

Plain Sermons by Contributors to 'Tracts for the Times'  
Volume Three—Edward Bouverie Pusey  
London: J. G. F. & J. Rivington, 1841.

SERMON LXXV.  
CHRISTIAN LIFE A STRUGGLE BUT VICTORY.

ROM. vii. 22—25.

"I delight in the law of GOD, after the inward man; but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank GOD, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD."

SUCH is St. Paul's first summary of the struggle, which he had been describing between man's better and his worse self; his inward man and his flesh; his conscience and his corrupt desires; his better self knowing what is right, approving what is right, willing it, taking pleasure in it, hut by nature powerless, sold as a slave to sin, and by it held captive, longing to do good, but, lo, what it does is evil; wretched in its captivity, and at last freed through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

Every one in reading this description of the struggle, this wretchedness, and this deliverance, will have asked, "Of whom saith the Apostle this—of himself, or of some other man?" Does it belong to me also? And if so, when is the victory and deliverance to be given me? in this life? or in the next?

This it behoves much to know; and to beware lest any wrong bias in ourselves, be, in fact, misguiding us, while we think that we are jealous for the one or other truth of GOD'S Holy Word; for men in every way deceive themselves, we are in most peril when we can seem to ourselves to be contending for GOD'S Truth not for our own ease. Some men who would have this description apply to the unregenerate only, mean thereby, that themselves, having by Baptism been born again, have no occasion for any strife, and so may go on in their easy, listless state, avoiding gross sins, but not in earnest about their holiness, about bringing every thought, will, and way, into subjection to the law of GOD: others, who would have it apply to the regenerate, mean it to furnish an excuse to themselves for not gaining the victory over themselves; they think themselves assured that they do "delight in the law of GOD after the inward man," that with "the mind they serve the law of GOD," that "to will is present with them;" but then they find in themselves no great progress; their besetting sins are strong, they weak; and so they comfort themselves with the confession, "that in them (that is, in their flesh) dwelleth no good thing; that how to perform that which is good they find not; and so that if they do what they would not, it is no longer they that do it, but sin which dwelleth in them;" and thus, casting the blame upon their nature, they acquit themselves; and would make the confession of humility a cloak for acquiescing in sin. Thus persons, setting out from

points the most opposite, meet at last, because they agree in one thing—they wish alike to avoid earnest strife with sin, to obtain contentment, without subduing it wholly; to find a resting place, where they may throw off their armour, take their ease and be merry; to rest on their lees, without being stirred or shaken, and yet to be in safety.

The due consideration of the Apostle's words will do away with both these excuses, for he speaks in this chapter of two things, (1) of a strife, and (2) of the end of that strife. There is a strife, and so they are wrong, who would think that they can live as Christians, without any strife or warfare in and with themselves: "Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" this mass of death whereby I am compassed round, and well-nigh overwhelmed. But the end of the strife is victory; "I thank GOD, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD;" or, as he elsewhere says, after again speaking of the law, "Thanks be to GOD, which giveth us the victory through our LORD JESUS CHRIST;" victory over death, because, first, victory over the sting of death, i. e. sin; and that, in the might of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Both ways have men wrested the words of GOD, as neither are we to suppose that Satan's resources are so poor, his deceivableness so little, that he assaults, or deceives, or misleads, in one way only. He will teach people to rest in forms, or to despise forms; to employ the means of grace, without using them as means of grace, or to neglect them; to make all religion rest in certain feelings, or to be careless about their affections to ALMIGHTY GOD; to forget GOD in one's self, while doing much to promote His glory, or to be careless about giving scandal and offence; to be content with holding a belief without living in it, or on it, or to think moral conduct (as it is called) all in all, and that it matters not what we believe, so people's lives, as they fancy, are in the right, and so on. And so we must not look how any text may have been misapplied, but what its meaning in itself seems to be, and (when we can know this) how it has been understood by the Church.

