easy, because this beast has friends on earth and in hell. You won’t chop off his head just like that, but your efforts will pay off. Moses was willing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He looked further and saw what God had laid away for those who fear Him. You will only live if you kill the beast. If you want to remain good friends with one or more sins, you are sparing your flesh.

There is no condemnation for them who are in Christ Jesus, who live not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. I would like to urge everyone to strive against sin and resist unto blood. Think of Asaph. He confessed before God that he was a great beast. Surely, we are no better. Welcome in the strife!

*“But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Romans 13:14).*

*“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Romans 8:13).*

# God Does Not Tempt

Tempting is an old word. It can sometimes mean “to entice or seduce,” but also “to try or test.” The meaning depends on the context. It is very serious when people tempt God, when they try God’s patience. Please be careful, friends. God’s patience will come to an end. Do not harden your hearts. If you persist in your sin, you provoke Him.

Tempting is not always sinful. God sometimes tries His children. We read that God tempted Abraham by asking him to offer his son Isaac, and Abraham endured the temptation. What a blessing to be tried by God in that way, also in suffering and trials. It is for the profit of His children. Obviously, God was not tempting Abraham to sin. No one may ever say that he is tempted of God in that way (see James 1:13).

Tempting often means to entice or seduce. What is seducing us? It is the world, worldly friends, and worldly books, magazines, television, movies, and websites, but especially our own heart. In contrast to Christ, we have an evil nature, an “old man,” a seducing power for which we must be on guard (see James 1:14). It works together with other seducing powers. Christ was tempted of Satan, as we are. Satan tried Christ; he wanted nothing more than to disrupt and frustrate the work of Christ. Satan greatly desired to sift Peter as wheat. Satan wanted to do this with Christ as well. He did all he could to ruin the work of God.

Be on guard against the liar and murderer; he loves to conspire together with our sinful heart. Don’t let him have his way. Resist him and flee from sin. Leave the house, if need be. Go visit a place where you are safe. When you please Satan, you grieve God and Christ. Do not quench the Spirit.

*“Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah”  
(Deuteronomy 6:16).*

*“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations”  
(James 1:2).*

*“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed” (James 1:12-14).*

# “Resist the Devil”

The Lord Jesus Christ did not allow Himself to be seduced and in no wise gave in to Satan. On the contrary, God’s Son responded with answers from the Bible. He remained faithful to His Father and resisted the devil, rebuking him. James writes that we must also resist the devil. Therefore, it is good that we have some words from the Bible ready, in case Satan wants to tempt us to sin, also against the seventh commandment. Call him a liar and a murderer. Resist him in the following ways:

- Take your Bible (see John 15:3, Psalm 119:11, James 4:7).
- Have Bible texts ready, for example, Genesis 39:9.
- Counter the temptation with prayer. Fasting is also good (see Matthew 4:2).
- Consider how dangerous it is to harden yourself.
- Think on the suffering of Christ. Visualize Him hanging on the cross.
- Try to think in concrete terms about what heaven is.
- Contemplate what eternal life will be like, but also what hell will be.
- Make solemn promises and tell them to a good friend.
- Avoid bad company.
- Take the most drastic measures necessary to protect yourself permanently, if possible.
- Sing a psalm. Praise His Name.

In short: Resist! This also means flee, or run for your life! Seek forgiveness with Christ, and may this forgiveness motivate you.

*“Flee fornication”* (1 Corinthians 6:18).

*“Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart”* (2 Timothy 2:22).

*“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you”* (James 4:7).

# To Reach after God and Find Him

That is something the Greek philosophers had never heard of, to reach after God and find Him; in other words, a personal relationship with God. People had to keep the gods on their side and pacify them with offerings. However, behind their backs you could mock with the gods, as long as you paid your sacrifices. Paul urged them to look at the one true God in a very different way. He is not far, but actually very near, not only to see everything that is taking place but also in order to be found. This was totally new for the Greeks. And not only for them! How many Jews and Christians try to pacify God with codes of conduct, such as keeping the Sabbath, praying, dressing according to your gender, behaving virtuously, in short, living as we ought to? But in the meantime, they have no desire to reach after God and find Him. How many young people are there for whom the church and Christianity consists only of rules and regulations! You may not do this; you must do that. It is very nice, of course, that people want to live as decent and respectable citizens, but how awful if that is as far as it goes. God has more to offer than the world.

It is dangerous, too, because if you don't find God, there will be a vacuum. You want something beautiful, something grandiose, something new, something that pleases the senses. There are thousands of young people in church who find the church a great weariness, who see absolutely nothing appealing or attractive in it. That is not only because of the shortcomings of the church, but it is also because of a lack of understanding. Who still knows and believes that God's children have it much better on the narrow way than all others on the broad way? Despite the doubts, the strife, and the imperfection, God's lovingkindness is better than life. *"O taste and see that the LORD is good"* (Psalm 34:8). God's children have moments of supreme joy, times of quiet contentment, a good conscience, and trust in God. There can also be fear of death and fear of deceiving oneself, but that does not need to have the upper hand. Reaching after God and finding Him is only possible by the Holy Ghost. He gives a hunger after God, in part because this life does not satisfy.

*“But what saith it? The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the Word of faith, which we preach” (Romans 10:8).*

*“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life” (1 John 1:1).*

*“Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Psalm 16:11).*





# “Temple of the Holy Ghost”

In Corinth, there were a multitude of temples. Not only did people commit idolatry there but--shockingly--also adultery. This was not done in secret but openly. Sexual pleasure belonged to religion. This is what Paul had in mind when he wrote that each human body should be a temple of the Holy Ghost.

Shouldn't your body, and every other body that we see, be a temple of the Holy Ghost as well? The beautiful human body, no less than the soul, is created for one purpose, to be a dwelling for God. That is why Christ comes to our door and knocks, to come in and sup with us. Our bodies are not just anything, but they are a house for God, a dwelling for the Lord Jesus. Do not rent out that beautiful building to someone else. Don't let it stand empty either, because then you can be sure that it will attract evil occupants who will destroy that temple from within.

Next time you feel the urge to look, remember the fact that each human body is made to be a temple. Not only your body, but also that body on the screen is meant to be consecrated to God. Even though the temple is ruined, polluted, dirty, or immoral, it can be rebuilt to be a temple for the Holy Ghost. This is how God intended the body to be.

Are the idols still in the house? Is your temple empty? The Lord still stands at the door of your temple and He knocks. How is that possible? Would God be willing to live in such a stable? Certainly, but it will feel the broom!

