

Determination & Prayer

Living Water

...the Lord said to the Samaritan woman that whosoever drinks of it shall not thirst again. How right and *how very* true is that which comes from the lips of Truth Himself! In this life the soul will never thirst for anything more, although its thirst for things in the life to come will exceed any natural thirst that we can imagine here below. How the soul thirsts to experience this thirst! For it knows how very precious it is, and, grievous though it be and exhausting, it creates the very satisfaction by which this thirst is allayed; It is therefore a thirst which quenches nothing but desire for earthly things, and, when God slakes it, satisfies in such a way that one of the greatest favors He can bestow on the soul is to leave it with this longing, so that it has an even greater desire to drink of this water again. (W 19,2)

Hold Back the Desire

Let it be understood from this that, as there can be nothing in our supreme Good which is not perfect, all that He gives is for our welfare; and, however abundant this water which He gives may be, in nothing that He gives can there be superfluity. For, if His gift is abundant, He also bestows on the soul, as I have said, an abundant capacity for drinking; just as a glassmaker molds his vessels to the size he thinks necessary, so that there is room for what he wishes to pour into them. As our desires for this water come from ourselves, they are never free from fault; any good that there may be in them comes from the help of the Lord. But we are so indiscreet that, as the pain is sweet and pleasant, we think we can never have too much of it. We have an immeasurable longing for it, and, so far as is possible on earth, we stimulate this longing: sometimes this goes so far as to cause death. How happy is such a death! And yet by living one might perhaps have helped others to die of the desire for it. I believe the devil has something to do with this: knowing how much harm we can do him by living, he tempts us to be indiscreet in our penances and so to ruin our health, which is a matter of no small moment to him. (W 19, 9)

It seems foolish to check so good a thing as this desire, but it is not. I am not saying that the desire should be uprooted—only checked; one may be able to do this by stimulating some other desire which is equally praiseworthy. (W 19,10)

The Lord calls us

‘Remember, the Lord invites us all; and, since He is Truth Itself, we cannot doubt Him. If His invitation were not a general one, He would not have said: “I will give you to drink.” He might have said: “Come, all of you, for after all you will lose nothing by coming; and I will give drink to those whom I think fit for it.” But, as He said we were all to come, without making this condition, I feel sure that none will fail to receive this living water unless they cannot keep to the path. May the Lord, Who promises it, give us grace, for His Majesty’s own sake, to seek it as it must be sought.’ (W 19 15)

...it is certain that He will forbid no one to come: indeed, He calls us publicly, and in a loud voice, to do so. Yet, as He is so good, He does not force us to drink, but enable those who wish to follow Him to drink in many ways so that none may lack comfort or die of thirst. For from this rich spring flow many streams—some large, others small, and also little pools for children, which they find quite large enough, for the sight of a great deal of water would frighten them: by children, I mean those who are in the early stages. Therefore, sisters, have no fear that you will die of thirst on this road; you will never lack so much of the water of comfort that your thirst will be intolerable; so take my advice and do not tarry on the way, but strive like strong men until you die in the attempt, for you are here for nothing else than to strive. If you always pursue this determination to die rather than fail to reach the end of the road, the Lord may bring you through this life with a certain degree of thirst, but in the life which never ends He will give you great abundance to drink and you will have no fear of its failing you. May the Lord grant us never to fail Him. Amen. (W 20, 2)

Determined Determination

Let us now return to those who wish to travel on this road, and will not halt until they reach their goal, which is the place where they can drink of this water of life. *Although in some book or other—in several, in fact—I have read what a good thing it is to begin in this way, I do not think anything will be lost if I speak of it here.* As I say, it is most important—all important, indeed—that they should begin well by making an earnest and most determined resolve not to halt until they reach their goal, whatever may come, whatever may happen to them, however hard they may have to labor, whoever may complain of them, whether they reach their goal or die on the road or have no heart to confront the trials which they meet, whether the very world collapses. (W 21,2)

...for we must all journey to this fountain, my daughters, whether we will or no, though we may not all do so in the same way. Take my advice, then, and let none mislead you by showing you any other road than that of prayer. (W 21,6)

I am not now discussing whether or not everyone must practice mental or vocal prayer; but I do say that you yourselves require both. For prayer is the duty of religious. If anyone tells you it is dangerous, look upon that person himself as your principal danger and flee from his company. Do not forget this, for it is advice that you may possibly need. It will be dangerous for you if you do not possess humility and the other virtues; but God forbid that the way of prayer should be a way of danger! This fear seems to have been invented by the devil, who has apparently been very clever in bringing about the fall of some who practice prayer. (W 21,7)

Be Attentive

You must know, daughters, that whether or not you are practicing mental prayer has nothing to do with whether the lips are moving. If, while I am speaking with God, I have a clear realization and full consciousness that I am doing so, and if this is more real to me than the words I am uttering, then I am combining mental and vocal prayer. When people tell you that you are speaking with God by reciting the Our Father and thinking of worldly things—well, then I need to be quiet. When you speak, as it is right for you to do, with so great a Lord, it is well that you should think of Who it is that you are addressing, and what you yourself are, so that you may speak to Him with respect. How can you address a king with the deference due him, or how can you know what behavior to use when speaking to a king, unless you are clearly aware of the nature of his position and of yours? It is because of this, and because it is the custom to do so, that you must behave respectfully toward him, and must learn *what the custom is, and not be careless about such things, or you will be dismissed as a simpleton and obtain nothing you desire...* (W 22,1)

Motives of Determination

...Since we have resolved to devote very brief periods of time to Him—only a small part of what we spend upon ourselves and upon people who are not particularly grateful to us for it—let us give it to Him freely, with our minds unoccupied by other things and entirely resolved never to take it back again, whatever we may suffer difficulties, annoyances or dryness. Let me realize that this time has been lent to me and is not my own, and feel that I can rightly be called to account for it if I am not prepared to devote it completely to God. (W 23,2)

I say “wholly”, but we must not be considered as taking it back if we should fail to give it Him for a day, or for a few days, because of legitimate occupations or reason. Provided the intention remains firm, my God is not in the least meticulous ... (W 23,3)

...The devil is very much afraid of determined souls, knowing by experience that they inflict great injury on him, and, when he plans to do them harm, he only profits them and others and ends up being the loser. We must not become careless though, or count on this, for we are dealing with treacherous folk, who are cowards and dare not attack the determined, but, if they see we are careless, they will do us great harm. And if they know anyone to be changeable, and

not determined in *doing* what is good and in being firmly determined to persevere, they will not leave him alone night or day and will cause him endless problems and difficulties... (W 23,4)

Do not be afraid that the Lord who has called us to drink of this spring will allow you to die of thirst. This I have already said and I should like to repeat it; for people are often timid when they have not learned by experience of the Lord's goodness, even though they know it by faith. It is a great thing to have experienced what friendship and joy He gives to those who walk on this road and how He takes care of almost all the expenses. (W23, 5)

For Personal Reflection:

Find a verse in the Bible inviting us to be perseverant (Lk 8,15), determined (Lk. 9, 62) or to be courageous.