When I say "its meaning," I intend of course its *chief* meaning, that which is the primary and prominent meaning of the whole passage taken together, in its fullest sense; for all sayings of Holy Scripture have manifold meanings and applications; they fit to the one or the other case, or rather the one or other case comes under them; they have higher and lower meanings; they take in the highest, and yet do not shut out the lowest; they apply to all our wants, all our little daily trials and difficulties, all the many thousand emergencies of the many thousand Christians at all times; they are written to suit all our countless minds, and characters, and dispositions, and frames of minds; to correct all, amend all, satisfy all our lawful cravings: they have depths for the profoundest, yea, it seems, which "Angels desire to look into," yet they have that on the surface wherein "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err;" the same words are "milk for babes," and "strong meat for those of full age;" they are the food of our childhood, and, since their depths have never been exhausted, no not by the meditative wisdom of the whole Christian Church, it would seem, as though it were to be a joy to us to know "the manifold wisdom of GOD" therein, even when we see Himself, in Heaven; and so, being

adapted to so many varied ends, the same words present so many different faces, as it were, accordingly as they are differently viewed. Yet all having a likeness to the One Original, the mind of the SPIRIT Who gave them; all being portions of the one Truth which HE laid up in them, but which we cannot take in as a whole, because it is the mind of GOD; and so when we attempt to draw out their meaning, we take, at one time, one part, another, at another, according to the degree of wisdom or insight which GOD has given us, or the occasion for which we need it. Thus, “daily bread,” for which we pray, means both the common food of our perishable bodies, and HIM Who is “the food of Angels,” the continual Life of all which liveth and of our undying souls, and again, more particularly, Himself, as the faithful receive HIM in the Holy Eucharist.

It may, then, be sadly true, that the words of this description of man’s weakness, separately and by themselves, suit too well what Christians feel in themselves at times; or they may altogether describe what too many, who have been made Christians, have brought themselves to; or they may suit a part of the life of the regenerate, but not the whole; his condition as to some remaining infirmity, and this more or less, but not his whole self; or some parts may suit the confessions even of eminent saints, yet not the whole; or they might belong to them in a lower degree or sense, not in the full meaning which they have in the place in Holy Scripture itself, taken as a whole. As many prophecies, which in their fullest sense have their *fulfilment* in our LORD or in the Church triumphant in Heaven, do yet belong, in a lower sense, to persons who were types of HIM, or to the Church militant here on earth, so parts of this description of man’s weakness may belong, in a degree, and in different degrees, to the regenerate or to some among them, and yet the whole have its fulfilment, i. e. be fully and entirely realized, in the unregenerate only, or in those who neglect the strength given them in Holy Baptism.

To take the strongest expression, the words “sold under sin,” in their full sense, describe persons, who are wholly given up out of their own keeping, no longer their own masters, but sin’s slaves, whose price they have taken, and to whom they have made themselves over, soul and body, to do its bidding. In this sense it is said of Ahab, and of Israel in regard to their worst sins, “they sold themselves to do evil.” Or it is said at once of temporal and spiritual bondage, that the Jews had “sold themselves for nought,” where it is added that they should “be redeemed without money,” freely, under the Gospel; whence alone it would seem not properly to belong to our state in the Gospel. In their lowest sense, they could not mean less than that a man was so far out of his own power, the bond-slave, as it might be, of sin or of his infirmities, perpetually giving way to them, surprized and taken captive by them. Since, then, St. Paul says of himself, “I can do all things in CHRIST strengthening me,” one could not on that ground think, that these words were spoken of himself, as he then was.

In like manner, one could not think of any saint, that they would love a thing, *because* it was forbidden them, which yet St. Paul says of those whom he is here speaking of.

And yet other parts of what is here said, do describe what goes on not in

backsliding only, but in earnest Christians, at times, more or less; we are taken off our guard many times, and “do the things we would not;” people use angry words, or speak in an angry tone, before they are aware, or deceive themselves and are slothful, or exceed in food, wishing only to take what is needful; or wish to pray, and through infirmities, are distracted. Or, since the Apostle says, “ourselves which have the first-fruits of the SPIRIT, groan within ourselves, waiting for the redemption of the body,” we may well take to ourselves the words, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” yea, well may we,—such as most of us are, even when we do wish in earnest to do GOD’S will—well may we, in the thought of our daily infirmities and sins, from the depth of our souls, bewail our wretchedness and long to be “delivered from the body of this death.”

