

The Inward Conflict

by Thomas Reade

The sermon explores the inward conflict faced by believers, emphasizing the struggle against sin and the necessity of relying on God's grace for victory and peace.

Scripture: Romans 7:18, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Philippians 4:6, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8

Topics: "Sanctification", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

Thomas Reade preaches about the inward conflict experienced by believers, highlighting the constant struggle between the desire to do good and the inability to carry it out due to the sinful nature. He emphasizes the various trials and temptations believers face, the sanctifying work of the Spirit in turning darkness into light, and the need for constant reliance on God's grace and strength to overcome. Reade encourages believers to seek sanctification, to be watchful and prayerful, and to find peace and purity in Christ through faith, humility, and love.

Transcript

29. THE INWARD CONFLICT

"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out." Romans 7:18

How varied is the life of the true believer. At one time on the mount, at another time in the valley. Sometimes he can rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, at other times, he groans being burdened, and is almost tempted to say with David, "I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul." There are seasons of peculiar mental distress with which the tried believer is alone acquainted. At such a season, it seems as if Satan were let loose upon his soul to agonize it with his fiery darts; as if the foul sediment of inbred corruption were stirred up from the very bottom of his heart.

When the Christian would fondly enjoy the tranquil delights of peace and spiritual consolation, how often is he constrained to say-

"Instead of this, he made me feel,

The hidden evils of my heart,

And let the angry powers of hell

Assault my soul in every part."

Can he be easy under such distressing experience? Oh! no!

"Lord, why is this, I trembling cried,

Will you pursue your worm until death?"

Hear, O my soul, the gracious answer, so accordant with the revealed word-

"This is this way, the Lord replied,

I answer prayer for grace and faith."

If you should ask; Why in this way so painful to endure? "These inward trials I employ,

From self and pride to set you free,

And break your schemes of earthly joy,

That you may seek your all in me.

This is indeed a trying dispensation; but even this inward conflict, painful as it is, is often sanctified to us by that divine Spirit, who can turn our darkness into light, and make crooked things straight. What Satan intends for evil, the God of love and power can overrule for good.

When the believer, through neglect of watchfulness and prayer, has fallen into a state of spiritual apathy; when the cursed leaven of self-love and self-righteousness have secretly been working their way into his duties; when the world has, by insensible degrees, gotten a hold upon his heart; then some sudden assault of the Devil sets his soul in alarm. Awakened by his fears, he is driven to earnest prayer. His rebel lusts, now in arms, and led on by Satan, threaten to overcome him. Terrified, and overwhelmed at the sight of his sins, and at his utter inability to help himself, he cries out in the agony of his soul; "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He loathes and abhors himself. He seeks for pardoning mercy at the cross of Christ. And there he obtains forgiveness, and comes off more than conqueror, through him who loved him and gave himself for him. "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," is his song of triumph.

The believer, by these repeated struggles, is convinced of his constant liability to Satan's temptations; of the proneness of his heart to depart from God; and of his daily need of sanctifying, sustaining grace. His language now is-

Prone to wander, Lord I feel it,

Prone to leave the God I love;

Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it,

Seal it from your courts above."

By trials inward and outward, the children of God are taught, that this poor world is not their rest, because it is polluted; that they are traveling through an enemy's country; that they must fight their way to glory, as

good soldiers of Jesus Christ, remembering that he, and he only who overcomes, shall obtain the crown.

Happy is he who learns wisdom from his own trials, and those of others. Oh! that my spiritual armor may be always bright. Indolence and supineness is the rust which blunts the edge of the sword, and gives the enemy an advantage over us. I know that my foes are mighty, but my Redeemer is almighty. I know that I am weak, but my Savior's grace is all-sufficient. Oh! that I had faith, strong faith, to lay hold upon his promised aid. Then would I put my enemies to flight; for the encouragement to the fighting Christian is, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Let me never forget, that if I yield to a small temptation, the enemy will present one more powerful, as my spiritual strength will be weakened to resist it. Thus, by degrees, and often rapidly, the unwatchful Christian is hurried into frightful sins.

God does not will the death of a sinner. He does not will that any should perish. His pathetic exclamation by the Prophet is- "Why will you die?" How strange, that any creature should be so infatuated, as to reject the gracious offers of pardon and peace, when God incarnate, crucified and slain, and now risen and glorified, stands with outstretched arms, with arms of love and pity, to receive and bless us forever! Yet such a creature am I! O my soul, be ashamed and confounded in the dust. You, even you, would still reject this bleeding love, if God himself had not first loved you, and drawn your affections through the sweetest, softest influence, to choose Him for your portion, and seek your all in Him. Oh! wondrous Love! Oh! love beyond degree! Lord, shed more and more of this love abroad in my heart. Give me more of your blessed Spirit's grace and influence. Subdue my rebel lusts. Preserve me from the attacks of Satan, from self-sufficiency and pride. Keep me humble, watchful, and thankful; pure, meek, and holy. Defend me from the contagion of a wicked world, from the fear of man, from all dissimulation, hypocrisy, and deceit. Make me simple and sincere, upright and without duplicity before you. Cause me to abound yet more and more in knowledge, faith, and love, until all my powers are perfected in glory.

Sin is the dishonor, the disease, the death of the soul. It brings, in this world, disgrace and condemnation; and in the next, shame and everlasting torment. Oh! how I long for entire sanctification. Blessed Jesus, you alone can wash away my crimson sin. Nothing but your precious blood can remove the foul pollution. To you I come, to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Lord, plunge me beneath this sacred flood, that I may come out of it pure and clean.

