

~Other Speakers M-R: Thomas Reade:

54. EARNEST DESIRES FOR PARDONING AND SANCTIFYING GRACE

"For your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity; for it is great." Psalm. 25:11

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Psalm 51:10

David's plea must be mine; "O Lord pardon my iniquity for it is great." Also the publican's prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner." And Peter's cry, "Lord, save me! or I perish."

With shame and confusion of face I look up unto you, Oh! bleeding Lamb, for having slighted your goodness, and loving-kindness towards me. Take away this earthliness from my mind; this coldness from my heart; this insensibility to the things of God. Preserve me from a secret alienation of heart; from a growing lukewarmness. Do not allow the enemy to triumph over me. Allow me not to fall from you. Adorable Jesus! I acknowledge my vileness, my worthlessness, my ingratitude. But, oh! let me still hope in your mercy; still plead the merit of your blood; still expect your renewing strength; still long, and look, for the visits of your grace. I am a sinner, and you died to save sinners.

You are the Rock of Ages, the everlasting Strength. Endue me with power from on high to overcome all my indwelling corruptions, which, like a thick cloud, intervene between my soul and you, the Sun of Righteousness, and thus prevent the rays of your consolation from gladdening my heart, and making me to abound in the fruits of righteousness. To whom can I look- to whom can I go, but unto You, O Friend of sinners. Lord, I come invited by your word. I come at your sweet call, for pardon, peace, and holiness. You delight to save. O make me willing to be saved in your way, and on your terms. May I have grace to receive salvation as the gift of grace, and to plead for mercy as a lost sinner, through your all-prevailing name and merits.

You, O Jesus, are exalted "to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins;" and shall I not praise you for such infinite love, such abounding grace to the chief of sinners? O give me a heart to praise you. Stir up my languid desires. Inflamm my cold affections. Set my whole soul on fire with holy love. Lord! I am sorely grieved, that I love you so little; that my affections move so slowly towards you. But, you give more grace. O bestow it upon me in richer abundance, that so I may live more to your glory, and to the comfort of my own soul, until joy shall be complete, and love perfected, in your presence and glory.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." What reason I have continually to complain of a barren heart. Did I say barren? Is it not full of evil? And, yet, it is a barren heart still, destitute of that love and humility, and those heavenly affections, which dwell in every child of God. Oh! how I long to be a real, sincere disciple of Jesus Christ. It is easy to make a profession of religion; that may be done by fallen nature; but to possess the Spirit of Christ, can only be enjoyed by those whom Sovereign Grace endues with so great a benefit.

Oh! that I knew how to estimate the blessings of salvation. Lord, enlighten my mind to see more clearly the riches of your grace, the wonders of your love, and the greatness of your mercy, as manifested to perishing sinners, in Christ Jesus. O allow me to taste your goodness, and relish those sublime truths, which are revealed in your holy word. How painful, that I should be so little affected by the agony and bloody sweat, the cross and passion, of my suffering Redeemer. Why is not my soul all on fire, when I think of your love? Why is it not melted into tears, when I think of my dying Savior? Am I harder than the rock in Horeb? Colder than the northern ice? Lord! smite my rocky heart with the rod of your loving-kindness; dissolve my frozen affections, by the melting beams of your grace.

Ah! "When shall I be made clean? when shall it once be." Lord grant that it may be Now. This night I may be in eternity. O! blessed Jesus, hasten your glorious work of sanctification in my soul. Alas! what cause have I to complain of that dead sea which lies within. Oh! that the living waters from the sanctuary may flow into my corrupted heart; that pure streams may constantly issue from it into my life and conversation.

How distressing are evil thoughts. How dreadful is the perception of such subtle wickedness, insinuating itself into the mind, and fixing its abode for days, in opposition to strivings, prayers, and tears! Lord lift up your arm. "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered." Bid the powers of darkness to depart from me; or, if these thoughts arise from the corruption of my fallen nature, O! remove this dreadful cause, by plunging me into the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness; by sitting as a refiner's fire; and by consuming, through your grace,

the dross of sin. Then shall I be holy and happy, peaceful and full of joy.

