

to excite your unclean heart, yet you may still be as filthy a person as before. Your own corrupt heart and Satan would incline you so. And though you never had a foot to go, or a hand to stir, yet you might be as much a thief as Judas. Your heart might rob every passenger, and steal from every house you come to.

Objects are but accidental things to man. They have no necessary impressive influences. They only deliver themselves in that nature with which God has clothed them. But that which envenoms them, and makes them to work so wickedly, is man's wicked heart. You have many persons who complain much against objects. Oh, they can see none or deal with none but wickedness is stirring. Why, beloved, the objects are innocent, but our hearts are unclean and sinful. If you could get another heart, you would look with another eye. The only way to make temptations lose their force is to decline occasions and to cleanse the inward parts.

SECTION V

Another use which I would make of this is to try ourselves what care we have of secret sins. I will give unto you some reasons why I would have you to try yourselves in this:

1. *Because there are many persons who wallow in secret sins.* The Apostle complained of such in his time. Ephesians 5:12, "It is a shame to speak of those things which are done by them in secret." He speaks of such as lived in secret fornication and unclean-

ness. Brethren, how many are there who apparel themselves in the secret thoughts of abhorred wickedness, but even in the secret actings of the same, as if there were no God to look on them, nor conscience to spy on them, nor judgment day to arraign them! Oh, how infinitely odious you must be in the eyes of that holy God, who dare to court Him in public, and yet dare to provoke Him to His face thus in private. You are like a whorish strumpet who dissembles marvelous affections to her husband abroad, and yet at home she will violate the covenant of her God before her husband's eyes. So you pretend so much for God before company, and yet in private you will presume to sin before His face. He sees you, and your conscience knows that right well.

There are at the least three horrible sins which now you commit at once.

First, that very sin which you would so conceal; and perhaps it may be a sin of the deepest dye. Yea, mark this, that usually the most damnable sins are such which are committed in secret, as Sodom's adulteries, and such fearful kinds of pollutions, and murders, and treasons, etc.

Second, hypocrisy, which is a screen to your sin, a holy cover for an unholy heart and practice, which makes the sinner so much the more vile in God's eyes, by how much the more that he not only sins against God, but wrests (as it were) something from God to cover and palliate his rebellion against Him.

A third is atheism. If there is not formal atheism, yet, there is a virtual atheism, as if God were not God in secret, but only in public, that He could see in the

light and not in the darkness; that His eye is as the eye of a man only, whereas He is a universal eye, and is a Light without all darkness.

2. *The principle of sinning is secret and common to every man.*

The motions of sinning are not like the motions of a bowl, which runs only by the virtue of an imprinted strength; they are not violent motions, whose cause is only extrinsical, but they are natural motions, whose principle is within the subject: "Out of the heart (said Christ) proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, malice, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; all these evil things come from within, and defile the man," Mark 7:21-23. The nature which tempts you, that nature is in you. It is the womb of many and infinite sinful corruptions and imaginations. It casts out wickedness as the fountain casts forth water. It is very true that outward occasions, and Satan by his suggestions, may assist and quicken original corruption, as the bellows may enflame the fire, yet the fire has heat and an aptness naturally to burn. So original corruption, though it may grow monstrously active by temptations from abroad, yet it can and does incline us, and can beget private actings of horrible sins from its own native strength; it can send out several forms of sinning and incline us to contemplate them, yea, to contrive the singular methods of transgression; yea, it can feed the soul with wonderful delights in them, so that in the eye of God, the sinnings are formed and fashioned, and ripened with most odious perfections.

3. *There is a depth of hypocrisy in the souls of men, whose proper work is to have a secret way contrary to an open profession; as a player who takes on him to act the part of a King, yet in his private and absolute way, he may be a person of most ignoble birth and unworthy qualities; so it is with the hypocrite.*

Divines distinguish three sorts of hypocrisy:

One is natural, and has footing in every man. Even the most upright heart has in it some hypocrisy, and he sometimes seems to be that which he is not; he may be sometimes more full in his profession than he is indeed in his actions.

Another is foul and gross, which is when a man's heart is not at all what it seems to be unto the world. Christ compares persons guilty of it to whited sepulchres which within are full of dead and rotten bones; as when a man shall profess he loves God and Christ and His ways, and yet secretly condemns and hates holiness and resists the motions of God's Spirit, and is at defiance with all the heavenly rules of life and powerful obedience.

A third is formal, when a man not only deceives others with a show of what is not in him, but also deceives and cheats his own heart with a persuasion of his own happiness—partly from some specials which he finds in himself above others, and partly from the pride of his own spirit joined with an affectation of happiness; yea, all the while his heart keeps a haunt of some private lust and ungodliness; there is some sweet morsel under his tongue with which he will not part.