Oh! Almighty Purifier, Oh, eternal Spirit of Holiness, sit upon my soul as a refiner's fire. Kindle a flame of love in my heart, that may burn to your glory. Allow me to see the preciousness of Jesus, his beauty and adorable perfections. Enable me to walk in his footsteps, to copy his example, to delight in his commandments. Root out of my heart all pride and worldly lust, and implant in their stead, humility and a heavenly mind. Give me a relish for spiritual employments, holy meditation, and fervent love.

"Faint, yet pursuing," was the state of Israel of old. I feel my spiritual weakness. How difficult it is to have the mind wholly fixed upon God. The clouds are not so shifting, nor the winds so fleeting, as my thoughts. I try to fix them upon heavenly things; for a few moments they seem to settle upon objects of eternal interest, and then they slide insensibly away, until starting as from a reverie, I am grieved to find, that my thoughts have wandered to the ends of the earth. Oh! the deceitfulness and instability of the heart!

Blessed Jesus, bind my heart to your Cross with the cords of love. Let not the enemy allure my affections from you, or fill my mind with vain imaginations. Let me be wholly taken up with you. Enable me to keep eternity in view; to live and act as one who must shortly appear in your presence. O blessed expectation to the true believer! Do I love your appearing? Am I longing to behold you without a veil between? Then shall

I be admitted into your presence, where is fullness of joy. But, have I truly believed on the Son of God? Am I united by faith to the living Vine? Do I daily receive the vivifying sap, the grace of the Savior, that I may bear the fruits of holiness? Has the Spirit sealed me unto the day of redemption?

Blessed Lord! make this sure to my soul by your inward work of grace, and by my outward conformity to your will. I wait upon you. You have promised to bless the waiting soul. Your word is truth. Then I will trust and not be afraid, for You, You only, are my salvation.

"I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out." What swarms, not only of wandering, but of foolish thoughts, crowd into the mind, when we want to be abstracted from the world and wrapped up in holy meditation. All this proves the depravity of the heart, and shows what corrupt creatures we must appear in the sight of God, when we appear so vile in our own.

What a blessing it is to know that this spiritual malady may be healed; that Jesus came into the world to save the lost. All are sick unto death. All, are lost. But Jesus, the kind Physician, the good Shepherd, has come to raise the dead, and to restore the lost. Hasten, then, O sinner, to this adorable friend. He has said, "Come unto me," yes, he has given you this blessed assurance, that him that comes, he will never cast out. Why then, this backwardness to come to Jesus? He is the tenderest of Friends, the most ready of Benefactors. Let him not have to say in your case, "You will not come to me, that you might have life."

Ah! but he has declared- "No man can come to me, except the Father, who has sent me, draws him." And why can you not come? It arises, not from any secret decree which foreordains your destruction, and presents an impenetrable barrier to your approach to the Savior; but it springs altogether from yourself. Unbelief, pride, prejudice, the love of sin, and the love of the world, the fear of man, and carnal security, keep you from closing in with the offers of salvation. In the day of judgment every mouth shall be stopped, and the whole world shall become guilty before God. No excuses will then be made, which now pacify the conscience. No pleas will then be put forward in arrest of judgment, which now lull the sinner to sleep on the lap of carnal security. All shall then acknowledge the justice of the sentence; "Depart from me, you cursed ones, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Remember, O sinner, that the very circumstance of your not being able to come of yourself to the gracious Savior, proves you to be a child of the Fall, and in a state of guilt and misery, since it arises solely from the rebelliousness of your will, and the total alienation of your heart from God. Beware, then, lest you make this moral inability, which is the fruit of the Fall, an excuse for keeping you away from Christ. Rather say, I cannot, because I will not. My stubborn will, like a chain, binds me to sin and Satan, and nothing but almighty power can set me free. Under this deep conviction of your lost and undone condition, cry fervently to the compassionate Savior, that he would plead his precious blood in your behalf before the eternal throne, that the Father of mercies may send the Holy Spirit into your heart, to lead you to the Cross; and there by uniting you to the blessed Jesus, cause you to triumph over the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God.

This is the way, the only way to obtain peace and purity, when pardon is sealed to the conscience by the Holy Spirit. Yes! when Jesus says, "Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven," then the Comforter sheds abroad the love of God in the heart; a sweet peace is enjoyed in the soul, and purity reigns within. Oh! how happy is such a believer. Worlds cannot purchase his inestimable blessings. He beholds the 'treasures of earth' as the dust beneath his feet, when he compares them with the love of his Savior, and an assured hope of heaven.

Lord give me this willing heart to come to you; this humble faith to receive you; this holy love to rejoice in you; this full assurance of hope that I shall reign with you forever. Then will my joy be full; I shall glory in tribulation, and daily experience the felicity of Paul, which his own words so feelingly express, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

Inward calmness I desired,

Hope, this pleasing dream, inspired,

Long, I sought from earth to gain,

Joy, which earth could not contain.

Conscience filled me with dismay,

Fear consumed me night and day

All my sins, before me spread,

Seized my soul with guilty dread.

More, I panted for repose,

More, I added to my woes;

If a calm appeared to reign,

Guilt awoke the storm again.

Without Jesus- far from peace,

Wandering through this barren place,

Often I said with deepest sigh,

Sinner, you are doomed to die.

Precious Savior! heavenly Friend!

All my wanderings You did end

From your Cross, Salvation flows,

There I find a sweet repose.

There, by precious blood divine,

Cleansed from sin, and sealed thine,

Justice did my debt remove,

Cancelled by Eternal Love.

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