

THOUGHTS ON DYING DAILY

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649296798

Thoughts on dying daily by Charles Girdlestone

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ON
DYING DAILY.

BY

CHARLES GIRDLESTONE, M.A.

*Fellow of Balliol College, 1819-1826; Vicar of Sedgley, 1826-1837;
Rector of Alderley, 1837-1847; Rector of Kingwinford, 1847,—resigned 1857.*

"I PROTEST BY YOUR REJOICING, WHICH I HAVE IN
CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD, I DIE DAILY."—1 Cor. 15. 31.



LONDON: HAMILTON, ADAMS & Co.

WESTON-SUPER-MARE: ROBBINS.

1878.

141. m. 649

WATSON-PAPER-MARKET
PRINTED BY CHARLES ROBINSON,
HIGH STREET.

THOUGHTS ON DYING DAILY.

§ 1.—*Paul not dismayed under the apprehension of death.*

WHEN the apostle Paul protested to the Corinthians, "I die daily," (1 Cor. 15. 31) he was referring to those deadly perils to which he was continually exposed, as a preacher of the Gospel; owing to the persecution of Christians then commonly practiced by Jews and Gentiles alike. With death in various fearful forms ever threatening to cut short his career, he expressed himself without exaggeration in saying, "I die daily," as well as when he spake of standing "in jeopardy every hour." The profession of faith in Christ Jesus no longer exposes us to persecution; but rather the reverse. And with the security from wrong doing, which we all enjoy, under the protection of laws generally respected, it is not easy to picture to ourselves the imminent dangers which never ceased to beset the early Christians, and especially such an energetic and prominent preacher of the Gospel as the apostle Paul. If however it were possible to conceive ourselves, like him, liable at any hour to be put to death, there would be no difficulty in our imagining the agitated state of mind to which we should be apt to

give way; with the painful apprehension of danger ever haunting us, depressing the spirits, and casting a gloom over all the ordinary occupations and enjoyments of life.

And yet Paul was by no means cast down. Though he lived day by day with death staring him in the face, he shewed no symptoms of being faint-hearted. On the contrary, we know of him, as far as it is possible to know the character of one who lived so long ago, that his was a mind habitually calm, self possessed, intent on the discharge of duty, vigorous in action, earnest, cheerful, and even joyful. However sensibly he might be alive to the perils which surrounded him, they seem never to have deprived him of that presence of mind, which was manifested in his demeanour, under the varied most trying circumstances of his marvellous course of life. And it is noteworthy, that even when asserting, "I die daily," he vouches to the Corinthians for the truth of his assertion, by an appeal to the "rejoicing in Christ Jesus," which he had together with them: "I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus, I die daily." As if he had said, surely as I glory joyfully in your conversion, surely as I rejoice in the glory given to the Gospel of our Lord by your faith and zeal, so surely do I, every day of my life, experience the most lively apprehension of imminent death, dying all the time I live; enjoying life thankfully, yet willing to die at any hour, if the Lord will; crucified to the world, and the world crucified to me, by the cross of the Saviour in whom I glory and rejoice.

§ 2.—*How the believer in Christ ought to regard his mortality.*

Thus it appears, that the consciousness of dying daily cast no gloom over the spirit of the apostle. Though our case is in some respects very unlike to his, there is a sense in which it is no less strictly true of each one of us, that we stand in jeopardy every hour, and are dying every day and all day long, from the moment when we begin to live. Life may be compared to a piece of clockwork, wound up, and set agoing ;—the weights running down, or the spring uncoiling itself, perpetually; so that the movement inevitably draws nearer to a close during every moment of its progress. Life is a lamp, which once lighted begins to consume its oil, and goes on consuming it, until the whole is burnt out, and the light is then quenched in darkness. We can calculate how long the lamp will burn, how long the clock will go. But who can know of his own life how long it will last, how soon it may be cut short by death? It might be natural to ask, "Lord, let me know mine end, and the number of my days, that I may be certified how long I have to live." (Ps. 39, 8.) But it has not been thought good for man that this enquiry should be answered. Thus it is not only true that we begin to die as soon as we begin to live, but it is also true that all the time we live we are liable to die at any moment ;—some vital organ may suddenly fail, some vital function suddenly cease to act, and the mystery of this ever throbbing life may be at