

A Secret Virtue and Power

by Thomas Brooks

The secret virtue and power of closet-duties is the ability to weaken one's beloved corruption and break the strength of one's special sin, leading to communion with God.

Scripture: Exodus 32:19-20, Isaiah 2:20, Isaiah 30:22, Hosea 14:8, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5

Topics: "Communion with God", "Idolatry and Sin"

Description

Thomas Brooks emphasizes the transformative power of private communion with God, illustrating how such intimacy leads to a profound hatred for sin and idolatry. He argues that true fellowship with God ignites a fierce indignation against one's cherished sins, compelling believers to cast away their idols, much like the Israelites did with their golden calf. Brooks highlights that through secret prayer, Christians gain strength to confront and overcome their most beloved sins, ultimately finding greater joy and satisfaction in God than in any earthly treasure. He encourages believers to seek this communion, as it is the key to spiritual victory and deeper understanding of God's truth. The sermon calls for a radical rejection of sin, urging that nothing is worth sacrificing one's eternal destiny.

Transcript

When a man finds such a secret virtue and power running through his closet-duties--as wounds and weakens his beloved corruption, as breaks the strength and the power of his special sin, as sets his heart more fully, resolutely, and constantly against his darling lust, as stirs up a greater rage, and a more bitter hatred, and a more fierce indignation against the toad in the bosom--then certainly he has had communion with God.

Isaiah 2:20, "In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they have made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats." In the day wherein God should take these poor hearts into communion with Himself, their hearts should be filled with such rage and indignation against their most delectable and desirable idols, that they should take not only those made of trees and stones--but even their most precious and costly idols, those who were made of silver and gold, and cast them to the moles and to the bats, to note their horrible hatred and indignation against them. Idolatry was the darling-sin of the Jews; their hearts were so exceedingly affected and delighted with their idols, that they did not care what they spent upon them: Isaiah 46:6, "They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith, and he makes it a God: they fall down, yes, they worship it." The word here used for lavish, in the Hebrew, signifies properly to waste, or spend riotously; they set so

light by their treasure, that they cared not what they spent upon their idols. God gave them gold and silver as pledges of His favor and bounty, and they lavish it out upon their idols, as if God had hired them to be wicked.

Oh, but when God should come and take these poor wretches into a close and near communion with Himself, then you shall find their wrath and rage to rise against their idols, as you may see in that Isaiah 30:19-21. Their communion with God is more than hinted; but mark, Isaiah 30:22, "Then you will defile your idols overlaid with silver and your images covered with gold; you will throw them away like a menstrual cloth and say to them--Away with you!" None defile, deface, detest, and disgrace their idols like those who are taken into communion with God. Fellowship with God will make a man cast away, as a menstruous cloth, those very idols, in which he has most delighted, and with which he has been most pleased and enamored.

Idols were Ephraim's bosom-sin. Hosea 4:17, "Ephraim is joined," or glued, as the Hebrew has it, "to idols; let him alone." Oh! but when you find Ephraim taken into close communion with God, as you do in that Hosea 14:4-7, then you shall find another spirit upon him: Hosea 14:8, "Ephraim shall say, what have I to do any more with idols?" I have had too much to do with them already, I will never have to do with them any more. Oh! how does my soul detest and abhor them, and rise up against them. Oh! how do I now more loathe and abominate them, than ever I have formerly loved them, or delighted in them. After the return of the Jews out of Babylon, they so hated and abhorred idols, that in the time of the Romans they chose rather to die, than allow the eagle, which was the imperial insignia, to be set up in their temple.

Though closet-duties are weak in themselves--yet when a man has communion with God in them, then they prove exceedingly powerful to the casting down of strongholds, and vain imaginations, and every high thing and thought, which exalts itself against the knowledge of God, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. When a man comes out of his closet with a heart more fully and steadfastly set against every known sin--but especially against his bosom-sin, his darling-sin, his Delilah which he played and sported himself most with, and which he has hugged with pleasure and delight in his bosom--then certainly he has had private communion with God.