And these remains of our corruption will be felt by persons more acutely as they advance in holiness; a tender conscience, like a tender frame, will feel a slight shock more than a hardened one a heavy blow; a dutiful child the serious look of his Parent more than a stubborn one a sharp rebuke. So these holy men have used many of these words to confess their remaining weakness and corruption, and the hold which sin had over them, while yet they were not true of them in the same sense in which they may be of most of us, or are of backsliders and the unregenerate.

What, then, I wish to consider is not to what state parts of this description *may* apply, nor would I take out of any one’s mouth confessions of infirmity and lowliness, which suit us mostly too well; I inquire only whether the description in its full, primary, sense, speaks of us; whether Holy Scripture contemplates real Christians as the chief objects of these words; whether the weakness and bondage which they speak of be the necessary, unavoidable lot of CHRIST’S faithful servants in this life, from which, with all their diligence, prayers, tears, watchfulness, their new birth, and, as the source of all, CHRIST instrengthening by His Indwelling SPIRIT, they may not hope to be free.

Here, then, as elsewhere, the simple obvious meaning of the whole passage, and the teaching of the Church are one, that St. Paul is, in this place, speaking of people under the law, not under the Gospel; and not only so, but that it *should not* be the case of persons under the Gospel. In this seventh chapter St. Paul is speaking of people’s state under the law; and what ours under and: in the Gospel is, or ought to be, he tells us in the eighth. For, although the Church, in compassion to people who could not read much at a time, has divided the epistle into certain breaks or chapters, the eighth chapter belongs very closely to the seventh; and the seventh tells us what we should *at best* have been, unless the Gospel had come; the eighth, what our state should be through the Gospel, as “the power of GOD unto salvation.” I say, ‘at best,’ for what men for the most part actually became, may be seen in the hideous list of sins which St. Paul gives in the first chapter. But here St. Paul is setting forth the goodness of the law, and how men showed it to be good, even while it could not make them obedient to itself. The “law was good,” but man weak. The law then showed him what was “holy, and just, and good;” and his own conscience, which GOD had given him, bore witness that it was so; that he ought to do

that which the law bade him do, and not to do what the law forbade him. But to see was not to do. His fallen nature was self-willed; it liked its own way, and it did not like to be ruled. The law, then, was a burthen to it, nay, it was a reason the more to go contrary to it, that he was bidden to obey it. This people will, through the remains of the old man in them, have felt, that to be forbidden to do a thing was only a reason the more to make them wish to do it; they did not like to be controlled, to have a superior, to be hindered from doing what they willed, and, therefore, they willed it the more, because they were hindered. This is what St. Paul says, "I had not known lust," (or concupiscence,) "except the law had said, 'Thou shalt not covet.' But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence;" i. e. by itself the law, so far from being of any use to him, was, on the contrary, the occasion of his sinning more deeply. He only knew partly, or slightly, or in some cases, not at all, what was forbidden him; and when he knew it, or knew it more clearly, he only longed the more to do it. Knowledge by itself, so far from helping a person to do right, leads him only the more to do wrong. Such was the first sin: "GOD doth know," says Satan, "that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil;" i. e. GOD knows it to be good for you, and so HE hath kept it from you. As was the first sin, so have been all the rest, its fruits. All sin accuses GOD of harshness, and want of goodness towards us; GOD hath showed us His will, and what HE sees good for us; man, when he sins, would fain have something else to be good than GOD, Who is his good, or than what GOD has appointed for him; i. e. he charges GOD with having appointed him somewhat, which was not most for his happiness, and withheld that which was. Thus GOD tells a man to be sober, not to steal, not to lie, not to covet, not to be greedy of this world's goods, not to love the world: Satan would persuade him to do all these things, and that so he should be happier than if he kept from them; nay, that he cannot do without them: i. e. he would persuade him, that GOD, Who knows all things, knew that they were good for him, and some way necessary for his happiness, and yet forbade him. Frightful and ungodly as this is, it is the language of all sin; every sin is for some end; it looks to some pleasure, some gratification, and it treats GOD as a hard master, Who grudges that which is for His creature's happiness. Sin would be wiser than GOD, and better than GOD; it would know what is good for His creatures, and grant it when HE withholds it. And herein is the excellence of faith, as opposed to it, that it takes every thing cheerfully, approves of every thing, obeys in every thing, not knowing how and in what way it will turn out, but sure that it will turn out in some way to good; that though the way be dark and slippery, it will end in the brighter light, because GOD hath enjoined it.

