

FIRST WORDS
TO
YOUNG CHRISTIANS

by

Robert Boyd

THE MOODY PRESS CHICAGO

CHAPTER ELEVEN -

HINDRANCES AND HELPS TO SPIRITUAL MINDEDNESS

If we would possess a spiritual mind, we must avoid living in the indulgence of any known sin.

Sin is the cause of all the misery that exists in our world. It wrings the heart with anguish from the cradle to the grave, and makes every part of our world echo the groans of suffering humanity. It has introduced death, and made of our world a huge sepulchre. It is still emptying earth and peopling perdition. It is our only enemy; for it does that for us which nothing else can, makes us hideous in the sight of GOD.

A man may be ever so poor on earth, and yet be the favorite of GOD. Like Lazarus, and Job, he may be covered with loathsome disease, and yet be fair and lovely in GOD's sight. But sin is the abominable thing that the Lord hates. It is more poisonous than the gall of asps, though men often roll it as a sweet morsel under their tongues.

Men may think lightly of it and call it a trifle, but can that be a trifling thing which causes the GOD of love to curse the work of His own hands, and to banish those for whom He has done so much, from His presence for ever?

Now if such be the nature of sin, there can be no heavenly delights in the heart where it is willingly indulged. If a man is daily doing violence to his conscience, and sinning against the clearest light; if he is in a great measure the slave of his appetite and passions. and refuses to put the curb of restraint upon them; if he is in haste to be rich, and not at all scrupulous about the means by which this is to be attained; in short, if he does not seek to cultivate a conscience that shrinks from the least approach of iniquity,

THICK CLOUDS OF DARKNESS WILL COME

between him and GOD. When he attempts to soar heavenward, he will be like a weak bird that would try to follow the lofty flight of the eagle, but which the tempest beats back panting and nearly lifeless to the earth. He may try to excite his mind, and blow upon his little spark of love, hoping to kindle a flame, but his sin, like water poured upon it, will speedily put it out.

Count Godomar, when near the eternal world, said he feared nothing in the world more than sin; and whatever liberties he had formerly taken, he would rather now submit to be torn to pieces by wild beasts than knowingly or willingly commit any sin against GOD.

The last words of Archbishop Ussher were: "Lord, forgive my sins, especially my sins of omission."

If a professed Christian would rather gossip at home than go to a prayer meeting; if he had rather run to hear fifty sermons than practice one; if he finds it pleasanter to utter harsh criticisms upon his minister than to pray for his success; if he had rather talk about a thousand sins in his neighbors than mortify one in himself; if he can shrink from any duty because it is unpopular, and will bring upon him the world's sneers; in short, if he acts as if he thought that CHRIST was holy to save him from being so, he cannot have a heavenly mind.

He may seem to pray with the earnestness of an Elijah, talk with the feeling of a David, and weep like a Jeremiah, but if he does not strive against sin, as those men did, and act out his convictions of right as they were accustomed to do, there is much reason to fear that he is only a self-deceiver.

Sin indulged will clip the wing of the strongest faith, and cut the sinews of the warmest zeal. GOD's people are to be "**a peculiar people, zealous of good works.**"

If we would cultivate a spiritual mind, we must

SHUN ALL COVETOUSNESS

The Word of GOD is most explicit on this point, assuring us that where the love of the world is, the love of the FATHER cannot dwell. When the worldly-minded man ought to be rejoicing in GOD, he is rejoicing in the increase of his earthly riches; and when he ought to be mourning over the low state of Zion and over perishing souls, he is weeping over his earthly losses. Could such a professor see his conduct in the light of a burning world, and in the light of eternity, how would he be startled at the extent of his own folly!

How great is the madness of those who rush into innumerable cares in their haste to be rich, and after they have involved themselves in more employments than they can possibly manage, wonder that they do not make more progress heavenward! You might as well call upon a rock or a mountain to fly heavenward as to expect that your soul can hold daily communion with GOD while it groans under such a load.

The curse of GOD seems to have rested upon covetousness from the first of time; and no wonder. What keeps the hungry from being fed? What keeps the naked from being clothed, and the ignorant from being instructed? What keeps the Word of GOD from being known over the wide earth, and the world from being evangelized?

There is but one answer: it is covetousness. It is a bare-faced refusal to do what GOD wants to be

done with His own. It is usurping GOD's right, a crime as bad as usurping His throne.

