

Christian Retirement

Part 53

By [Thomas Reade](#)

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ON INDWELLING SIN

Nothing grieves the believer in Jesus so much, as the sin which dwells in him. He can feelingly adopt the language of the apostle: "Oh wretched man that I am!", and with him acknowledge, "we that are in this tabernacle, do groan, being burdened." Yet, let not the worldling imagine that the believer has no inward enjoyment. This very grief on account of sin is accompanied with holy peace and joy, through faith in the atonement of Jesus.

How great is the change which grace makes in the soul! Sin, which once was sweet, now becomes bitter. Sin, which once wore the mask of beauty, now appears in all its native deformity. The mind, enlightened from above, beholds sin in the mirror of truth, as hardening and deceiving, unprofitable, shameful, and deadly. Its evil effects are seen in the destruction of original innocence; the desolating judgments of heaven; and the miseries which cover the earth.

Its evil effects are felt in the corruption of our nature, the stings of conscience, and the abounding iniquities of mankind. But, above all other views, we behold the infinite evil of sin in the agonies and death of Jesus, the Son of God.

Oh! that I may have grace to bewail, at the foot of the cross, the exceeding sinfulness of sin. There I would confess both my guilt and pollution; and there, looking with an eye of faith to the bleeding sacrifice, I would wait in humble hope, until Jesus speak those soul-transporting words: "Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you."

Sinless perfection is the bliss of heaven. There, believers who die in the Lord become "the spirits of just men made perfect." While they sojourn here below, they are called to wrestle and fight both with inbred sin and outward temptations. Hence we find in that faithful word, which is the "light" and counselor" of the church of God, continual calls to vigilance and activity, and reiterated cautions against negligence and sloth. There are four evils against which the most advanced believer has daily, yes hourly, to contend.

The first is UNBELIEF.

This is a powerful enemy to our peace. It was unbelief which gave Satan the first advantage over the once happy pair in Paradise. They doubted—they disbelieved—they fell. Unbelief is the parent of numberless evils, which, although of different complexions, yet, like the human race, may be traced to the same source.

Doubt, distrust, evil-surmisings, murmurings, complainings, slavish fears, despondencies, creature dependencies, contempt of divine threatenings, slighting of divine promises, rejection of Jesus, neglect of the Gospel, ridiculing the work of the Spirit, atheism, deism, Socinianism, carnal security, lukewarmness, backsliding in heart or life, false profession, hypocrisy—all these, and a thousand other evils, spring from unbelief. Lord, deliver me, I humbly and earnestly beseech you, from these soul-destroying, hell-deserving sins.

The second inbred evil is PRIDE.

Pride is a subtle enemy. It spoils all that we think, and speak, and do, until the Spirit of Christ destroys its power in the soul. Pride is the last sin which dies, and expires only with the life of the believer. Through his whole pilgrimage he has to contend against spiritual pride, in all its specious and multiplied forms.

In heaven, pride cannot exist. There, all is humility and peace. Self-love, self-seeking, self-will, self-confidence, self-righteousness, all spring from pride. Pride, like unbelief, is a root of bitterness, from where grow in dreadful luxuriance, vain-glory, love of human applause, seeking of honor, independence, rebellion, revenge, anger, contempt of others, resentment of real or supposed injuries, ambition, presumption, etc.

There is no end to this extensive evil, which infects the hearts of sinners, and fills the earth with misery and blood.

Blessed Jesus! you humbled yourself even unto death, to make an atonement for my pride. Oh! make me humble and lowly in heart. Clothe me with humility, that, with all lowliness of mind; I may walk before you to your honor and glory.

The third enemy is SENSUALITY.

This dreadful evil is the parent of crimes, which the apostle declares ought not so much as to be named among the holy followers of Christ. How awful, then, is the thought, that the nominally Christian world is, at this very moment, stained with crimes of so polluting a nature, as to oppose a barrier, in many instances, to the conversion both of the heathens and the Jews! Our Lord has told us that offenses will come; but he has also denounced a "woe unto him through whom they come."

