

The Burden of Sin Deplored

by Thomas Reade

The sermon explores the profound burden of sin, the necessity of true repentance, and the pursuit of holiness in the life of a believer.

Scripture: Exodus 14:15, Matthew 22:37, 1 Corinthians 13:4, 2 Corinthians 5:4, Philippians 3:12, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:2, Revelation 2:10, Revelation 3:21

Topics: "True Repentance", "Christian Holiness"

Description

Thomas Reade preaches about the burden of sin, highlighting how both the worldly-minded and the formalist can be insensible to the evil of sin, despite outward expressions of repentance. He emphasizes the importance of true repentance, groaning under the weight of sin, and the need for genuine love for God and others. Reade also addresses the dangers of self-righteousness, idolatry, and the misuse of ecclesiastical authority, contrasting it with the true authority of Christ. He urges believers to strive for holiness, to love God wholeheartedly, and to press on towards perfection in Christ, relying on His grace and mercy.

Transcript

31. THE BURDEN OF SIN DEPLORED

"For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened." 2 Cor. 5:4

The worldly-minded professor and the formalist, are alike insensible to the evil of sin. With their lips, indeed, they can say, "We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings. The remembrance of them is grievous unto us, the burden of them is intolerable," while they neither feel sorrow for sin, nor groan under the weight of it. From the table of the Lord, the one can pursue his pleasures, and the other his covetous desires. The one clothes his vices with specious names; the other covers the evil of his heart with a punctilious observance of outward duties. Both stand on the same level in the sight of God, though each despises the other. The formalist considers the worldling as profane; the worldling views the formalist as hypocritical. Pride reigns in both. The love of God dwells in neither.

If we calmly survey what passes around us, we cannot but be pained, if taught of God, to see what trouble people take to impose upon themselves. Everyone has some excuse to make for what he does. If you speak to a man of the world, he will soon tell you, that it will not do to be singular; that we must conform to the maxims, customs, and fashions of the world, if we would avoid the odious name of 'saint'.

If you converse with the formalist, he will extol, as of the first importance, the rites and ceremonies of his Church, while he sneers at experimental religion, the religion of the heart, as being enthusiastic, and carrying things too far. Even among real Christians, those, whose hearts have been converted to God, but differing from each other on some points of church discipline and government, we too often see a lamentable lack of that charity, which is the bond of perfectness. This is truly a mournful sight! Oh! that the enemies of the Gospel could say of us, as the persecutors of the Church once did, "See how these Christians love one another."

Few, alas! in this evil day, when divisions distract the Church of Christ, are able, in a spirit of brotherly love, and Christian fellowship, to unite with Paul in his Catholic prayer; "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." The extreme of all parties seize upon the keys in a spirit of Popedom, and open or close the door of admission into the Church, as they think proper. There is a Pope in every heart. How many are turned out of the church, whom Christ will own when he makes up his jewels. Oh! what an unspeakable blessing it is to know, and to feel assured, upon the inspired truth of God, that Christ alone holds the keys of Sovereign Authority and Power. "All power," said he, "is given unto me in heaven and in earth." "I am the first and the last; I am he that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." "These things says he that is holy, he that is true, he that has the key of David, he that opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens."

It may be replied; Did not our Lord say to Peter- "I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." He did, and Peter was peculiarly honored in being the first to open the door into the Christian Church, both to Jews and Gentiles. On the day of Pentecost, through his preaching, three thousand souls were added to the Church, from among the assembled Jews at Jerusalem. And, in the house of Cornelius, the Holy Spirit was imparted, and repentance unto life was granted to the Gentile company, who also heard from the lips of Peter the words of eternal life.

Peter, in common with the other Apostles, was inspired to declare the will of God, which should be binding on the Church in every age. To him, as well as to the rest of the Apostles, was given power to exercise a salutary discipline in the Church, and to separate from it, heinous offenders. This being done, according to the revealed Will of God, would be ratified in heaven.

Paul, "called to be an Apostle," though, as he expresses it, "as one born out of due time," had an equal commission with the twelve. He used this apostolic authority in the Church of Corinth, by cutting off, for a time, an offending member. "Also in the Church of Thessalonica. The same discipline he exercised over Hymeneus and Alexander. The power thus delegated by our Lord, as Head of his Church, was not for destruction, but for edification. Peter, therefore, writes, "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers--not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock." So also writes Paul; "To spare you, I came not as yet unto Corinth. Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy." "I may seem to be boasting too much about the authority given to us by the Lord. But this authority is to build you up, not to tear you down."

These passages clearly show how the Apostles used the keys of authority in the Church, and expose the arrogant pretensions of the Church of Rome, as if she were the sole proprietress of the keys, the mother and mistress of all churches, and the Pope, the successor of Peter, and the Sovereign Pontiff, to open and shut the kingdom of heaven as he pleases. Instead of employing ecclesiastical authority for the edification

of the Church, the Papal Hierarchy employs it for the sole purpose of establishing their own power, of filling their own coffers, and of persecuting even unto death (when able so to do) the saints of the Most High, who dare not conform to their idolatrous rites, nor receive their anti-Christian dogmas.

Instead of teaching her sinful members to look unto Jesus for pardon and peace, and to trust only in the merits of his blood for acceptance with God, who fulfilled all the righteousness of the law for us; she sends them to the Priest, who, at the confessional, puts himself in the place of God, and then absolves them in the plenitude of his power. They return pacified in their consciences, by this priestly quietus, regardless of the One Atonement which Christ made for sin.