Another part of the first sin was inquisitiveness; over and above the temptation itself, our first parents would fain try what the effect of the forbidden fruit was; and this we have also inherited: it forms part of man's early temptations, over and above the pleasure which he promises himself, that he would experience in himself what this is, which he is forbidden,—what it works in him,—why it is forbidden. In children, in whom we see openly, what in after-life is more concealed, we see this; how the very fact that

they are forbidden tempts them instantly to do what they are forbidden; how, when unrestrained, they take additional delight in it; how a law becomes to them a reason to break it; how what they were scarcely tempted to before, they are strongly led to, as soon as it is forbidden. "We ever strive after forbidden lawlessness, and love what is refused us," is the confession of a heathen in the name of human nature, when left to itself.

This is man's worst state; this is the full effect of that wilfulness, which we may feel, or have felt, in ourselves, leading to commit sin, simply because it was forbidden, disliking to live under control, wishing for freedom, not from itself and its own passions, but from control; a love of liberty, i. e. lawlessness, a desire of being without a superior, and so rebelling against GOD also, with hard thoughts of GOD, loving things because GOD had forbidden them; and as the Apostle says, at last "hating GOD," as being the Master who withheld them.

But conscience will not always be still; GOD had placed a law within men, as well as without them; HE had not only said, "Thou shalt not steal, or bear false witness, or covet;" but HE had provided a voice within them, which should echo the words of His law, and speak audibly within their souls, "Thou mayest not do this wickedness, and sin against GOD." And this voice HE at times made to speak more loudly by His SPIRIT, whereby HE ever strove with man. And then the man became two selves, one which was set upon the evil forbidden him, and the other which felt it ought not to be done, and resisted, and strove more or less strongly, but in the end for the most part gave way. And to this state of struggle there was, naturally, no end, no way of escape; yet was it miserable: it was miserable to be split in two, against one's self, one part against the other; miserable to see that a man ought not to do what he did, and yet to do it; to condemn himself, and yet to do what he condemned; to strive and struggle, and wish to be free, and yet when the temptation came, struggles, hopes, wishes to end in the same way, by giving way, and the better self to be overpowered by the worse; to be dragged along as a prisoner whither it would not, and to feel that it was himself which was being so dragged away; that there was a strong man within him, which had the mastery over him, and had bound him, and let him struggle a little, but still kept hold of the chain, and after a man had walked a little freely, held, and bound, and tied him down as before. And this chain was sin. This is it, which St. Paul goes on to describe; they were carnal, fleshly, sold under sin; what they did they allowed, or approved not; and the law they did approve of: they willed what was good, but could not do it; what they would, they did not; what they hated they did; it was a very law unto them, that so soon as they wished what was good, evil came, was present with them; their mind had one law, that written upon it by GOD, their members another; and these were at war one with the other, and the warfare ended in their being taken captive, being slaves to the law of sin, and of evil habit of their earthly selves. "I see what is best, and approve it, I follow what is worst," is again the confession of the heathen of the state of our race; and another, "I know how I ought to be,—to do, wretched man, I was unable." Well might the Apostle exclaim, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