After Moses had enjoyed forty days' private communion with God in the mount, how did his heart rise, and his anger wax hot against the molten calf that his people had made! Exodus 32:19-20, "When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain. And he took the calf they had made and burned it in the fire; then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it." Moses had never more intimate fellowship with God than now, and he never exhibited so much holy zeal, anger, and indignation against sin as now.

When a man comes off from the mount of closet-duties with a greater hatred, anger, wrath, and indignation against bosom-sins, darling-sins, complexion-sins, which were once as dear to him as right hands or right eyes, or as Delilah was to Samson, or Herodias to Herod, or Isaac to Abraham, or Joseph to Jacob, then certainly he has had communion with God in those duties. When a man finds his beloved sins, his Delilahs, which, like the prince of devils, command all other sins, to fall before his closet-duties, as Dagon fell before the ark, or as Goliath fell before David--then assuredly he has had fellowship with God in them.

Pliny writes of some families which had secret marks on their bodies, peculiar to those of that line. Certainly, there are no people--but have some sin or sins; some secret marks on their souls, that may in a peculiar way be called theirs. Now when in private duties they find the bent of their hearts, and the purposes, resolutions, and inclinations of their souls more raised, inflamed, and set against these, they may safely and comfortably conclude, that they have had communion with God in them.

O sirs! there is no no bosom-sin so sweet or profitable, that is worth burning in hell for, or worth shutting out of heaven for; and therefore, in all your private duties and services, labor after that communion with God in them, that may break the neck and heart of your most bosom-sins. When Darius fled before Alexander, that he might run the faster out of danger, he threw away his massive crown from his head. As ever you would be safe from eternal danger, throw away your golden and your silver idols, throw away your bosom-sins, your darling lusts.

Man's whole life is but a lingering death; man

no sooner begins to live--but he begins to die.

Secret prayer sweetly inclines and strongly disposes

a Christian to all other pious duties and services.

Private prayer is a golden key to unlock the mysteries

of the word unto us. The knowledge of many choice and

blessed truths, are but the returns of private prayer. The

Word dwells most richly in their hearts--who are most in

pouring out their hearts before God in their closets.

Certainly that Christian, who in private prayer lies most

at the feet of Jesus Christ--he shall understand most of

the mind of Christ in the gospel, and he shall have most

of heaven and the things of his own peace brought down

into his heart.

There is no service wherein Christians have such a near,

familiar, and friendly fellowship with God as in private

prayer; neither is there any service wherein God does

more delight to make known His truth and faithfulness,

His grace and goodness, His mercy and bounty, His

beauty and glory to poor souls, than in secret prayer.

Private prayer crowns God with the honor and glory which are due to His name; and God crowns private prayer with a revelation of those blessed weighty truths to his servants, that are a sealed book to others.

One hour's communion with God in one's closet, is to be preferred before the greatest and best company in the world.

A man whose soul is conversant with God in a closet, in a hole, behind the door, or in a desert, a den, a dungeon--shall find more real pleasure, more choice delight, and more full contentment, than in the palace of a prince.

Our heavenly Father hears and observes our private prayers, and bottles up all our secret tears. He is not a stranger to our closet desires, wrestlings, breathings, hungerings, and thirstings. He loves to lade the wings of private prayer with the sweetest, choicest, and chief blessings. Saints often meet with the best wine and with the strongest cordials--when they are all alone with God.

All tears will never be totally wiped from our eyes, until all sin is totally taken out of our hearts.

The very soul of prayer lies in the pouring out of a man's soul into the bosom of God. Prayer is nothing but the breathing out before the Lord, that which was first breathed into us by the Spirit of the Lord. Prayer is nothing but a choice, a free, a sweet, and familiar fellowship of the soul with God.

Some saints have never had so much of heaven brought down into their hearts, as when they have been with God in private prayer. Oh the secret manifestations of divine love, the secret kisses, the secret embraces, the secret influences, the secret communion with God, that many a precious Christian has had in the most solitary places.

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