It was this sin that ruined the first pair, for they coveted to be as gods. It found a lodgment in the heart of Cain, who coveted Abel's blessing. It was the sin that ruined Lot's family, transforming his wife into a pillar of salt. It caused Achan to be stoned to death, and made Gehazi leprous till his death. It brought ruin on Judas, death on Ananias, and caused Demas to forsake the truth.

In short, it was this sin that may be said to have

MADE HELL ITSELF,

for hell was made for devils who coveted the throne of GOD.

Mr. Cecil had a rich hearer, who, when a young man, had solicited his advice, and who had not for some time had an interview with him. Mr. Cecil called on him one day, and said:

"I understand you are very dangerously situated."

The young man replied: "I am not aware of it."

Mr. Cecil said: "I thought it was probable you were not, and therefore I have called on you. I hear you are getting rich. Take care, for it is the road by which the devil leads thousands to destruction."

A merchant in one of the towns of the state of New York, says Mr. Finney, was paying a large part of his minister's salary. One of the members of the church was relating the fact to a minister from abroad, and speaking of the sacrifice which this merchant was making. At this moment the merchant came in.

"Brother," said the minister, "you are a merchant. I suppose you employ a clerk to sell goods, and schoolmasters to teach your children. You order your clerk to pay the schoolmaster, out of the store, such an amount for his services in teaching. Now, suppose that your clerk should give out that he had to pay the schoolmaster his salary, and should speak of the sacrifices he was making to do it, what would you say to this?"

"Why," said the merchant, "I should say it was ridiculous."

"Well," said the minister, "GOD employs you to sell goods as His clerk, and your minister He employs to teach your children, and requires you to pay his salary out of the income of the shop. How do you call this your sacrifice, and say that you are making a great sacrifice to pay this minister's salary? No; you are just as much bound to sell for GOD as he is to preach for GOD. You have no more right to sell goods for the purpose of laying up money than he has to preach the Gospel for the same purpose.

You are bound to be just as holy, and to aim as singly at the glory of GOD, in selling goods as he is in preaching the Gospel. And thus you are as absolutely to give up your whole time to the

service of GOD, as he does. You and your family may live out of the profits of this store, and so may the minister and his family, just as lawfully. If you sell goods from these motives, selling goods is just as much serving GOD as preaching, and a man who sells goods upon these principles, and acts in conformity to them, is just as pious, just as much in the service of GOD, as he is who preaches the Gospel.

Every man is bound to serve GOD in his calling, the minister by teaching, the merchant by selling goods, the farmer by tilling his fields, and the lawyer and physician by prying the duties of their profession."

If we would have a spiritual mind, we must

AVOID A PROUD AND LOFTY SPIRIT.

There is no disposition which appears more out of place in poor puny man than pride and self-conceit; and yet how generally are these traits of character exhibited! Remembering that man is a fallen creature, depraved and guilty; that he has derived his origin from the dust, and is fast hastening to the grave, where worms will devour him, what has he to be proud of?

He is every moment dependent upon GOD, for every pulse that beats, every breath he draws, and everything that makes life desirable. He is even dependent upon the meanest and most despised of GOD's creatures for many of his comforts, and even necessities. Everything that he calls his own, he holds by the most precarious tenure. His friends may be snatched from him in a moment, his riches may make themselves wings and fly away, and his health may be blasted by infection in any passing breeze.

He is liable to hunger and thirst, cold and heat, poverty and disgrace, sorrow and pain, through all the brief span of his stay upon earth. Even his mind, his noble, intellectual part, that part which can rise to Heaven and wander through eternity, is liable to be taken from him at any moment, leaving him a driveling imbecile.

It is said that the celebrated poet, Southey, for some years before his death had so lost his intellectual powers that he did not know his own name, and when looking at his own books, said:

"Southey! who is he?"

Tourney, after he had excelled all Oxford in learning, and became very eminent among the literary men of Paris, was so puffed up with pride as to hold Aristotle superior to Moses and CHRIST, and yet but equal to himself. In his latter days, he became so idiotic as not to know one letter in a book, or to re remember one thing he had ever learned.

And yet poor mortals will dare to be proud! Some glory in their wealth, some in empty titles, some in beauty and high birth, and others in empty fame. Oh, surely pride must stand as a mighty foe between GOD and the soul!

A young lady, eighteen years of age, in New York City, was brought up by her parents in all the

gaities and follies of youth; by them encouraged to ornament her person, and engage in every gay amusement. When she was taken ill, three physicians were sent for immediately, who pronounced her to be near her dying hour.