4. *Outward occasions can incline to secret sinnings.* Beloved, there lies a snare almost against us in all

society. We have such vile natures that as a spark of fire will easily kindle a box of tinder. So but a word spoken, many times, kindles a world of passion, of malice, of revenge within us; yea, the misplacing of a look begets in us secret disdain and discontent; yea, the casting of an eye may enflame the heart with excess of lust. Need we not then (putting all these things together) to search our inward frame to see what care we have about and against secret sinnings? But you will say, "How may a man know whether he desires truly to be cleansed from secret sins?"

I will give unto you some observations for this—first negatively; then, second, positively.

The Negative Discoveries

The negative discoveries, those by which a man may know that he does not desire to be cleansed from secret sins, are these:

1. When the principal restraint of his sinnings is terminated only in man. Beloved, really our conversing is either with God, or with ourselves, or with men; and answerable to these, there are three several reasons of forbearing sin: either because of God, whose will and holiness is injured; or else because of our conscience, because our secret quiet and ease shall be interrupted; or else because if we should adventure to sin, we should hazard our estimations and estates and safeties, and incur ignominy, blame, shame, punishment, and loss with men.

Now, mark it. When respect to man is the only

reason why I forbear sin, I am all this while loose and unconscionable in the inward frame. All my care is taken up about those actions and carriages which fall under the eye and judgment of man; and none but the visible and open actings of sin break out that way. If I forbear sin for man's sake, that men may esteem well of me and not censure or punish me, I therefore so far restrain sin as it may not be visible, but I do not strive against it because it is sinful; I say, not because the thing is sinful before God, but only because it is culpable before man. Now try yourselves in this: What is the restraint of your sinning? Suppose all men in the world were in a deep sleep, suppose that no eye saw you, suppose that no tongue of human justice would call you to account; would not your heart then, with full sail, spread out itself? Would you not now, like the lions in the night, wander about for your prey? Would not your heart turn out itself, drive out its secret inclinations? Would you not do that in any place which now you committed in secret corners?

2. When the hindrance of secret sinnings are a burden, they are crosses. A man does not desire to go out of the way for his delight. He is not weary of his affection, for delight is endless and unsatisfied: though the body may be wearied, yet the affection of delight is never wearied. Now brethren, a man may know his delights by his crosses. If I attain not that which I respect not, I am not moved; but if my spirit rise and swell and rage, or if I grieve and complain and am sad because of an impediment of something which has clapped in itself between me and my desires, this shows that I had a delight in it, that I

would gladly have had it. Now let me apply this to our business in hand. God, many times, hinders the sinner; He does step in by His providence and prevent him from increasing his guilt. He puts forth some accident, some impediment or other which stands between the intention of sin and the execution of it. The sinner has contrived and plotted the time and place and the manner of the sinning, but God (who overrules all) has disappointed him by the unexpectedness of other company or some other occurrence, or sudden sickness or misadventure. If now the heart grows into Ahab's turbulent fits, it is a sign it would have had Naboth's vineyard. If the hindrance of the sinful fact, whether open or secret, is a grief to you, this shows the bent of your heart to the sin; but I pass on.

3. When the nature of sin is no burden, but some particular actings are. As Joab said to David when he observed his sorrow for Absalom, "I perceive (said he, 2 Samuel 19:6) that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased them well." So here, when the main trouble is for some actions irregularly starting out to the world, and not for the nature, which is a cause of that and all other sinful actings, this shows that our eye is outward and not inward.

Brethren, mistake me not, I do not mean that sinful actions should escape our tears; nay, verily all our sinful births and broods naturally call for sorrow and humblings; and the more sinful any explicit act is, the more dishonor God has by it, the more scandal religion suffers by it. Therefore, I say, the more sorrows and tears should we cast after it;

but then know, that according to the guilty quality, according to the proportion of it should be the answerableness of our grief and perplexity. Am I grieved for a rash and hasty word and not for a passionate and violent nature? Am I troubled for an unclean gesture or act and not for an unclean heart? Am I perplexed for a lie by my tongue and not for an evil and false heart? Verily then my eye is not on God, but man. It is not upon secret sins, but only upon open and manifest sins.

4. When we cannot abide the spiritual efficacy and inward searchings of the Word. Beloved, "the Word of God is quick and powerful, a two-edged sword, it divides between the joints and the marrow, it is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart," Hebrews 4:12. You find it to be so, that it comes into your closet; it finds you out in your most secret way of sinning; it follows you into the most dark corners; it pierces into the imaginations and plots which you never yet brought out to the sun; it tells you of your very desires and affections, what you like most, crave most, do most. Now what do your hearts say? How do they bestir themselves when they find the Word haunt and pursue them, when they observe it come and close with the secret windings and turnings? Do you not strive to keep out the light? Do you not hold it off as they do the enemy in a siege in the out-works, that he might not break into the heart of the city? Would you not be spared, unsearched? Nay, you cannot endure the Word which comes to your private sinful gains and to your private sinful pleasures; you will not endure to be ordered how to think and how to desire. If it be so,