

American Decency Association

PO Box 202, Fremont, MI 49412 231-924-4050 www.americandecency.org

Encouraging Christians to guard their hearts

June 2016

STRIVE!

By: J. C. Ryle



“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.

Here is a plain command,— Jesus says to us, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate.” ...

“STRIVE” teaches that a man must use means diligently, if he would have his soul saved. ...

There are ways in which a man must walk, if he desires to be found of Christ. Public worship, reading the Bible, hearing the Gospel preached ... No one can ... wipe away one of his sins. But... if man could do nothing but sit still, Christ would never have said “strive.”

“STRIVE” teaches that man is a free agent, and will be dealt with by God

... I hear Jesus saying to sinners, “Come-repent-believe-labour-ask-seek-knock.” I see plainly that our salvation from first to last is entirely *of God*. But I see with no less plainness that our ruin, if lost, is wholly and entirely *of ourselves*. ...

“STRIVE” teaches that a man must expect many adversaries and a hard battle, if he would have his soul saved. ... The heart which is naturally sensual and earthly will never be turned to spiritual things without a daily fight. ...

“STRIVE” teaches that it is worthwhile for a man to seek salvation. ... If there be anything that deserves a struggle in this world, it is the prosperity of the soul. ...

“STRIVE” teaches that laziness in religion is a great sin. ... It is a breach of a plain commandment. ...

“STRIVE” teaches that all outside the strait gate are in great danger... of being lost forever. ...

“STRIVE” ... condemns

the ways and practices of multitudes who profess and call themselves Christians. Many there are who neither swear, nor murder, nor commit adultery, nor steal, nor lie. But one thing unhappily cannot be said of them. They cannot be said to “strive” to be saved. The spirit of slumber possesses their hearts in everything that concerns religion. About the things of the world they are active enough. They rise early, and late take rest. They labour. ... They are busy. ... But about the one thing needful they never “strive” at all.

What shall I say of those who are irregular about public worship on Sundays? ... Of those who seldom or never read the Bible? ... Of those who never pray?,, Is this striving?

In soul matters fear moderation just as you would fear the plague. Care not what men think of you. Let it be enough for you that your Master says, “STRIVE.”

[www.tracts.ukgo.com/john_charles_ryle.htm]

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Striving Through Devotion

By: Steve Huston



As Jesus calls me to “Strive to enter in at the strait gate” (Luke 13:24), and J.C. Ryle reminds me that “You cannot stand still in the affairs of your soul,” I ask myself, “What am I to strive after and how do I strive for it?” Obviously it is the grace of God that saves us and transforms us, but we dare not forget that it is Christ Himself that calls us to “strive to enter in.” It’s a command to be obeyed and a warning to be heeded.

Perhaps one of the biggest things we strive against is self; remember, “I” is in the center of “pride.” It was Satan’s downfall and is our biggest obstacle to a life of holiness. For some, it’s an intellectual, physical, or emotional desire that we want met either outside Biblical bounds or in over abundance. For others, it’s what

Charles Ross warns against: “*Satan has a quiver full of poisoned arrows. Do you know which is the most deadly? It is trust, confidence in thyself; it is vain, self-confident boastful spirit.*” For both, the answer is found in John the Baptist’s exclamation: “**He [Jesus] must increase, but I must decrease.**” The ever-striving battle, at its root, is the diminishing of self and the exultation of Jesus.

Naming this vile weed that needs to be exterminated is perhaps much easier than the pulling of it. As always, we rely upon the strength of our Master and Savior; yet, we are called to do our part as well. Jesus cleanses and sanctifies; still, we are to use every means of grace at our disposal to be rooted, stablished, and grow in Him.

One means of grace, which encompasses many, that helps in this striving, is a time of daily personal devotions. The older I get, the more I recognize its importance. Reading and studying the Word of God helps me to focus on its Author and main Subject, my Lord, Jesus. Spending time meditating on Scripture and in prayer—asking

God to guide my prayers and lead me—is another part of decreasing self and allowing Jesus to increase Himself within me. Reading the devotional writings of other time-tested authors is also a great encouragement to my faith and the exultation of Jesus. Men like J.C. Ryle, Oswald Chambers, Robert Hawker, and Charles Spurgeon, to name a few, write with passion about: a hatred of sin, an exultation of Christ, the importance of living a holy life, the torments of hell, and the beauties of heaven. O, the blessings I receive as they point me to Christ, the Savior of my soul.

I have a friend who is my senior who drinks deeply from the well of devotion. He arises well before the sun to spend much time with the Lord in prayer and study. He well recognizes his desperate need for this private time with the Lord. It humbles me and I strive to follow his example as he follows Jesus.

Looking away from all else so that we may focus only on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith... STRIVE!

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