No sooner was their opinion made known to her than she requested, as a favor, that all her gay companions might be collected with haste. They were soon around her bed, when she told them she was going to die - described the awful manner in which they had spent their precious time, and exhorted them all to repentance before it was too late, in a very affecting manner. She then, turning to her father and mother, addressed to them, in the presence of her acquaintances, these heart-rending words:

"You have been the unhappy instruments of my being; you fostered me in pride, and led me in the paths of sin; you never once warned me of my danger: and now it is too late! In a few hours you will have to cover me with earth; but remember, while you are casting earth upon my body, my soul will be in hell, and yourselves the cause of my misery!"

She soon after expired.

Yes, my reader, if you would enjoy real communion with GOD, you must beware of pride. If pride drove the first pair from an earthly paradise, rest assured that if indulged it will drive you from a heavenly one.

GOD, we are told, knoweth the proud afar off. If you are puffed up in your own conceit, greatly elated when men praise you, and correspondingly depressed when they censure; if you best love the company of those who flatter you, and shun those friends who are ready to tell you your faults; if you are ready to take offence on account of some imaginary slight, and refuse to make confession of your faults when you do wrong; If you hate plain dealing, and are always ready to assert your own faultlessness - then it is to be feared that there is much pride lurking in your heart. So long as a man

WORSHIPS HIMSELF,

cannot worship GOD. He may make use of very humble expressions, and describe himself as a great sinner, but this may only be the proud spirit seeking applause for its seeming humility.

If we would enjoy spiritual-mindedness we must often be employed in conversation about heavenly things.

There is a great deal of religious conversation, as it is called, which is little better than religious gossip.

To talk of ministers and their sermons, of missionaries and their labors, of churches and their practices, too often forms the staple of what is called religious conversation.

Now it is right that a man should be well-informed in regard to the movements in the religious world, but it is not right that our conversation should be occupied with the mere externals of

religion, to the exclusion of those

VITAL THEMES

which cause the heart to burn and glow, as we speak of them. The two disciples, in that delightful walk which they had with JESUS, after His resurrection, "**How did our hearts burn within us!**" as they listened to His Spiritual conversation.

John Bunyan was converted by overhearing the conversation of two humble women talking about the love of CHRIST to them. Christians who neglect to speak of divine things, lose many precious opportunities of usefulness.

A Christian minister, some years ago, on returning from preaching in a neighboring village, was asked by an individual to direct him to a certain place. His request was attended to, and when the stranger was thanking him for his kindness, the minister replied:

"Take care, my friend, that you are in the right way at last."

These words appeared long to sound to the man's ears, and what could the gentleman mean by them? was an inquiry often presented to his mind, and which at length led to the salvation of his soul. Some years had passed away, with all their attendant cares, joys and sorrows, when the minister was solicited to preach at another town.

After the service, he was requested to visit a member of the church who was in a dying condition. As soon as he came near, the dying man fixed his eyes on the countenance of the minister, and with a peculiarly significant look and emphatic voice said:

"Sir, I know you! I know you!"

"Know me!" replied the minister, "how can that be? for I am a stranger here."

"I know you, sir," again he replied. "Do you not remember, some years ago, a person asking you the way to such a place, and your returning with him, putting him in the right path, and when you were parting, saying to him: 'My friend, take care that you are in the right way at last?'"

"No, I do not," replied the minister; for it had completely escaped his memory.

"Yes, you did, sir," rejoined the dying man; "I have not forgotten it, nor ever shall forget it. 'The right way at last!' oh, sir, am I in that way now? I cannot live long, I feel that I am dying; tell me, oh, tell me if I am in the right way!"

The minister questioned him as to his faith in CHRIST, and on other important points, to which the dying man led suitable and satisfactory answers. After the minister affectionately and earnestly recommended him in prayer to GOD, and left him. In a few his mortal career was ended.

Nothing promotes spiritual-mindedness so much as conversing with GOD in prayer and praise. In everything we are invited to make our requests known unto Him, and to mingle thanksgiving with our supplications. Singing the praises of GOD is to form a large part of the employment of Heaven. Very persistent efforts have been made in the present day to discourage men from prayer, on scientific principles, but this is just another form of the old opposition of the carnal heart to intercourse with GOD.

The natural heart hates anything that brings a personal GOD near it.

Still every Christian knows, from the best of all evidences, his own experience, that GOD is the Hearer of prayer. The world is full of evidences of it, however sinners may shut their eyes and close their ears against them.

Let us not cease to call upon GOD while He is near and in everything acknowledge Him, that He may direct our steps.

~ end of chapter 11 ~