Your name, blessed Jesus, is SAVIOR, and your work SALVATION. Your office is to save sinners, and your delight is with the sons of men. O then, encouraged by your grace, by your precious promises, and everlasting love; yes, emboldened by the sweetest calls and invitations of your word, I come, blessed Friend of sinners, beseeching you to pardon all my sins; to give me a new heart; to fill me with your heavenly Spirit; and when I shall have served you here on earth, to translate me to your kingdom of glory.

Time is hastening on the wing. Every moment cuts off a portion of my life, and leaves me less time to work out my salvation. I cannot tell how soon I may be called into eternity- an Unchangeable Eternity. My day of grace may speedily draw to its close. Oh! then, be diligent, my soul, be diligent. Work while it is day. Delay not to seek the Savior of sinners. Defer not that work, in comparison of which, all the boasted works of mortals are like painted bubbles, floating on the air. Soon they will burst and vanish away, but the great work of salvation will be commensurate with eternity. If thus to seek for pardoning grace, with ever-longing desire, be esteemed "vile," oh! that with David I may say; "I will yet be more vile."

Blessed Jesus, behold me in mercy, in pity, and in love. Oh! let my wretchedness move your compassion. Was there ever a more miserable object than I?

I am BLIND. Lord open my eyes to behold wondrous things out of your law. Open my understanding to understand the Scriptures. Give me eye-salve that I may see your beauty, and my deformity; your perfection, and my pollution; your preciousness, fitness, fullness, love, and glory, and my own helplessness and nothingness.

I am MUTE. Lord unloose the string which guilt has tied. Enable me to speak your praise; to tell of all your wondrous works; to tell of your everlasting love; your groans, and tears, and blood, shed for the vilest of the vile, even, amazing grace, for me!

I am A HELPLESS CRIPPLE. Oh! heal those bruises which sin has made; heal the bones which sin has broken. Restore me to the joys of your salvation; then shall I walk in the path of your commandments, and not be weary; then shall I run the heavenly race, and not faint; then shall I mount up in heart and affection to you, my adorable Jesus, as on eagle's wings.

I am FULL OF DEADLY DISEASES. Sin has poisoned all the springs of life; polluted all the powers of my soul; and filled me with a dire disease. Oh! great Physician, apply the healing balm of your precious blood; cleanse the thoughts of my heart by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit; and make me a new man, through the healthful Spirit of your grace.

I have LOST THE SENSE OF FEELING. Sin has paralyzed my soul; blunted the edge of my conscience; and hardened my heart. Oh! give me a quick perception of evil, a dread of its approach. May the very breath of sin be nauseous to my soul. May I never rest until the foul corruption be removed; until the inner man be wholly renewed by You.

I am SPIRITUALLY DEAD. This is my state by nature. Though alive and active to evil, I am dead to God and goodness. Though my mind can devise mischief, I am not sufficient of myself, to think a good thought. Oh! You, who are the Resurrection and the Life, bid me come forth from the grave of nature's corruption; bid me live, live to you now, by faith and love; and with you when time shall be no more, in your kingdom of glory.

I am EVERYTHING THAT IS VILE AND WORTHLESS. This I must be, if, by nature I am spiritually blind, and dumb, and helpless, and diseased, and paralyzed, and dead! Oh! divine Emmanuel! You who are the Way, the Truth, and the Life, unite me to Yourself. Then, as viewed in You, I shall be beautiful and lovely in the eyes of my heavenly Father. In you, and clothed with your righteousness, I shall be complete, without spot and blameless. In you I shall be adorned with celestial graces, through the indwelling Spirit of Holiness. Oh! blessed Savior, wash me through your precious blood, that every guilty stain may disappear; then, when presented before the Eternal Father as your ransomed one, and beheld by Him who cannot look upon iniquity, I shall be accepted in You, as my Righteousness, Atonement, and Intercessor, with complacency and favor, and be admitted through You to endless joy and glory.

While a sojourner and pilgrim upon earth, I want to be steadfast in faith, fervent in love, joyful in hope, low in my own eyes, meek in spirit, and pure in heart. These are the graces which constitute and adorn the Christian character. These are the old, the silver, and the precious stones which I would build upon the true and only

foundation— Jesus Christ the Righteous. To Him I would look, as the Author and Finisher of every good and perfect gift, bestowed upon perishing sinners by the Spirit of his grace.

Without your WISDOM I would wander into the mazes of error and heresies; be carried about by every wind of doctrine, and at last make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience.

