

*Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. (Psalm 19:12-13)*

In our efforts to extricate ourselves from the stinking mud-wallow of immoral, illegal, wicked, selfish and hateful deeds that herald the depravity of the human race, we must daily face two problems: secret faults and presumptuous sins.

Secret faults are those attitudes and deeds that characterize our daily behavior of which we are not conscious. Not knowing exactly what they are, and having no moral consciousness of them, we can only trust a merciful God to cleanse us from them for Jesus' sake.

But presumptuous sins are another matter. These are deeds which we willfully commit, knowing full well they are wrong. Sometimes they slip upon us through the subtlety of the Tempter. Sometimes we do them in an irrational passion. But sometimes we deliberately plan, plot and purpose to do them. Try as we may to justify them in our own minds, yet we cannot erase the knowledge that they are sin and hateful in God's sight. We are not here talking of unbelievers, but Christians who hunger and thirst after righteousness, but who know of the corruption that yet lies in their breast and, to their sorrow and distress, often surfaces in committed sins. None but a Christian, a holy man, cries to God, "Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me!"

He who would be free from such sins knows that the power for deliverance lies not in himself but in God alone. He has learned by experience that although "to will is present with him, how to perform that which is good, he cannot find" (Romans 7:18). But he has also learned by the word of God that "sin shall not have dominion over you" (Romans 6:14). It is a cruel and ungodly lie that teaches that God puts the longing and desire in His people's hearts to be free from the bondage of committing sin, then provides no power to deliver them from it. Precious promise it is from the lips of our Savior, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." (Matthew 5:6)

We pray to be "kept back" from presumptuous sins. But we do not then deliberately sin and blame God for not preventing us from doing so. This betrays the sincerity of our prayer. We who do indeed desire to be freed from the dominion of wrong acts know well our responsibility to resist evil, to will and to do that which is good, and to determine through the power of God to refuse every sinful disobedient deed. Anything less is hypocrisy and a travesty of Christianity.

-C.M.