And is this the state of the Christian? Is this to be the state of those who have been born again, who have been “made members of CHRIST, children of GOD, inheritors of heaven?” GOD forbid! Where then were the blessedness of the Gospel? where “the glorious liberty of the children of GOD?” where the victory given to us by faith in CHRIST JESUS? where the overcoming of the wicked one? where the promise, that “whatsoever is born of GOD overcometh the world;” and that, “because greater is HE That is in us, than he that is in the world?” that CHRIST Who is with us, and in us, is more than they (Satan and the powers of darkness) that be against us? where the comfort of our LORD’S promise, “Be of good cheer, *I* have overcome the world,” if we are still ever to be overcome, yea, HE overcome in us? Oh, no! these are faithless, slothful fears, whereby Satan would despoil us of our crown at least, if not of our life, by wresting the truth, that we *are* poor, weak, frail, helpless creatures, ever ready to fall, unable to stand upright, full of infirmities, beset with manifold temptations, with the seed of corruption from our fallen nature still lurking in us; that we have weakened ourselves by our former sins; that they have taken such hold upon us that we are not able to look up; that they are “a chain,” whereby we are “tied and bound,” that we should not go freely: yea, he appeals to ourselves; is it not true which the Apostle says? Have you not this “law in your members warring- against the law of your mind?” does it not “bring” you “into captivity?” Do you not find, that when you “would do good, evil is present with you?” that there is a fault and corruption in most, if not all your actions? Why then struggle so vehemently, when with all your pains you will never get free; yea, your chains are often only felt so much the heavier when you would struggle to get rid of them? No; so must it be in this life, the time of deliverance is not yet. Most of this is true, miserably true, of most; and all which could he said of our natural weakness and helplessness, nay of the weakness and helplessness of the new-born Christian by himself, would be true. But why let the accursed one fix our minds on these sad truths, these truths of nature, so as to make us forget the more blessed truths, the truths of grace? Why think for ever of the dung-heap, whereon we lay, and whereon, of ourselves, we should have always lain, when GOD has raised us, “the poor out of the dust, and lifted up us beggars from the dunghill, to set us among princes,” (even the holy angels,) “and make us inherit the throne of glory?” And how? Hannah the prophetess goes on to say, “for the pillars of the earth are the LORD’S (not Satan’s), and HE hath set the world upon them, and HE will guide the feet of His saints ‘.’” It is true, that we are by nature weak, but “when we are weak, then,” the Apostle says, “we are strong;” of “ourselves we are not able to do anything;” but the Apostle says again, “I can do all things through CHRIST that strengthened me;” by nature the strong one (Satan) bound us; but GOD hath “bound the strong man, and spoiled his goods;” and we, who were once his “lawful prisoners,” are now set free; by nature we were brought “into captivity to the law of sin in our members, but by grace,” St. Paul goes on to say, “the law of the Spirit of life in CHRIST JESUS hath *set us free* from the law of sin and death;” (i. e. being in CHRIST JESUS, we have received *within* us a new law, we have obtained a new law, that of the life-giving SPIRIT, which hath set us free from the

law to which we were before bound: this law is not a law without us, but within us; not a law which we are only obliged to obey, but a law which gives us power to obey, which draws us, raises, lifts us upwards to GOD, as the law of sin kept us down to this earth; as it is a law of our bodies that they cannot fly upwards, nor leave this earth, so now there is a law given to our souls, whereby they may leave this earth, despise this earth, and fix themselves upon GOD; and this law is that life-giving SPIRIT, which we have in CHRIST JESUS;) by nature we should walk after the flesh, by grace we walk after the SPIRIT; by nature the law was weak in us through the flesh (i. e. through the power of the flesh over us); by grace the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us (not *for* us only) but by GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT dwelling "*in* us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the SPIRIT;" by nature we are carnal, fleshly, by grace we are, St. Paul boldly says, "not *in* the flesh, but *in* the SPIRIT, if so be that the SPIRIT OF CHRIST dwelleth in us." We are taken out of our natural state in Adam, and we are brought into a new spiritual bond in CHRIST; so that though outwardly in the flesh, inwardly we are not in the flesh, not subject to it, its power, its laws, its tyranny, but freed from it, and in CHRIST. All which St. Paul says of man's natural subjection to sin, all that he denies of him who is *in* CHRIST. The one is in the flesh, the other is not in the flesh; the one minds the things of the flesh, the other not those of the flesh but of the SPIRIT; the one is subject to the law of sin, the other is free from the law of sin; the one cannot please GOD, the other doth please GOD; the one cannot perform the thing that is good, in the other the righteousness of the law is fulfilled; the one is death, the other life and peace.

