

very weak, the devil is continually tempting us, and the senses alluring us to evil, yet the influence of one wicked companion will more easily overcome us than all these. The first thing therefore that we must do to be saved, is to keep ourselves at a distance from dangerous occasions and wicked companions. And in this it is necessary to use violence with ourselves, and overcome all human respect. He who does not use violence with himself will not be saved. It is true, we are not to confide in our own strength, but only in the divine assistance; but God requires of us on our own part to do violence to ourselves in order to obtain heaven. *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away.* St. Matt. xi. 12.

The second means is mental prayer. Without this it will be difficult for the soul to continue long in the grace of God. *In all thy works,* says the Holy Spirit, *remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin.* Eccl. vii. 40. He who frequently meditates on his last end, upon death, judgment hell and heaven, will not fall into sin: but these truths are not to be discerned by the eyes, but only by the mind; if they be not dwelt upon, they vanish from the mind and the pleasures of sense presenting themselves, easily gain admittance into the hearts of those who do not keep in mind the eternal truths; and hence it is that so many abandon themselves to vice and are lost. All Christians know and believe that they must die, and be judged after death; but because they do not think of these things, they live at a distance from God. Without mental prayer we can have no light, but must walk in the dark, and walking in the dark we cannot perceive dangers,

we cannot take precautions; we ask not God for his assistance, and thus we must be lost. Without prayer there is neither light nor strength for us to walk forward in the way of God; because without prayer we ask not God to give us his help; and hence not praying we must certainly fall. Hence Cardinal Bellarmin says, that it is morally impossible for a Christian who does not meditate upon eternal truths to continue in the grace of God. On the contrary, he who meditates every day, will not easily fall into sin; and if by some misfortune he should fall, he will by a continuance in prayer, soon arise and return again to God. A servant of God once said: "Mental prayer and mortal sin can never exist together." Resolve therefore, to make every day, either in the morning or in the evening, but better in the morning, half an hour's meditation. For the rest, it is sufficient to read during the half hour some book of meditations, and excite within you from time to time some pious affection, and make some prayer to God. Above all, I beseech you never to relinquish this kind of prayer, but to make it at least once in the day although you should be in great dryness of spirit and should find it very irksome. If you continue faithful to it, you will assuredly be saved.

Together with prayer it is of great use to be diligent in spiritual reading, out of some book that treats of the Holy lives of the saints, or of the christian virtues; and this for half an hour or at least a quarter of an hour every day.—How many by reading some devout book have changed their lives and become saints. St. John Colombinus, St. Ignatius, and so many others. It would also be very useful every year to make