Self-indulgence, sloth, luxury, gluttony, and drunkenness, unite with carnal gratifications and impure desires in binding chains around the captive sinner, until death consigns him to the dungeon of hell. Oh! you holy and ever-blessed Spirit, purify and purge my heart from this dreadful enemy the flesh, which wars against the soul. Wash me in the precious blood of Jesus. Pardon all my sins of impurity, and fill me with holy affections and pure desires.

The most solemn threatenings are denounced in Scripture against these inbred sins: "He that believes not, shall be damned." "Every one that is proud in heart, is an abomination to the Lord." "If you live after the flesh, you shall die."

But there is another enemy which lodges within the human heart—
COVETOUSNESS, or the LOVE OF THE WORLD.

This sin ever opposes the exercise of love to Christ, and heavenly things, in the soul of the believer. The world assumes an undue importance, owing to our coming into continual contact with its fleeting possessions; while eternal realities are the objects of faith and hope. Hence, even the advanced believer finds frequent occasions to use the lamentation of David: "My soul cleaves unto the dust; quicken me, according to your word." The conviction of this evil should lead us to more earnest prayer for that spiritual-mindedness which is life and peace.

Worldly prosperity too frequently produces lukewarmness, and declension from the ways of God. But if we possessed more of that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, more of that telescopic eye which looks within the veil, and views, as near, the distant glories of Emanuel's kingdom: we should be less attached to earth; yes, altogether weaned from it; and be enabled to say with the apostle, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

This proves the necessity of regeneration, since the love of the world is the natural affection of the unrenewed heart. Nothing can eradicate this idolatrous attachment to earthly things, but the love of Christ shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit. The more we see of the preciousness, glory, and excellency of Jesus, the more we discover of the emptiness, vanity, and insufficiency of all earthly good; and the more will our souls be withdrawn from present things, and fixed upon things above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God.

The evils flowing from this sinful love of the world, are many and great. Idolatry, (for whatever supremely engages the heart, be it a diadem or a feather, is our idol,) avarice, greed, the love of money, of earthly possessions, of splendid equipages, and of all those things "which the nations of the world seek after;" fraud, deceit, over-reaching, theft, envy at the prosperity of others; repining at our own condition, if lower than our neighbor's; an unwillingness to part with all for Christ; a shrinking from the cross; a dread of suffering for righteousness' sake—

these, and many other evils, flowing from covetousness, prove the soul to be in a state of enmity against God: for "if any man will be the friend of the world, he is the enemy of God."

From these four dreadful sources of evil—unbelief, pride, sensuality, and covetousness—spring all the miseries which inundate the earth, and fill hell itself with horrors.

These sins are so interwoven with our fallen nature, that, until we are created anew in Christ Jesus, they form, as it were, part of ourselves. How needful, then, is self-examination! How important to consider our ways! We may leave the world with respect to its vain amusements, and yet never have the heart disengaged from it. Withdrawment from the world does not necessarily produce a crucifixion to it. It is one thing to leave the sinful customs and company of the world, and another to sit loosely to its fading pleasures and possessions. We may be worldly in a lonely desert, and spiritual in the midst of a crowd. The world may reign in the cell of the monk; and be renounced in the counting-house of the pious merchant.

The exhortation of Paul is at all times most appropriate and seasonable: "

"What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep. Those in frequent contact with the things of the world should make good use of them without becoming attached to them, for this world and all it contains will pass away." 1 Cor. 7:31.

Blessed Lord! implant in my heart that lively faith, that deep humility, that heavenly purity, that spiritual-mindedness, which will evidence my union to you, and prepare me for your beatific vision in the world to come.

When I survey my treacherous heart,
So base, so vile in every part;
How wondrous, Lord, that sovereign grace
Should make this heart your dwelling-place!

It is true, I hate each rebel sin,
And long for purity within;
Yet, ah! what evils still remain,
The purest act of love to stain.

Were this my only hope and plea,
What I have said, or done for thee,
Dread loads of guilt would sink me down,
Beneath the terrors of your frown.

But Jesus is my living way,
My only trust, my hope, my stay;
From him, I all my strength receive,
And daily on his fullness live.

When death shall loose the silver cord,
Obedient to your mandate, Lord,
My soul shall joy and peace possess,
If Jesus be my righteousness.

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