These, my Brethren, are glorious but awful privileges; men are ready enough to accept the righteousness by faith, and this comes first; but then there must follow a righteousness of *life*; we have been justified, or made righteous, freely, it remains that we be sanctified; we 'believe in GOD THE SON, Who redeemed us and all mankind,' but 'we believe in GOD THE HOLY GHOST' also, 'Who sanctifieth us, and all the elect people of GOD:' the law has been fulfilled for us, it is now to be fulfilled in us. While we renounce all power of ourselves to do works well-pleasing to GOD, we must claim, nay, we must not shrink from the power imparted to us, "to walk worthy of the LORD, *unto all pleasing*, fruitful in every good work, strengthened with *all* might, according to His glorious power." "This is the will of GOD, our sanctification." CHRIST came not into the world, died not for us, shed not forth abundantly the rich gifts of the HOLY GHOST, that we should live unto ourselves, but that we should live to HIM; not for this "was the chastisement of our peace laid upon HIM, and by His stripes are we healed," that we should become again thus sickly Christians: these amazing acts of GOD'S loving-kindness were not wrought for us that we should live an indolent, easy, costless life, pleading our weakness as an excuse for neglecting GOD'S strength, sacrificing little or nothing, doing little or nothing; and leaving undone little or nothing, but what we should have otherwise done or left undone. HE hath not clad us with our armour, that we should sit still, but that we should fight the good fight, in His power trample "upon serpents, and *all* the power of the enemy," whom HE has trampled under our feet; subdue every thing to obedience to



HIM, bring all our words, thoughts, and actions into harmony with His law, make HIM the rule, the end, the law, the life of our actions; in a word, live *to* HIM here, that so we might live *with* HIM hereafter.

But then has this conflict with sin, which the Apostle describes, nothing to do with us? Is it a thing past or gone? Alas, not! many ways. From the conflict we shall never in this life be wholly free. The struggle with sin is not changed, but its issue and end; it *did* end in defeat and death; it should end now in victory, life, and an everlasting crown. There are four states, says an ancient Bishop;<sup>1</sup> the first, in which man struggles not with sin, but is subject to it; the second, in which he struggles with it, and is overcome; the third, in which he struggles and overcomes; the fourth, in which he has to struggle no more. Whoso knows not GOD, nor the law of GOD, submits to sin and struggles not; awakened to the knowledge of GOD and His law, man struggles but is overcome; in and through the power of CHRIST in the Gospel, he still has to struggle, but overcomes; in Heaven, “they who shall he thought worthy to obtain that world and the Resurrection from the dead,” shall have to struggle no more, but shall enjoy a blessed and everlasting peace. Our highest state in this life is to struggle, and to be the conquerors; and so, all which St. Paul says of the two laws within us, would still find place in us, only that the end should not be defeat but victory, having been freed by CHRIST to retain our freedom wherewith HE has made us free. But is this so? Alas, again one must say, that many who have been baptized into CHRIST are as though they were heathen, fallen back into the defilements from which they had been washed; many struggle a little, more or less, but it still ends in their being enslaved to their sins: many in some things walk well, but give way to some one or more temptations, whenever they occur; many think that they walk well, because they are freed from the temptations to such and such sins, but to others continually give way; in many the conflict is doubtful, sometimes ending in defeat, sometimes in victory. All these are short of the fulness of Christian privilege, and Gospel duty, and Evangelical obedience; almost all are in a state very dangerous. It is not, indeed, the amount of the conflict, but its issue, upon which a man’s hopes and salvation depends. Often, upon attempting any fresh duty, breaking off any self-indulgence, labouring to attain some fresh measures of obedience, the conflict will be very severe; “at first wisdom will walk with him by crooked ways, and bring fear and dread upon him, and torment him with her discipline, until she may trust his soul, and try him by her laws; then she will return the strait way unto him, and comfort him, and show him her secrets.” Again, it is said, “My son, if thou come to serve the LORD, prepare thy soul for temptation. Set thy heart aright, and *constantly endure*; cleave unto HIM, and depart not away.” Any great victory over Satan is not to be achieved without suffering: “the kingdom of Heaven is” to be “taken by violence.” Of course, a man cannot be reckoned in a safe or happy state, so long as there is vehement resistance within him to the will of GOD; he cannot be happy, because he is divided, part with GOD, part against HIM; he