*“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16).*

*“And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (2 Corinthians 6:16).*

*“Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid. What? Know ye not that he which is joined to a harlot is one body? For two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's” (1 Corinthians 6:15-20).*

# The Body of Christ

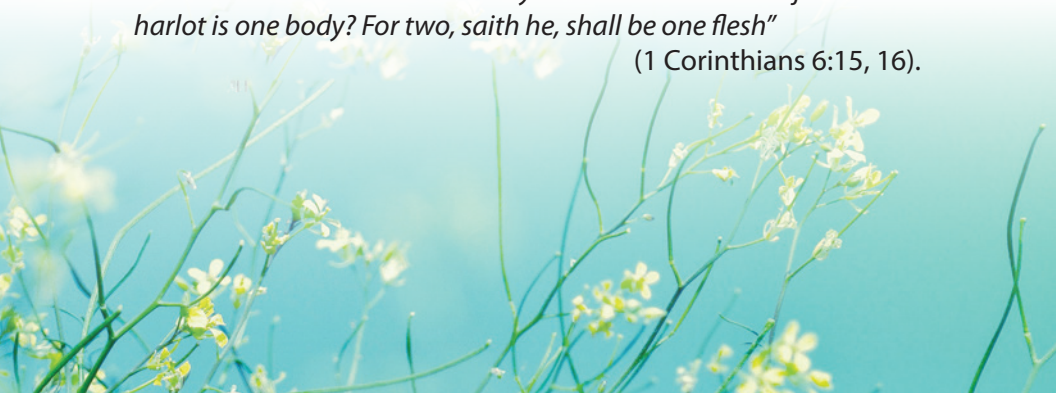
This was new to me. I knew that in the Bible the Church is called the body of Christ. It is also commonly known that every true believer is a member of the body of Christ. The question is, however, in what sense? What exactly is a member of the body of Christ? I always interpreted this in a spiritual way and thought that the souls of God's children are the members of the body of Christ. To my surprise I read in 1 Corinthians 6:15, *"Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?"* I had to digest this for a moment!

Not only the souls, but also the bodies of God's children are members of Christ, bone of His bones and flesh of His flesh. Christ loves His Church just as much as Himself. Their body is not only His created property, not only bought with blood, but also is part of Him. He loves the bodies of the believers as much as His own body. Also the flesh and blood of the Church are united with His body in a mysterious way. Are we a child of God? Then our body, and that of many others, is part of His body.

Why did Paul express this so strongly and specifically? He wanted to emphasize how holy the body is. When we realize that our body can be or become the body of Christ, we should be very careful with that body and what we do with it. If it is well, this will also give us a different view of the body of another person. Every male or female body can be or become the body of Christ. Be careful what you do with your own body. Consider what you are looking at when you look at the body of another. At the very least, should it not be our desire that our body, and the body of another, be a member of His body?

*"Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid. What? Know ye not that he which is joined to a harlot is one body? For two, saith he, shall be one flesh"*

(1 Corinthians 6:15, 16).



# “Bought with a Price”

You cannot buy human bodies. Granted, embryos and organs are bought and sold, but that’s not what we are talking about now. People are not merchandise. Yet, much money is being made from pictures. People allow themselves to be used or seen for money. Human bodies are soiled and sold. With that in mind, is it possible that a holy and righteous God buys not only the soul of His people but also their body? A body of which the eyes have looked at other bodies, with hands that used the keyboard to search for phony intimacy? Would God buy such bodies?

Whose are we actually? God has made us. He has a right to both soul and body. In the case of God’s children, this is even truer. They were bought with a high price, and therefore we are encouraged to glorify God with our bodies. Within marriage the body may also be valued and loved, but outside of marriage it must be kept pure. This is also true when you are not certain of your salvation, when you cannot imagine that your body is bought with the blood of Christ. After all, our souls are not purer than our bodies! Paul wrote about this in the well-known chapter 1 Corinthians 6. He wrote to the people of the church of Corinth that they were bought with a price and that while formerly many of them had indulged in sexual sins! They were bought with a high price, and therefore precious to God.

It is possible for us and also for you. Do not try to find out if you are bought, but seek forgiveness; seek to be washed in the blood of the sinless Lamb. Also, think of other people’s bodies as bodies that may have been bought. And though it is true that not all people are bought with a price, yet no one has the right to use their eyes for staring at bodies.

*“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:20).*

*“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23).*



# Undeiled Body

Our body is not sinful in and of itself, but we do have a sinful nature and a corrupt will. We have become weak and mortal, but that is not to say that our body has become sinful. When Paul is speaking about the body of this death, he means the old man. We can besmirch our body, we can defile it by using it for sin, but even then our body itself does not change. Sin is spiritual, not material. Compare it to a knife. With the same knife, you can cut vegetables and you can murder someone. A knife can provide damning evidence, but no one will declare this object to be guilty. In the same way, we can use our body to serve sin or to serve God.

Our bodies are defiled, particularly by sexual sins. Thereby we *“sin against our own body”* (see 1 Corinthians 6:18). Our body, so beautifully made by God, is besmirched; our eyes, our hands, everything. We have all abused our bodies. What a difference with Christ! The Blessed of the Father has never defiled His body with anything, and He has never used His body as an instrument to do something against God’s will. And just that undefiled body was nailed to the cross. His unblemished body was scourged, was spit upon, and was beaten and tortured. He hung on the cross to take away the impurity of our body and to make it immortal. He can take away every memory of sin.

If we sin against our own body, we may loathe our body. We do not need to do this, however. Our body is not sinful, and just as a knife can be wiped clean, our bodies can be, too. Seek forgiveness in the spotless Lamb of God, and use your body as a vessel for sanctification and honour.

*“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour”* (1 Thessalonians 4:3, 4).

*“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God”* (Romans 6:13).

*“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”* (Philippians 3:21).

# A Glorified Body

That body of yours must be washed in the blood of Christ. God's Son did not only come to save souls, but He also came to wash and glorify sin-stained bodies. Why else would Jesus have taken on a real human nature with soul and body? Jesus did not want to do a half work. Therefore, there is a future, not only for the souls of the living church, but also for their bodies. It is also important to realize that it will not be another body that shall arise. We will go lost with our own body or be saved with our own body. Pinch yourself in the arm. That body which you feel and all bodies that you see are destined for eternity.

Paul wrote about a vile body that shall be changed and made like unto the glorious body of Christ. The body of true believers shall become incorruptible and immortal. What a thought; what a promise! What are we going to do with that body here on earth? Should we not try to keep that body pure? Must that body not be prepared for that time? Isn't it appalling to give your body over to sin, with the vain hope that everything will turn out all right? No adulterer shall enter the kingdom of God!