Without your STRENGTH I would never hold on my way, or hold out to the end, amid the oppositions of the world, the flesh, and the devil. I would shrink from the cross. I would betray my Savior. I would ruin my soul.

Without your RIGHTEOUSNESS, I would forever remain under the curse. I may toil and labor by legal obedience, by ceremonial observances, by fastings and prayers, by mortifications and austerities, but I would still remain unsaved and unblessed. If I seek for justification through these works of the law, I would never find the favor of God. Jesus is the Lord our Righteousness. He alone can present me perfect and complete, clothed in his merits alone. United to Him, all is changed. My works are works of love, not grounds of merit. They are accepted of the Father, through the Son, as fruits of faith and evidences of my adoption into his family.

O! then, None but Christ, none but Christ! He alone, by his Spirit, can enable me to vanquish the powers of darkness, to overcome the corruptions of my heart, to crucify the lustings of the flesh. The worst enemy I have is MYSELF, strange to tell; yet, no less strange than true! I may escape from other enemies, but from this I cannot flee. Wherever I go, SELF still is there. The inbred evil travels with me. I may cross mighty oceans, traverse extensive deserts, plunge into the deepest recesses of the tangled forest, or the caverned earth, yet, in the profoundest solitude, SELF is there. The records of the ancient ascetics fully prove that Satan and inbred sin, are as powerful in the mountain cell as in the crowded city.

None but the harassed, tempest-tossed believer knows the dreadful conflicts between the flesh and the Spirit, between the law in his members and the law of his mind. His cry is; "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I flee away and be at rest!" But soon he feels the vanity of this wish; for even if could he fly on eagle's wings to the earth's remotest bounds, he would carry with him all the evil he deplores. He therefore prays for present grace and strength, for present power to conquer sin, and glorify his Savior in the place and station divine wisdom has appointed for him.

It would not be expedient or fit, that the internal conflict should be minutely described. Those thoughts which, like lightning, dart into the mind, and set the passions on fire, are known only to the tempted believer and the heart-searching God. When hated and resisted, they are temptations, and not sins.

The shield of faith alone can quench these fiery darts of Satan. Happy is the tried believer who can say from the heart, at these distressing seasons; Lord, these vile imaginations are my grief, my burden, yes, the very anguish of my soul. My will rejects them, my heart detests them. You know that I long for deliverance from them. Oh! come blessed Spirit of Holiness, drive these fiends away! Wash me afresh in the Redeemer's blood. Breathe on my dying graces. Make me more vigorous, more alive to You, more actively employed in all good things; then shall Satan find no room for his hellish injections, but heavenly peace and holy joy will reign triumphant in my soul.

O! that this may be the prayer of my heart, in seasons of conflict with indwelling sin. What continual need do I find for the grace of God. Alas when I would do good, evil is present with me. I find it most difficult to keep my thoughts in subjection to the law of Christ, and to prevent my imagination from roving to the ends of the earth, and building ten thousand visionary schemes. How painful to feel the divine principle so weak, and the corrupt principle so strong.

"Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." We are saved, not by presumption, but by a holy fear. Thus says the Lord, "I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Lord implant your fear in my heart, entwined with hope in your love, that, through a living faith in Jesus, I may stand in the evil day, obtain the victory, and receive the crown of life, to the praise of the glory of your grace.

My soul, blessed Savior, pants after thee,
To find You, forms the summit of desire
Your smile can set my mourning spirit free,
Your peace my heart with holy joy inspire.
A wretched wanderer on forbidden ground,
Your Name and Will was long to me unknown;

Desires for Pardoning and Sanctifying Grace

But mercy sought me in this night profound,
And kindly drew me to Yourself alone.
Your voice of love, in accents sweet and mild,
Revealed Salvation in that favored hour;
Your Spirit formed me to a little child,
The seal and witness of your grace and power.
But ah! your patience since that joyful day,
Has borne my languors with a Father's love;
You have I left- ungrateful have I strayed,
Though still my mercies ever faithful prove.
Why do I feel such weakness in my heart?
Such cold affections to my heavenly Friend?
It is not You, blessed Savior- I depart
From You, whose love nor measure knows nor end.
Take pity Lord- Dispel my guilty fear;
Subdue my heart- its hardness now remove.
My soul on Golgotha to You was dear,
I rest, O God, on your Eternal Love.