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<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, in Ps. xxxv. And Lib. lxxxiii. quæst. q. 66.

cannot be happy, because our happiness is in GOD, and he resteth not wholly on GOD; nor can he be reckoned safe so long as he is thus fiercely assailed by the foe; but it is not the fierceness of the onset, nor the length of the struggle, but the final issue, upon which all depends, whether at the last he yield or conquer. But though the struggle may have its dangers, absence of struggle is for the most part far more dangerous; for it will show mostly, not that a man hath the victory, but that he has not begun to fight, or is, at least, now sitting listless; for our adversary will not part with us so cheaply, that for a few blows dealt now and then, or at a certain period of life, he will not again assail us; nor are all the difficulties in the road to Heaven at the outset, although the most and the greatest are.

An easy, relaxed life, such as is that of most Christians, is full of danger; a man cannot fight who is unarmed, or struggle when lying outstretched and softly; or rouse himself at once in his full energy when the enemy is upon him; or if he could, what sort of warfare were it, which were to be renewed now and then only? what the need of continual watchfulness, of unceasing prayer, of “daily bread,” were the conflict, for which all these are preparations, now and then only? Whoso knows nothing of daily conflict, (unless, perhaps, for some period when GOD gives rest,) is very far advanced, or scarcely set out. And therefore the elder Christians multiplied conflicts; they fasted, they watched, they denied themselves, that they might know and understand themselves, whether they were indeed in earnest for the strife; they kept themselves practised for more vehement conflicts by these voluntary essays; they did as men in worldly warfare would, kept themselves trained, disciplined, prepared, the eye ready, the hand taught; that the eye might see what was right, and the hand be quick to perform, lest at the time of conflict the enemy should find them unprepared, and they perish; and this they did, knowing that the strength, wherein they warred, was not their own, but their LORD’S, placed within them, but not of them. And would we hope to share their crown without their victory, or their victory without their struggles, or be “good soldiers” without “enduring hardness?”

In one of these states we must all be; either not fighting, and subdued; or fighting, and still subdued: or fighting, and subduing, (for our rest is not yet); and it behoves us much to know which. In both the first, men may, and do deceive themselves; they may mistake the stillness of death for the peace of Heaven: their own being fast bound in chains for their having the enemy bound; they may think that because they have no struggles, they have no defeat, and their whole life is one defeat; they stir not, fight not, and Satan, who holds them fast asleep, knows too well to disturb them; he often will not rouse them to any greater sin, for this might create resistance; they are asleep within his dominions, and so they are there, he is satisfied, and will not risk his prey, by tempting them to sins which might awaken them.

Again, a man may mistake ineffectual struggles against his sin for something on his part, think how he has felt, wished, striven, perhaps resolved, being almost in earnest, prayed against it, and contrive to forget that, upon which in the end all depends, “Was he

conquered or conqueror?" He may mistake the strivings of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT within him, GOD'S loud calls, and all the helps which GOD hath given him, for something of his own, and so keep out of his own sight, that just that one thing which might have been his own, victory in all this strength given him, was wanting; but all these feelings, strivings, comforts, calls, resolutions, purposes, may only be so many witnesses against him, in that he did not what was GOD'S end in all these—OBEY.

My Brethren, let us take diligent heed, not in one or other sort of trial, but in all our trials, in which of these states we are? Are we sitting still? or being defeated? or conquerors? On this question hangs our life; let us not put it from us, nor answer it carelessly, or in the manner of dissemblers with GOD; but see wherein our own trials lie, not what trials we *have not*, not what temptations by which our neighbours fall, we are freed from, but what trials we have, and how we are acting in these; and may GOD give us all grace,—to those who are now asleep, to arouse to fight against these His enemies, and to those who are fighting, to fight more resolutely, and to those who are fighting victoriously, to fight continually; never to lay aside their armour, never to relax, but to gain yet more victories over themselves and Satan; and as their profession is, to fight manfully against sin, the world and the devil, and to remain CHRIST'S faithful soldiers and servants unto their life's end;" and to him that overcometh, CHRIST saith, "I will give a crown of life."