Read 1 Corinthians 15 a few times. Then you will also see how important the created reality is. The body is just like seed sown into the ground in order to come up and produce new seed. Our body will be sown as well. Shall it arise unto salvation, or will our body be cast into the pool of fire? Take good care of your body!

*"According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death" (Philippians 1:20).*

*"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" (Philippians 3:21).*

# “Better Than Life”

You want something different. I understand. Just now you are tired of everything, and there is an emptiness that must be filled. But there is something better. Sin is sweet, no doubt about it. But how long does it last and where does it lead?

If only we could see what God has laid away for them that fear Him. If only we could see how good it is to receive forgiveness. There is nothing better than peace with God, a clean slate. God’s lovingkindness is better than life. It is great if you have a good relationship with your husband or wife, and a bright smile warms your heart. But what if God would lift up His countenance upon us and give us a look of kindness and love! What would we think if the Lord would whisper kind words such as “I am thy salvation”? That would give unspeakable and glorious joy. Why do I write this? Because there is something far better and more beautiful than what sin has to offer. Do not chase after hot air, sweet sins with a bitter aftertaste, but seek real joy. Do not settle for less. Remember that it is the one or the other. You cannot serve both God and the world.

Peace. Did you ever have peace in your heart, peace with God, peace with everything and everyone? Have you ever experienced God’s favour? Did you ever believe and feel that God is pleased with you and that He will forgive you? God’s children sometimes taste that peace here on earth. There are times when all is well, and there are times of strife and unbelief. And yet, a good conscience is precious. The more closely God’s children live to God, and the more valiantly they strive against sin, so much greater will the blessings be that they receive. And don’t forget that in heaven that peace will be tasted forever.

But if you persist in your sins, you will lose out on all that to your own great loss. Therefore, it is so foolish to persist in your sins. Come; bend your knees, read a chapter from the Bible, Psalm 42, for example. Ask for the best.

*“Because Thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise Thee” (Psalm 63:3).*

*“Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell” (Proverbs 9:17, 18).*

*“O satisfy us early with Thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days” (Psalm 90:14).*

## “Touched with the Feeling of our Infirmities”

Do you not dare to draw near to God? Do you have no boldness to come to the throne of grace, because you have sinned too long, too much, too wickedly? You can read about this in Hebrews 4. The writer shows why sinners may come anyway, because there is a High Priest. There is a High Priest who has not only passed into the heavens, but who is also “*touched*” with the infirmities of sinners, because He knows what it is to be attacked.

Did the devil not “*tempt*” Christ? Did he not try to bring the Son of God to a fall? Satan did not succeed in any way, but Christ does remember those “*forty days*” (Luke 4:2). Let no one think that Christ does not understand what it means to be tempted. He is not too high for this. He became man, a true man, but without sin. This gives a boldness to flee to Christ. The Lord Jesus always remained standing, but the attacks were real. Not unconsciously, but consciously God’s Son remained faithful to His Father. All the more reason to seek our salvation only in Him. He is the guiltless Lamb. He did not know or do any sin. Although Christ is so very different than we are, let this not be a reason to flee from him. He is also very close to us.

The war against a bosom sin can be a lonely one. Even when you have friends to whom you can unburden yourself, these friends are not always available. There are many lonely people in the world. If only you knew how I felt, they often think. Sin makes one lonely and depressed. But there is One who is always available. He is not only angry at sin, but He is also “*touched with the feeling of our infirmities.*” Although not a single sin had the least influence on Christ, yet He can empathize. Call upon Him; cry out to Him. Tremble because of your sins, but never let your sins keep you away from God. God’s Son knows that a lifelong battle is being waged. He knows that also His children must be on guard all their life. There is always a chance of a surprise attack, of being ambushed, or of falling into a trap.

Please read these texts:

*“Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted”* (Hebrews 2:17, 18).

*“For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin”* (Hebrews 4:15).

*“For such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens”* (Hebrews 7:26).

# Putting on Jesus

Here's something you must read. In Romans 13, Paul writes that the day of eternal salvation is coming closer and closer for God's children and that therefore, we must wake up and quickly get dressed. Toss your nightclothes in a corner and put on new clothes. He means to cast away your sins as far as possible. Paul names them: rioting, drunkenness, chambering, wantonness, strife, and envying. And then put on new clothes. What does the Holy Spirit mean with this? You would expect the apostle to describe the new clothes as chastity, decency, piety, and obedience, clothes with which you can appear in public. But no, Paul's address takes a different turn; "*Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.*" Do not go to work with the law, do not take up arms in your own strength; no, let the Lord Jesus Christ be your armour, your robe.

Paul wrote to the believers that they had to put on Christ, but unbelievers need the same thing. Not legal sanctification, but evangelical obedience prompted by the love of Christ. He who (by grace) wraps himself in the Lord Jesus Christ is the best armed. Union with Christ will most certainly lead to a holy life. Therefore, do not fight against sin without Christ. Also unbelievers must keep the law, but do not forget that trying to live a holy life outside of Christ leads to hopelessness. Striving against sin out of slavish motives is not recommended! Instead, flee to Christ with your sins and your addiction. Seek Him in His Word, and be assured that you do not first have to conquer your addiction before you may come. Wake up, cast off the works of darkness, and put on the Lord Jesus. With all your guilt and need, seek refuge in Him. Do not rest before you have found Him in His Word.

*"The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof"* (Romans 13:12-14).

*"Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin"* (1 Peter 4:1).

*"Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell"* (Proverbs 9:17, 18).

*"O satisfy us early with Thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days"* (Psalm 90:14).



# You Have not Sinned too Much

There are addicts who turn away from the church, because there is no hope for them anyway. Church is not something for people who have already been in the grip of sin for years, so they reason. It starts with staying home Sunday morning, after which church attendance becomes less and less. They become discouraged. "Discouragement is a hindrance to conversion," Rev. T. van der Groe wrote centuries ago already. Meanwhile, the devil laughs. First the evil one tempts you to sin, after which he says that you are too far gone, and there is no forgiveness for you. If you believe that liar, you will go on, or you will fall back into sin. What difference does it make? I will go lost anyway, you think.