Instead of directing her members to the great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, who ever lives to make intercession for us, and whose intercession alone can prevail with God; this Apostate Church sends her blinded votaries to the Virgin Mary, as "the Mother of divine grace," "the Queen of all saints" thus lowering the majesty and glory of the Son of God, the Savior of the world. And, as if this did not sufficiently eclipse the Sun of Righteousness, she multiplies her intercessors, and fills her sanctuaries with the images of her idol saints!

Happy would it be, if many in the Protestant Church did not tread so near the multiplied errors of the Church of Rome. We are ever prone to extremes. There is a danger of undervaluing the blessed instituted sacraments of our Lord; and there is also a danger of unduly exalting them, beyond the design for which they were appointed. The only fountain of grace is God in Christ. All grace flows down to, us from the ever adorable Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Neither creatures nor sacraments have any inherent virtue in themselves to confer grace, They are not the fountain, but channels or golden pipes, through which the golden oil of grace is conveyed to the believing soul, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Without faith in the heart of the recipient the Holy Communion of the body and blood of Christ, will be but an empty channel, through which no living water will pass to the soul.

Oh! what a blessing it is to be a Bible Christian, to bear the Image of Christ, to be a temple of the Holy Spirit. Without this, no forms of religion, however excellent; no Church, however pure, to which we may have nominally belonged, can help us when Christ comes to judgment. We may then say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name?...and in your name done many wonderful works?" but the Great Searcher of hearts will answer- "I never knew you; depart from me, you that work iniquity." We may now loftily exclaim, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we", but, at the righteous revelation of God, we shall be found to be no better than heathen temples, in which the idols of self-righteousness, pride, and persecuting zeal have had the homage of our hearts.

Oh! my soul, in the midst of abounding iniquity, in the midst of errors and heresies, keep near to your Almighty Savior. I groan, being burdened with a body of sin and death. How long shall vain thoughts lodge within me? Oh! that they may be forever removed. I trust I can say- "I hate vain thoughts," and yet, alas! how they swarm, at times, like locusts, darkening the air, and devouring every green herb of the field. It was said by the Prophet, "O, Jerusalem! will you not be made clean? when shall it once be?" Lord, make me clean, even now. Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me. Holiness is happiness. I want to feel every evil motion subdued, every thing contrary to the will of God entirely done away. I know that there is no arriving at sinless perfection in this life.

But, perfection is the Christian's aim. It was Paul's desire for his converts; "This also we wish, even your perfection." An absolute freedom from all sin, in mind, affection, will, and conduct, forms one of the glories

of heaven, where, in the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, will be gathered, the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and the spirits of just men made perfect. There they shall be arrayed in linen, white and clean, which is the righteousness of saints. Their sanctification will then be complete when they see Jesus, and are made like him in the perfection of holiness.

Is there a point at which the Christian may stop striving? No, there is not. While running the heavenly race, we must forget the things which are behind, and reach forth unto those things which are before, and thus press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. "As many as be perfect," all who have attained to a ripeness in Christian graces, and who have come to "full age" in Christian experience, will be thus minded.

The two great commandments are, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself." Where is the soul in this corrupted world, who, before conversion, truly loved the Lord? The question will be intuitively answered, "It cannot be found." And where is the soul who, after conversion, has never had occasion for one moment to mourn over cold affections, or wandering desires after earthly things? Where is the man who can boldly affirm, I have never, since the hour of my conversion, in any one instance, sinned against God. He who can say so is lamentably ignorant of himself.

Oh! that I may have grace to humble myself in the presence of Him who looks at the heart. I have no ground for self-complacency, no reason for self-exultation. I have daily cause for mourning when I review my own heart- that vile, deceitful, hateful thing. And yet, I have daily cause to rejoice in the Lord, whose faithfulness and truth, whose forbearance and patience, whose pity and love, are like himself, infinite, unbounded, unsearchable.

Oh! that I had a vigorous, lively, active, faith. This, like the strong west wind in Egypt, which drove the locusts into the Red Sea, would drive away the hated evils from my heart. Guilty fears, painful apprehensions, dire forebodings, misgiving thoughts, anxious cares, tumultuous imaginations, with all the swarms of worldly lusts, carnal desires, and whatever else is formed and fostered in my wretched heart, would then be all destroyed like Pharaoh's army, through the almighty power of Jesus.

Be glorified, O Lord, in my complete deliverance from the bondage of corruption and the dominion of sin. Fill me with spiritual light. Bring me into the glorious liberty of the Gospel, and at last conduct me safely through the Jordan of death into the celestial Canaan. While a sojourner in the wilderness, guide me by the pillar of fire; screen me with the overshadowing cloud; feed me with the heavenly manna; refresh me with the waters from the smitten rock. Give me a holy courage in your cause, a holy confidence in your mercy, a holy consolation in your exceeding great and precious promises. Strengthen me to fight manfully under the banner of the Cross, to face my enemies without fear, knowing that He, who is with me, is greater than all they who are against me. As a good soldier of Jesus Christ, may I have grace continually to advance, never to retreat.

In your divine armory, you have furnished me with the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit, but nothing is provided for the back. The cowardly Christian, who flies from his foes, is exposed to the fiery darts of Satan, and may fall vanquished on the field of battle. "Go forward," was your command to Moses, when Israel was enclosed by mountains, the army of Pharaoh behind them, and the Red Sea before them. They obeyed your word, the waters were

divided, they passed in safety between the liquid walls, they saw their enemies dead on the sea shore, and sang a song of gladness unto the Lord who had triumphed gloriously, who had made the host of Pharaoh to sink as lead in the mighty waters.

Oh! give me grace to "go forward," to follow the Captain of my salvation, strengthened by his promise, "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life."

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