

## **SECRET FAULTS AND PRESUMPTUOUS SINS**

**"Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me; then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer." – Psa. 19:12-14.**

THIS prophetic prayer represents well the heart attitude of the fully consecrated and earnest Christian. While realizing forgiveness of the "sins that are past through the forbearance of God," through the grace of God which was in Christ Jesus, which imputed our sins to him and his righteousness to us who believe in him, nevertheless the well-instructed soul realizes his faults, his shortcomings. These secret faults may be of two kinds: (1) They may be faults which were secret to ourselves at the time committed – slips, unintentional errors. Of course, the earnest heart, desiring full fellowship with the Lord, will regret even his unintentional shortcomings and will strive and pray for Divine grace to get the victory over these. But besides these there are other secret faults, which are secret in the sense of being unknown to any one but ourselves and the Lord – imperfections or faults of the mind before they take the outward form of actual and presumptuous sins.

All Christians of experience in the good way and in the battle against sin and self have learned that there can be no outward or presumptuous sins that have not first had their beginning in the secret faults of the mind. The sinful thought may be one of pride suggesting self-exaltation; it may be one of avarice suggesting unlawful acquisition of wealth; or it may be some other fleshly desire. The mere suggestion of the thought before our minds is not sin; it is merely the operation of our

faculties, and of the influences which surround us, inquiring of our wills whether or not we will consent to such thoughts. Many consent to thoughts of evil who at the time would utterly repudiate any suggestion to commit evil deeds; but if the thought be *entertained* it is a secret fault, and the growing tendency would surely be toward the more outward and presumptuous sinful conduct, the tendency of which is always from bad to worse. To illustrate: Suppose the suggestion should come to our minds of a method by which we could advance our own interests of fame or honor or reputation by the undermining of the influence and reputation of another, how quickly the evil, selfish thought, if entertained, would lead to envy and possibly to hatred and strife. Almost surely it would lead to backbiting and slander and other works of the flesh and the devil. The beginnings are always small, and correspondingly much easier to deal with than in their developed form. Hence, the prophetic prayer, "Cleanse thou me from *secret faults*" and thus restrain or keep me back from presumptuous sins.

In the Epistle of James (1:14,15) we read, "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own desire and enticed. Then, when desire hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Here we have the same thought differently expressed. The temptation consists at first in the presentation to the mind of *suggestions* which are impure or unkind or unfaithful to obligations; but there is no sin, no fault, as yet. The fault begins when we harbor the evil suggestions, begin to turn them over in our minds and to consider the attractions which they may have to offer. This is where *desire* (taking hold of the evil thing instead of resisting it) causes a beginning of the secret fault; and it is only a process of development, which in many instances, under favorable circumstances, may be very rapid, that sin, the presumptuous or outward acts of sin, results – for instance, bearing false witness against a neighbor, or slander, or other evil deeds. And the evil

course having begun in the fostering of the evil suggestion, and having progressed to presumptuous sin, there is a great danger that the entire course of life will be ultimately affected thereby and bring the transgressor into that condition where he will commit the *great transgression* – wilful, deliberate, intentional sin – the wages of which is death, "Second Death."

It would appear, then, that every intelligent Christian would continually pray this inspired prayer, for cleansing from secret faults, that he might thus be restrained from presumptuous sins; and thus praying heartily, he would [R4592 : page 119] also watch against these beginnings of sin and keep his heart in a cleansed and pure condition, by going continually to the fountain of grace for help in every time of need. He who seeks to live a life of holiness and nearness to the Lord by merely guarding and striving against *outward* or presumptuous sins, and who neglects the beginning of sin in the secrets of his own mind, is attempting a right thing in a very foolish and unreasonable way. As well might we seek to avert smallpox by outward cleanliness, while permitting the germs of the disease to enter our systems. The bacteria or germs of presumptuous sins enter through the mind, and their antiseptics and bacteriacides of the truth and its spirit must meet them there and promptly kill the bacteria of sin before it germinates and leads us to such a condition of evil as will manifest itself in our outward conduct.

For instance, whenever the bacteria of *pride* and self-importance present themselves, let the antidote be promptly administered from the Lord's great medical laboratory for the healing of the soul. The proper dose to offset this species of bacteria is found in the words, "He that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted"; and, "Pride goeth before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall."

If the thought presented to our minds be the bacteria of *envy*, then let us promptly apply the antidote which declares that envy is one of the works of the flesh and of the devil, and contrary to the Spirit of Christ, which by our covenant we have adopted as ours. And let us remember that envy is closely related to and apt to be followed by *malice*, *hatred* and *strife*, which, under some circumstances, mean murder, according to our Lord's interpretation. – I John 3:15; Matt. 5:21,22.

If the bacteria which presents itself to our minds is *avarice*, with the suggestion of unjust methods for its gratification, let us promptly apply to it the medicine furnished in the Lord's Word, namely, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" "For the love of money is the root of all evil, which some, coveting after, have erred from the truth and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

The more attention we give to this subject, the more we will be convinced, from our own personal experiences, of the truth of the Scriptural declarations respecting the beginnings of sin as *secret faults in the mind*; and the more we will appreciate the statement of the Word, "Keep thy heart [mind, affections] with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." – Prov. 4:23.

But we are not to wonder that God has so constituted us as to permit temptations to come to our minds, nor are we to pray that we may have no temptations; for if there were no such presentations, no such temptations, then there could be no victories on our part, no overcoming of sin and of the Wicked One. But we know that for this very reason we are now in the School of Christ; not that we shall there be shielded from all temptation, but that we may learn of the great Teacher how to meet the Tempter, and, by our Master's grace and help, to come off conquerors, victors in the strife against sin. The degree of our success in this conflict will depend largely upon the keenness of

our faith and trust in the great Teacher. If we feel confident of his wisdom, we will follow closely his instructions and keep our hearts [minds] with all diligence. Faith in the Lord's wisdom and in his help in every time of need is necessary to us in order that we may be thoroughly obedient to him; and hence it is written, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your *faith*," that is, it will be by the exercise of faith and the obedience which flows therefrom that we shall be enabled to "come off conquerors and more than conquerors through him that loved us and gave himself for us."

Nor are we to seek Divine aid far in advance; as, for instance, to be kept throughout the year to come, or month to come, or week to come; rather we are to know that if we have made a covenant with the Lord and are his, that he is near us at all times in every trial, in every temptation; and that his assistance is ready for our use; if we will but accept it and act accordingly. Hence, our prayers should be for help *in the time of need*, as well as general prayers for the Lord's blessing and care for each day. In the moment of temptation the heart should lift itself to the great Master, in full assurance of faith, recognizing his love, his wisdom and his ability to help us, and his willingness to make all things work together for good to those who love him. Asking for his assistance in such a time of need would surely draw to us the Lord's counsel and help and strength for righteousness, truth, purity and love; and thus we should be hourly victorious, daily victorious, and finally victorious.

The difficulty with many is that they are looking for some great battles, instead of averting the great battles by availing themselves of the Lord's provision, and keeping their minds cleansed from secret faults. The little battles, which are much more numerous, are the ones in which we gain the victories with their ultimate rewards. "Greater is he that ruleth his own spirit [mind, will] than he that taketh a city."

Finally, the grand results of obedience to this counsel of the Lord, the grand attainment of those who have faithfully kept their hearts with diligence, is expressed in our text, and may well be the repeated earnest prayer of all the sanctified in Christ Jesus – "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer."