Let me stress that the church is there also for (sexual) addicts. In fact, attending church is primarily for sinners to strive together in prayer. It is for hearing God's voice, for seeking refuge in God, despite everything. Do not copy Cain by saying that your sins are too great to be forgiven. Think rather of what Ezekiel had to tell the hopeless Jews who said that they pined away in their sins and wondered how they should then live (see Ezekiel 33:10). What did he say then? God swore an oath! God swore that as truly as He lives, *"He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live."* Therefore, do not believe the devil, your own heart, and pious people who say that you are too dead, too hard, too cold, or too wicked. Repent and believe the gospel. Turn from your evil ways and live. Our God pardons abundantly. He spreads out His hands to a rebellious people. Repeat to yourself that God stretches out His holy but merciful hands to you. I don't understand how this is possible either, but it says this in His Word. Believe it. Believe that God still seeks you and does not overlook you. God has experience with wicked ones.

*"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon"* (Isaiah 55:7).

*"Say unto them, 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: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"* (Ezekiel 33:11).

# Warmth

We need each other in the struggle against sin. The better your marriage, the less temptation there will be to sin. This also applies to friends and to the congregation. The better your contacts are, and the closer the friendships, the less need there will be for fake intimacy. It is remarkable how often we read the words *one another* in the Bible. Of course, a poor relationship is no excuse for sin, but friendship often does help in preventing sin. Idleness is the devil's workshop, but a feeling of loneliness is, too. Therefore, we must cultivate friendships in the congregation. We should not be as loose sand. Let us give warmth, seek warmth, and be willing to accept warmth. We have a responsibility to each other, not only to promote unity, but also in the joint struggle against sin.

I did some searching for words in the Bible that are used in this context: receive one another, love one another, serve one another, tarry one for another, admonish, forgive, comfort, edify one another, have compassion one of another, use hospitality one to another, be subject one to another, have fellowship one with another, greet one another, and more. If you search a concordance, you will find more phrases. It becomes quite a list. No one has the right to be a recluse and pretend to be independent. It is not healthy for anyone to isolate themselves and only show their face for a short time on Sunday. We must look out for each other, not to judge each other, but to help, to heal, and to prevent divisions. Don't forget your own family, your parents, your brothers and sisters. Look them up, invite them over, make contact, and do things together. The Bible says that we are stronger together. If parents read this, invest in your children and continue to provide warmth for them.

*“And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another” (Romans 15:14).*

# The Bridegroom

Love is strong. Even false love has slain her thousands. Many risk their life, their marriage, their health, and their salvation for a short time of enjoying sin against the seventh commandment. Foolish, but sadly true. Is there any remedy? The best medicine is the love of Christ, the love which comes from Jesus, and the love for Him which God works in the heart. Nothing is as powerful as the spiritual love between a sinner and the Saviour. When we are full of Jesus, there is no place for drugs, for the world, for fake love, or for pornography. There will be no need or desire for it. Let us therefore seek Jesus, the Son of God. We read about this love in the Song of Solomon. The world and sin try to tempt a shepherdess called the Shulamite. She remains faithful to her beloved, however, and tells the daughters of Jerusalem, the ladies of Solomon's court, about her true love. She has been with Him, and therefore the world and sin have no effect on her. Read Song of Solomon 4 to hear how much love the sinner, the bride, receives and read Chapter 5 starting at verse 10 to hear what the bride sees in Jesus.

The Bridegroom expresses His heartfelt love for His wife. God's children are beautiful in the eyes of Christ. *"He sees neither spot nor wrinkle"* (see Ephesians 5:27). We cannot understand it! When we look in the mirror of God's law, we are frightened at what we see. But the Lord Jesus sees beauty in His own. He is not silent about it either, but whispers in His people's ear: Your eyes are doves' eyes, your hair is so beautiful, your teeth are so straight, your lips are so sweet. The Bridegroom speaks about her fair neck, even her breasts. Oh, the joy which fills the heart of Shulamite! Those who feel the love of Jesus will stand strong against sin.

*"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God"* (Ephesians 3:17-19).

*"My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand"* (Song of Solomon 5:10).

*"Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned"* (Song of Solomon 8:7).

# Quiet Time

It helps to begin the day with God, to listen to His voice, and to speak with Him. More than one person has told me what a great difference it makes to begin the day with God. Therefore, make a habit of getting up a little earlier so that you can study God's Word, with or without a daily meditation. I know that it takes some willpower, but do you want to prevent sin and overcome addiction or not?

Read the warnings, the encouragements, the promises, and the threatenings. Read the entire Word and bend your knees. Take the time to express how great and good God is, but also how weak and guilty you are. May I go a step further? Seek communion with Jesus, seek Him in the Scriptures, and meditate on who He is. "Alone with God, O blest retreat, to hold with Him communion sweet!" (Rev. J. Oatman). But a "looking unto Jesus" is also profitable in the struggle against sin. I know that you cannot force anything, and communion with God and Christ is a gift. Yet you will have to agree that we are called to seek for this. Enoch walked with God. That means that he was continually aware of God's presence, His nearness, and His grace. Faith is not only a blessed knowledge but also a blessed relationship with God, a bond of love with the Lord Jesus Christ. He says to His own, "*Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair. Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee*" (Song of Solomon 4:1, 7). And in return, God's children say to the Bridegroom, "*My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars*" (Song of Solomon 5:10, 15).

The relationship of God's children with Christ is often so lukewarm! So little effort is made to walk with Him. Or perhaps you have no idea what this means. Seek a Saviour for your sins. Leaning or not leaning upon Him makes such a great difference, and not only at the beginning of the day.

*"I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my Beloved, that ye tell Him, that I am sick of love"* (Song of Solomon 5:8).

*"His mouth is most sweet: yea, He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem"* (Song of Solomon 5:16).

# “Thou Art Fair, My Love”

In the previous chapter, we discussed the blessed relationship with God. It is good to delve more deeply into this most holy relationship described in the Song of Solomon. Compared to this relationship, even the happiest marriage pales in comparison, and all false intimacy proves to be a hollow shell. Think about it, to be a filthy sinner and then to hear Christ say, *“Behold, thou art fair, My love.”* You are beautiful. Your eyes are like doves’ eyes, round, shiny, and honest. Doves’ eyes? Yes, it makes us think of the work of the Holy Spirit, who is compared to a dove. The Bridegroom loves that look of affection, joy, and honesty. That is true beauty! Look at her long flowing hair. The Bridegroom compares it to black woolly sheep in a hilly landscape. She looks noble, like a princess, stately, majestic. After all, *“the hair is the glory of the woman”* (see 1 Corinthians 11:15).

