

Milton Harris - The Dangers of Secret Sin

Good morning. Thank you. There are several verses in the scriptures that may sound like they are in contradiction to each other. Paul says in Romans six verse 23 that "we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We accept that. We know that for sure. We don't argue with that. Because that's the very reason that Christ came. There's another verse that kind of supports that. In First John one, verse eight, "if you say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Even talks about the fact that we made God a liar. Now I don't know about you, but I don't want to call God a liar. And I don't want to say anything that would imply there. But now, here's the dichotomy. Over in chapter three of First John, it says that "if you are in Him, and if you abide in Him, you do not sin." And listen to that. If you abide in Christ or in God, you do not sin. The verb tense there is very important because it's present indicative and it says that you do not continue to sin. I have a little bit of a problem when people call Christians sinners. That I look at all this audience and those that are faithfully serving God with everything they have. And say, well, you are just a sinner that's been saved. I have a problem with that. It doesn't say that you don't sin. But first John three says you don't continue to sin. Sin is not a way of your life. You try your best not to sin. But there are occasions where you do and thank God, we have the redemption in that.

When it comes to the subject of sin. I think it's important that we break it down into really what it is. There are three categories of sin that I want to talk to you about just shortly. And you may already know this. The first category of sin that we have is public sin. The second one is a private sin. A public sin is where everyone knows it. Pretty much everyone. It's just very obvious that someone is sinning. And that is referred to as a public sin. But then again, there is a sin that is private. Maybe it's something between me and Mitch and really no one else knows about it. There may be another person or two who knows about it, but it's private. It's pretty much between him and me. That is another category of sin.

But the category that I really want to talk about this morning is secret sin. There is sin in your mind. I think there's an act, I think, we're all we're all guilty of this or at least do it. There are things that you think about, that you shouldn't think about. If they're wrong, God does not accept it. And therefore, if God does not accept it, it is sin. And his in your mind is only you and your God that knows it. Your spouse doesn't even know it. Your children don't know it. But you have something in your mind that is wrong. And it shouldn't be done away with. Now my lesson and plays off of David McClister's lesson several weeks ago when he talked about the Holy Spirit, and how the Spirit works in mankind. And then on four occasions, a spirit came to deliver or to help deliver. And he applied that somewhat to us as individuals that as the Spirit resides in us. It must take over our spirit. And we must surrender to that spirit. And if we do not surrender to the Spirit, then we can't really have the fruits of the Spirit. And if we don't totally surrender to that spirit, then we're going to have a problem with this private or this secret sin in my head. That I'm not going to be able to get rid of it. And it's going to do great damage to me. So that's really what I want to talk about this morning. The matter of secret sin or the spirit-controlled man. Does the spirit control our mind? Paul says, "it's no longer I live but it is Christ who lives in me." Christ and the Holy Spirit was living in him. And the importance of that is to understand the things that occur in our mind. That gives us great damage.

In Revelations the 16th chapter we read about a battle. A battle that is called the Battle of Armageddon. There's a lot of misunderstandings as to the battle of Armageddon, the millennial reign of Christ, etc., etc. I think all of that in Revelation is something that has already occurred in most cases. But I do believe, and this is a personal opinion. This is my opinion. I do believe that the battle of Armageddon is taking place today. I believe that. In my study, as I looked at it and just tried to understand the issue of battle Armageddon. Now, do you know where the battle of Armageddon is taking place? Right here. This is where the battle is. It's reason and Paul says that we are to transform our mind, which is our spiritual surface. Why? Because there is a battle taking place in our mind. And if we're not able to control our mind, for out of it comes issues of life. Then we're in trouble. And I want to share with you some things that maybe are causing us to have this difficulty.