With nobility comes responsibility. Is our name also connected to the highest Name in the universe? Your teeth are like a flock of sheep just shorn, walking in a perfect row. He notices that her teeth are straight, not one of them is missing, and they are very white. The Bridegroom notices her smiling at Him, seeking her joy in Jesus. He tells her, and His words warm her heart, *“Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely.”* It is about her perfect mouth and the lovely sound of her voice. The mouth expresses character, and the lips speak lovely words about the Bridegroom. She speaks the language of Canaan, and no other language stirs the heart of the Bridegroom like this one does. This is a language taught by the Holy Spirit. Her temples or cheeks are red like a piece of pomegranate. In other words, she blushes. She is not afraid to show herself vulnerable. She is humble and shy. Or perhaps the red colour is a sign of health. Around her neck she wears her jewels of betrothal, and she wears them with pride. She holds up her head and her neck is like a strong tower. Her body is fully formed, and you can see that she is no longer a girl. Do we have this Christian beauty, and do we see it in others?

*“Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them”* (Song of Solomon 4:2).

*“Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men”* (Song of Solomon 4:4).

# “Sick of Love”

Everyone needs love and warmth, and will try to obtain it, if need be, in a sinful way. Restless is our heart, until it finds its rest in God. This is what David meant when he wrote, *“In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”* In the Song of Solomon, we read the expression *“sick of love.”* It overwhelms the heart when you may say of Jesus that He gave Himself for me; He loved me and paid for me with His death. The Holy Spirit can open the hearts of sinners and fill them with His love.

What does this have to do with the struggle against sin? Read the first three verses of Ephesians 5. Paul urges the Christians in Ephesus to walk in love, as Christ has loved us. Then Paul immediately adds, *“But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you.”* In other words, when we walk in love, there is no room for uncleanness, fake intimacy, and Internet addiction.

Sin is only sweet when you are hungry. But when we taste the love of God, there is no longer any need or desire for sin. Compared to the pure love of Christ and for Christ, sin is so banal, cheap, false, and fake. Let us, therefore, not fill one hole with another. Whoever wants to overcome one addiction runs the danger of falling into another. Thus the only true remedy is to seek our joy and fulfilment in God, in Jesus.

May God give us to walk in love, to be rooted and grounded in love, and to be filled with all the fullness of God. What a wonder to experience that love. Think of Song of Solomon 1:2, *“Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Thy love is better than wine.”* You can call it a holy intoxication of love. May God give this to us. That love gives fulfilment, colour, and purpose to your life. Whoever is filled with that love has enough and is content, like an infant who has just nursed on the lap of his mother.

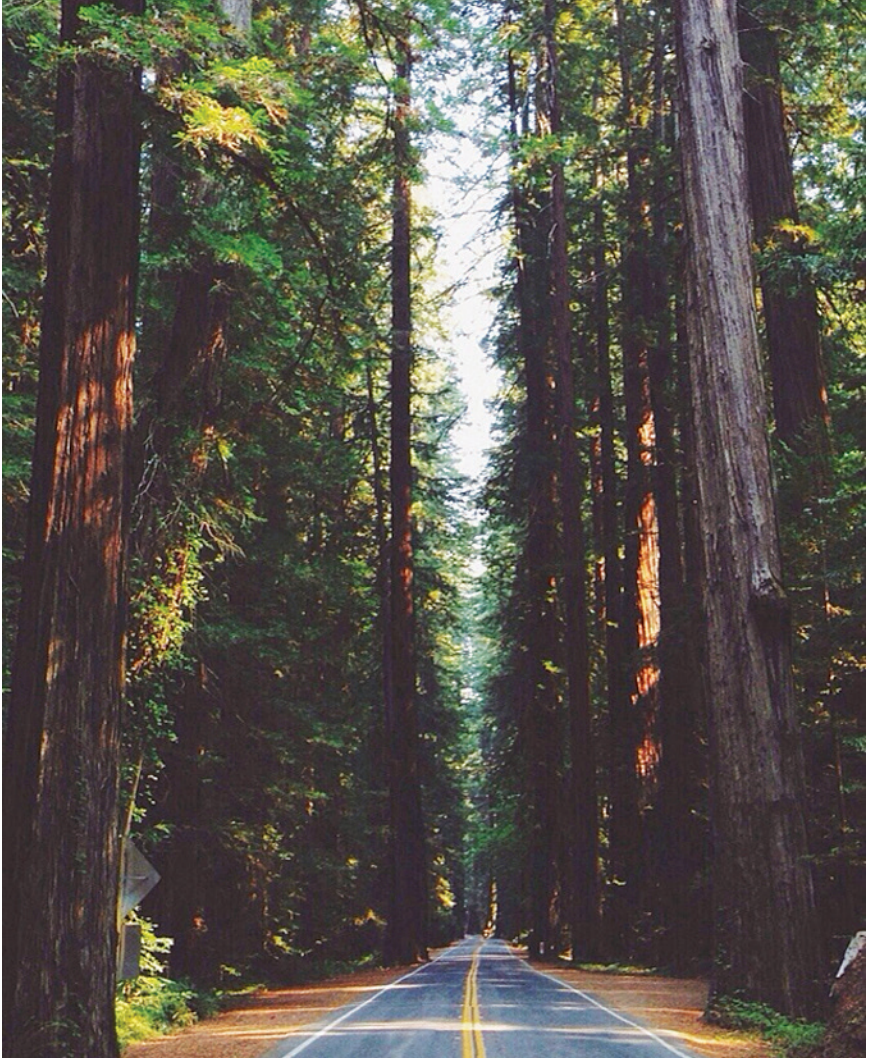
*“That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love”* (Ephesians 3:17).

*“And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God”* (Ephesians 3:19).

*“And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints” (Ephesians 5:2, 3).*

*“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18).*

*“He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love” (Song of Solomon 2:4).*



# Judge

Paul was not afraid to speak about the Lord Jesus as Judge, a Judge ordained of God. Paul was invited to speak about his God and he accepted the invitation. In a friendly and loving manner, but without groveling, he addressed the men of Athens with much tact and wisdom. In his first official encounter with the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, Paul asserted that the whole world would be judged by a Judge, namely, by Him who arose from the dead. What a message to start off on! Right from the beginning, Paul's address strikes a serious note. He explains that we were created for God, that He will be found of us, and that He desires union with us. Our sin is that we turn our backs to God and look the other way, and that we are content with outward religion.

Christ will come as Judge, and the crimes we are charged with are serious. The minimum sentence for each sin is eternal damnation. The books will be opened and the dead, small and great, will then stand before God. Oh, what will it be to be sent away, to hear that you tried to live in two worlds, and that God does not recognize you as His child! God's displeasure will be very great because of the fact that there was not even any repentance, and that so many sins were done against better knowledge! Displeasure because we neglected so great a salvation, committed adultery with the world, squandered so much time, and did not seek the Lord. Great displeasure, because we did not believe in Him, we did not come to Him, but disobeyed the gospel. Don't misunderstand Paul, however. He would have loved to discuss these things further and also speak about the possibility of forgiveness, but he did not get the opportunity.

Consider that Paul spoke of a Judge in order to prepare the Greeks for His coming, not to tell them that they would be lost anyway. Quite the opposite. Also today when the law is preached, it is meant to save us.

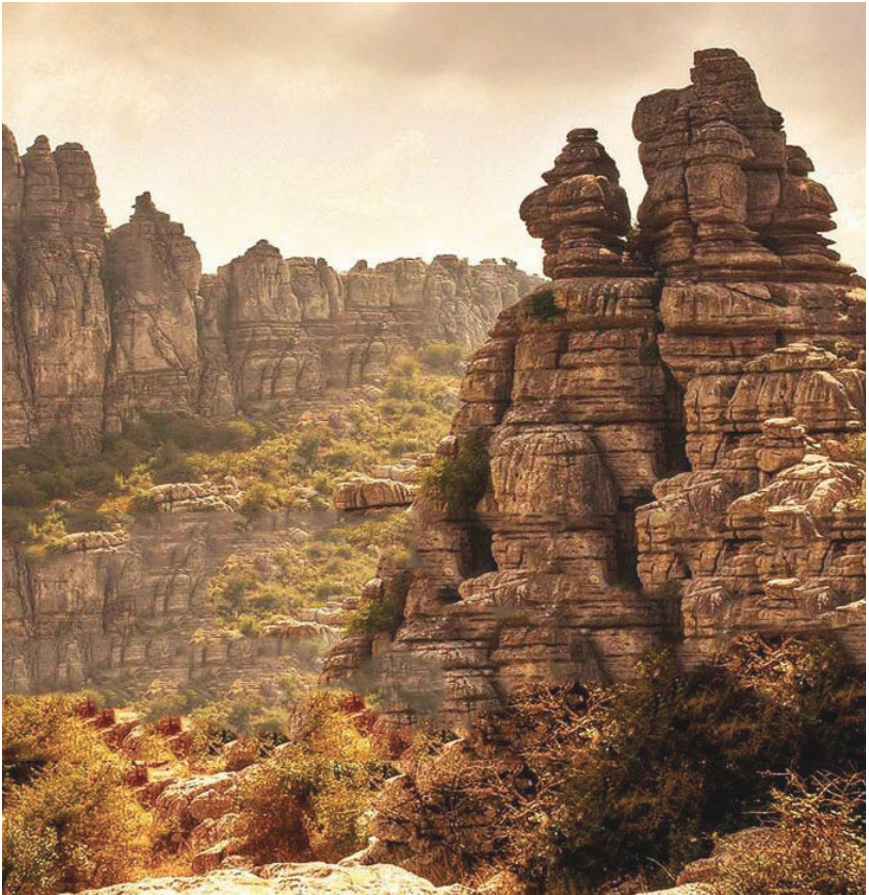
*"Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).*



*“In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to My gospel” (Romans 2:16).*

*“And before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats” (Matthew 25:32).*

*“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:1).*



# Choose Today

So which way will you go? A radical choice is necessary. Can you not change your course today? You cannot give yourself a new heart, but I challenge you to use your head and not to run headlong to destruction. Thus far and no further, dear friends!

What would you like, the one or the other, either life or death? *Yes* and *no* do not go together. You cannot have your cake and eat it, too. You cannot serve God and mammon. Some things in the Bible are not prescribed, for example, whether one had to keep the Jewish feast days or not. Everyone had to decide this for him- or herself; there was no right or wrong on that point. Many other things, however, are black and white, life or death, yes or no. You are either on the broad way or on the narrow way. You are going to heaven or to hell. *"Kiss the Son, lest He be angry."* God's wrath against sin is unending, because sin is committed against an eternal God. A fraction of that wrath is enough to perish. Consider that God is kindly warning you about Himself. Fall at the feet of God's Son, surrender and hand over the reins to Him. Perhaps you wonder if God's Son will even have you at His feet and that He will not send you away. It is quite the opposite. He is angry if you do not fall at His feet. God is highly offended if we hesitate, have hard thoughts of Him, and do not believe His willingness to save sinners.

But what does God ask of us then? Must we act as if we are repenting? Must we do our very best to press faith out of our soul? No, do not fool yourself; God looks right through us. He asks for our heart, for true saving faith. And be honest; who will kiss the Son if we do not know Him and esteem Him? Let us not make a circus and force lions to jump through hoops. And yet, *"choose you this day whom ye will serve"* (Joshua 24:15).

*"Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him"* (Psalm 2:12).



# The Life to Come

Eternal life means to be forever with the Lord, with Him who loves His own eternally, who has bought His Church with His blood. To be with that dear Lord Jesus Christ, the Shepherd of the sheep, who loved the church, even when they were enemies. Think about this often.

A strong weapon in the struggle against sin is to think often about heaven, and what we will lose if we do not serve God and do not fight the good fight. Frequently take time to consider the future joy of God's people. They are going to heaven and, after the Second Coming, to a new earth. When temptation becomes strong, direct your thoughts to heaven and to being with God. Consider that it is necessary to first seek the kingdom of God.

Immediately after death, God's children go to heaven and are forever united to their Bridegroom, their Head and their Saviour. Never again will they have any doubts or any feelings of guilt. They will always feel as a child at home with God. Think about these things seriously. Oh, we will miss out on something if we harden our hearts in sin! Then the struggle will be over for God's true children and their course will be finished. The unfading crown of glory is laid away for them. Nothing will ever disturb their peace again. At the resurrection, they will receive their bodies again, but then they will be immortal. In our own flesh we will see God; with our own eyes we will see the Master. The Queen of Sheba said that the half of Solomon's wisdom and wealth had not been told her. She was astonished and there was no more spirit in her. That is nothing, however, compared to what God has laid away for them who fear Him. Consider what you will miss out on, dear friends. Seek God, and keep the end in view. Seek that which you may keep.

*"Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard" (1 Kings 10:7).*

*"But as it is written, 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 Corinthians 2:9).*

# “Looking unto Jesus”

Fill your heart. Yes, you read correctly. Fill your heart and your head with something better than sinful joy. Make sure there is no place for sinful thoughts. Put sinful desires out the door by focusing on good things. Good things! And what is better than Christ Himself! I know that we cannot “look unto Jesus” upon command. You must receive an eye to see Him. But yet it is good to begin holy meditations, to read about Him. I was working on a sermon about the fifth chapter of the Song of Solomon and the thought arose that when Christ is the subject of our blessed meditation, we will inevitably shun sin. The Son of God places everything else in the shadow. He is white and undefiled. His holy face is a healthy ruddy colour. His black locks points to His eternal youth. His eyes are as the water brooks. With His azure eyes of blue, filled with love, He melts the heart of the Bride. His features are strong, good, kindly, and faithful. His appearance is as if hewn out of ivory and His legs as marble pillars. He stands as a man and needs no staff. He stands upright as a cedar of Lebanon. One kiss from Him enraptures the Bride. He is not only a Bridegroom but also the best Friend of the Bride.

Have you ever noticed this Jesus? Have you ever seen Him with eyes of faith and lost your heart to Him? *“He is altogether lovely.”* If you live in sin, you distance yourself more and more from this Man, who is *“the chiefest among ten thousand.”* He who by God’s grace desires Him, believes in Him, and seeks Him time and again, will soon be with Him forever. He is the Saviour, the Sin-Destroyer. He pays the debt and gives a right to eternal life. We cannot wish for a better King. He is the Man to listen to, to lean upon, to feel peace with, to trust completely, and to love eternally. Do not be content with anyone less. It is dangerous to stand alone! Without Him, we are for our own account.

*“My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand”*  
(Song of Solomon 5:10).

*“His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars”* (Song of Solomon 5:15).

*“His mouth is most sweet: yea, He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem”* (Song of Solomon 5:16).

# Evangelical Sanctification

The title of this chapter is quite a mouthful, yet it is not as difficult as it appears. It's about the way in which we should strive to live a holy life. It should be done in an evangelical way and not in a legal way. In other words, do not fight in your own strength, but seek strength in Christ. Do not do it yourself, but let God do it! Do not seize yourself in a stranglehold that nearly chokes you, but think of the gospel, the fact that Christ has come to save sinners. *"He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities"* (Psalm 130:8). God does not only forgive, but He also delivers from the slavery of sin. Seek God's grace and do not settle for less! I don't mean for God's children to passively wait to see what God will do; on the contrary, but it makes such a big difference *how* we fight, whether in a strained and forced way, or in the strength of Jesus.

Listen, for example, to the well-known words of Paul, *"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you."* And precisely because it is God's work, the apostle urged them to resist unto blood, striving against sin. If it has to come from our side, we may as well quit! Or think of the prayer of David, *"Create in me a clean heart"* (Psalm 51:10). Prayer is a crucial part of evangelical sanctification.

Also think of faith and trust in God's promises, the promise of the Holy Ghost. It is one of the blessings of God's covenant to write His law in the hearts of His children. When I say evangelical sanctification, I especially think of meditating upon Christ. There is no mightier weapon against sin than looking unto Jesus. Notice how Paul encouraged the living church, *"Purge out therefore the old leaven . . . , for even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us"* (1 Corinthians 5:7). Let me go a step further; we must put on the Lord Jesus (see Romans 13:14). A living faith in Him is the best weapon in the struggle against sin.

*"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint"* (Isaiah 40:31).

*"And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them"* (Ezekiel 36:27).

*"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure"* (Philippians 2:12, 13).

# “A Thorn in the Flesh”

You will never be rid of this, not even if you are a true believer. The Lord does deliver His children from the bondage of sin but not entirely from sin itself. Even Paul continues to be troubled by his sinful “flesh.” “Why?” we ask ourselves. God’s children continue to disappoint themselves and sometimes become weary of the struggle. Sin can be a thorn in your flesh. Why does the Lord not deliver His children from this weakness, and why must the struggle last all their life? It is not without good reason. We cannot rationalize or analyze God’s actions, but one reason is to make us smaller and more humble. Also, God’s children are quickly puffed up with pride and begin to feel important about their conversion, like Peter. But God will not tolerate this. He wants His children to have low thoughts of themselves. The thorn in Paul’s flesh may not have been a particular sin, but in any case it served the same purpose, namely, that he would not exalt himself. It is to prevent God’s children from becoming insufferable, because all honour only belongs to God. I used to think that the poor in spirit in the Beatitudes were beginners in grace. Later, I understood that all of God’s children must remain poor in spirit, because only theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

And what about our fellow man? It is disastrous to come across as “converted” when we are not a hair better than others. Therefore, it doesn’t hurt to continue to feel triggers of sin. Hopefully, it makes God’s children approachable. Remaining flaws are never excusable, but they may have a good effect. “*Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall*” (see 1 Corinthians 10:12)! It is good, therefore, to stand beside unconverted sinners and never to become more than a broken contrite sinner. I think of David who wrote in his well-known 51st Psalm, “*Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.*” He did not feel so self-assured, and if there was grace for him, there would certainly be grace for others!

*“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure” (2 Corinthians 12:7).*

*“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise” (Psalm 51:17).*

# Taking Refuge Again

We can be delivered from the power of sin, but not from the *body of sin* itself. Why is that? It is not only to keep the church small, but it is also to drive them out time and again to take refuge in Christ. Would Christ become more and more precious, would He become more and more dear to God's children if they would feel themselves more and more converted? Without the struggle against sin, God's people would get so used to their deliverance that Christ would fade from view. Therefore, the Lord uses their remaining infirmities to make them continually flee to Christ, so that He will increase and they will decrease.

Taking refuge is not a one-time occurrence. God's children are exercised by falling down and getting up. Remaining sins humble them, cause repentance, and often cause doubts as well. God's children never get past the need for forgiveness. Even the most advanced and most exercised Christians feel stabs of pain, which brings them down upon their knees again. Although they commit less sin, they continually become a greater sinner. In this way, true believers will think more and more highly of God's faithfulness and love. The wonder of grace becomes greater, and God's children see more and more preciousness in Christ. Faith becomes lively again and repentance is felt more deeply. Only after his deep fall did Peter truly understand his need of the Mediator. This is how it continues. Although God's children cannot live in sin, because they hate sin, yet falling into sin does have this outcome. *"O wretched man that I am!"* (Romans 7:24), Paul wrote. But he is not finished. *"I thank God through Jesus Christ"* (Romans 7:25). The strife against sin makes faith more meaningful.

How is that with us? Is the power of sin broken? Do we no longer want to grieve God anymore? Do sins remain in us against our will? Do not forget that sinners are invited to seek their salvation in Christ: *"Yet return again to Me!"*

*"And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly"* (Matthew 26:75).

*"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit"* (Romans 8:1).

*"They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? Shall not that land be greatly polluted? But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to Me, saith the LORD"* (Jeremiah 3:1).

# Persisting in Prayer

Are you skipping prayer before going to bed, because you have fallen into a sin? Do you not dare to draw near to God for a few days, because you feel like such a hypocrite? I can understand your reaction, but it is not necessary. You may always pray, *"O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?"* Continue to pray, even though you are ashamed before God. Please realize that God wants us to struggle against sin prayerfully. Only in this way can sin be prevented, forgiveness can be pleaded for, and we can remain watchful in order to be kept from the desire and the opportunity. Especially beginning Christians sometimes feel that they can remain standing without fervent prayer. But God wants to see the true believers striving in prayer, continually trying to slay their old nature, never feeling they have succeeded, but always remaining needy and dependent.

In other words, the prayer *"forgive us our debts"* (Matthew 6:12) will remain a continual item of prayer, even when the sins of God's children are forgiven. Forgiveness is never automatic or to be taken for granted. Following upon that, we must also continually pray, *"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil"* (Matthew 6:13). Paul requested the church to strive together in prayer for him, and that same prayerful strife is needed in the battle against the enemies, the world, the devil, and our own flesh. Pray without ceasing, run the race, seek to live a holy life in dependence on Him. Take the time to pray, also when you have no desire. Without prayer, sin will slip through the cracks back into your heart. Confess your weaknesses; tell the Lord that you do not trust yourself. Cry aloud to God, *"Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"* Complain to God, *"The evil that I would not, that I do."* Do not neglect this means. And when you sin in your thoughts again, do not hesitate to bring it before the Lord. It is good to feel ashamed before God, but do not let it keep you away from the Lord.

*"O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin"* (Romans 7:24, 25).

*"And it came to pass, that, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples"* (Luke 11:1).

*"Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able"* (Luke 13:24).



# Longing for the End

As long as things go reasonably well, we would like to remain here on earth and no, we would rather not say goodbye yet. We hang onto this life and try to make something of it. Calvin calls it a brutish love of this world. There are at least three things that can spoil our affection for the world. Adversities can be so depressing that we lose the will to live. A second and much better way is when love makes us yearn after God. The third way is to become tired of sin and desire to be delivered from it. The Apostle Paul prayed for this. Not only did he want to be delivered from the thorn in his flesh, and above all to be with Christ, but he also very much wanted to put off the old man. In heaven he would no longer need to complain, *"O wretched man that I am!"* The Lord wants His pilgrims to feel more desire for heaven and for the kingdom to come. Therefore, it is good for them to feel pain not only because of the results of sin, but also because of sin itself. It is good for God's children to keep sighing for that time when they shall be delivered from all sin and reign forever with the Lamb.

Oh, to be with God and Jesus, to love and praise God unhindered and without sin! It is worth the strife of faith! *"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled."* Or read what it says in the Canons of Dort, Fifth Head of Doctrine, Articles 1 and 2: *"God delivers also from the dominion and slavery of sin in this life; though not altogether from the body of sin and from the infirmities of the flesh, ... which furnish them with constant matter for humiliation before God, ... and for pressing forward to the goal of perfection, till being at length delivered from this body of death, they are brought to reign with the Lamb of God in heaven."* Then they shall overcome sin once and for all, and reign as kings, being subject only to God. Are we sighing for that time, or would we rather sin some more? Take some time to read the entire two articles.

*"And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body"*  
(Romans 8:23).

*"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled"* (Matthew 5:6).



# No Reason for Unbelief

Their remaining infirmities often cause God's children to tremble. "How can this go together with grace?" they ask themselves. Falling into sin and grieving the Spirit can cause spiritual darkness and doubt. Yet it does not have to come to this. Bemoaning your sins can also go together with a prayer of gratitude. At first glance, this may sound strange. How can complaining and thanksgiving go together? Still, we read an example of this in the familiar words of Paul, "*O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Romans 7:24, 25). Paul did not remain ensnared in his complaint, but he firmly believed that God had delivered him from all his guilt and would deliver him from his sinful nature.

"*I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" I hear humility in these words. I hear a fervent prayer. I hear faith in the Lord Jesus and the firm hope that God will finish the work perfectly. Paul already thanked for that which he had not yet received but would receive shortly. What a faith in his Lord and Saviour! What a special joy and humble happiness. There is no trace of unbelief here, despite his candid complaint about himself.

We cannot imitate Paul in this. This faith is a gift of the Holy Ghost. It is not false assurance or fake faith, but it is faith of the purest kind. Bosom sins which continue to play a role create a remaining weakness for certain addictions--yet it does not need to cause doubt and depression. Though it can keep God's children small, it can also make them look forward in faith. After all, God does not leave His work half done. Although God's work in the sinner is never complete here upon earth, one day it will be! Everything is already paid for and, therefore, the fulfilment of the promise is sure. Imagine that someone continues to struggle with certain sins, and yet joy has the upper hand. "*I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*"

*"O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Romans 7:24, 25).

*"But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not"* (Luke 22:32).

# More Temptations

Let's not pretend that sexual temptations are the only temptations. There are numerous people who are much more sensitive to other things. At heart, everyone has his or her weaknesses. There are other temptations besides that of satisfying your carnal sinful desires. Satan showed Christ all the kingdoms of this world. Did it not appeal to Jesus to be the head of the world, a mighty man? *"If Thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be Thine"* (Luke 4:7)!

Who would not want to win millions of dollars? Countless people participate in lotteries, or are obsessed with money and call it "being a good businessman." Are all businessmen obsessed with money? I hope not. Poor people can also be under the spell of money. Are you in the clutches of a bundle of temptations? Satan laughs and if he cannot capture you in one way, he will try a different way.

Satan had another arrow in his quiver, the honour of men. We hope that others look up to us; we love high status, either because of possessions, education, or abilities. Satan wanted Christ to enjoy the honour of jumping off the temple and then, before the eyes of every onlooker, to be carried by the angels and worshipped as God. Well, we know that Christ did not seek His own honour, but that of His Father! How would we like being a star, having fans, enjoying fame? Does it not appeal to our proud hearts?

Don't think that there is a single person who is free from temptations. *"Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall"* (see 1 Corinthians 10:12). Are we in the snare of sexual addiction? Search yourself to find out whether there is more going on. We are inclined to all evil and need a Saviour even more than we realize!

*"And the devil said unto Him, all this power will I give Thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it"* (Luke 4:6).

*"And in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone"* (Luke 4:11).

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