The one I have on the screen right now is the first one I want to look at. And it's as a matter of anger issues. Now, I'm not talking about wrath. I'm not talking about something that comes out of you. I'm talking about something that is that you're thinking and you're angry here. And you seem to be an angry person. And somebody has said something to you, or something has happened and you're angry about that. And you can't get it out of your mind. Now what kind of damage do you think that's going to do? If that is the case, as a matter of fact, you even play off of that anger. You may even enjoy that anger in your mind as you use it against someone else. There are verses that I think can help us along this line. James one verse and nineteen it says, "Know this, my beloved brother, let every person be quick to hear and slow to speak and slow to anger." Anger in itself is not a sin. God was angry. He was angry with his people. He was angry with several situations that he dealt with, but here's one thing that you must understand. When it comes to God's anger, God's anger was specific. It was the anger that was on a particular issue. It was anger that did not continue. Once it was dealt with and he dealt with it. He did not continue to hold that anger in his heart. I think that's a good example. Sometimes we may get angry at something, and it needs to be specific. It does not mean to be a general anger and just stay angry at everybody about everything. No, that's not what kind of anger we need. Now specifically if we're going to have that anger in my mind, I've got to deal with it in the same way. You have, I'm sure, heard of the straw man effect. I was in a meeting, in this congregation, in a home. I think it was a group meeting. And some of us were sitting around talking and I was talking to him along these lines. And I said, you know, I have a problem. I was speaking. I have a problem with this straw man effect. And this person who was sitting pretty close to me kind of looked at me and said, you know, I do too. I said it's a horrible thing. Do you know what the straw man effect is? A straw man effect is that you? You set up the straw man, as it were, in your mind. And remember, this is in your mind, and you began to argue with him or her. You do that for the purpose of proving yourself to be correct and that person to be wrong. And in the process of doing that you may even become angry in your mind about the situation this straw man effect that setup. That's a horrible thing. Do some of you have that problem? Don't raise your hand. I'll raise mine. Because I'm not as bad as I used to be. But I used to be pretty, pretty bad about that. And it's a dangerous thing. Now when you think about that, is the Holy Spirit in your mind? Is the Holy Spirit guiding you and helping you and I'm not talking about miraculously. Is he trying to help you overcome some of these things? Well, maybe he is. But the problem is I have not surrendered to Him to the effect that he has allowed control of my mind and that must occur in my life.

Here's a second one that I have. I found these pictures. I thought they were pretty good. On the internet, I grabbed him and threw him out there. I said, well, this looks like a guy that doesn't like to take

advice or criticism. Rob, if I came up to you, and I advise you to start wearing a tie - I got him didn't I. I got him. You must start wearing a tie. That's just not appropriate that you don't wear a tie. And if you don't do that, I'm going to be kind of upset with you. As a matter of fact, I'm going to remind you every Lord day. How are you going to accept that? That's a very simple thing. Okay. What about taking some serious advice to somebody or they advise you on something and that you look at them and say, what right do you have to tell me what to do? What competency do you have and should tell me what to do? And you begin to get pretty upset about that. And matter of fact, that starts working on your mind. You can't forget it. And it begins to gnaw, as I would use that term, on you. And when it does that, what does it do? It has the same effect as being anxious. Do you know what anxious is? To be anxious about something? You do know the effect of what it is to be anxious? It means distracting care. Distracting care. You have been distracted away from something because of your anxiety. And therefore, there's things that maybe go undone or unattended because of your anxiousness. Well, this has kind of the same effect, but it has the effect of becoming angry. Look at the verse that David McClister gave us and I'm using it over here. "I put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statues and you will be careful to observe My ordinances." Do you hear the power of that? Do you think that maybe that verse should have an extreme effect on us? Were we don't go negative when somebody advises us on something, and I have some verses of Proverbs that tells us to be careful on that. But it doesn't get in my mind and work on it and cause me not to be pleasing to God. Now want to know something? If you have a mind like that, if you have a mind that is angry. If you have a mind that is distracted by criticism or advice, do you think you're going to heaven? If I was to say to you well if you're participating in a, you know, an adulterous relationship and I would ask do you think you're going to heaven by doing that? You'd say no. Why should we think that these little secret things that go on in our head, that we're not willing to get rid of, what is going to prevent them? Or how will they prevent or cause us to lose our home in heaven? Romans 12 Verse 18, "repay no one evil for evil. But give the thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all if possible, so far as it depends on you. Be peaceable with all." Now, that's the attitude I have toward a person that would come to me and advise me on something, and I say well you're just totally wrong. Well, that's a verse that would handle that. Matthew 7:20, Jesus himself, "What comes out of a man comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of a man comes evil thoughts." Yeah. Where did they start? Here. And in this case, they came out. In the cases that I'm talking about, mostly, they don't come out they stay there, and we think we're going to get by with it.

Proverbs 13:10. "By insolence comes nothing but strife. But with those who take advice is wisdom." And one more, Proverbs 12:15, "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes. But a wise man listens to advice." So just some verses that should help us that we don't get bent out of shape in our mind when somebody gives us some advice that we think is pretty dumb. It might end up being more criticism that it is anything.

Boy here's one. Now, does that guy look like, which one looks like he's got a critical spirit? I showed one to Linda and she says no, both of them look pretty bad to me. I said, yeah. You know one of the biggest problems that we have in our country today? One of the biggest problems we have in some of our local churches? This right here. I believe that with all my heart. Nothing's right. Nobody's right. The President is not right. The candidate that's running for presidency is not right. And the third-party guy is not right. And the majority of the house is not right. And my friends are not right. I have a critical spirit.

And where is it? Right here? I leave services and say oh boy Kenny didn't do that right. He should have preached that sermon in this direction. Or Mitch didn't teach that lesson right, boy he blew it, and he should have done it this way. Critical spirit. I don't mean that seriously. You're doing a great job. But just a spirit that can't see what's right. I was watching TV last night. HGTV. Linda's favorite program. I can't say that I enjoyed it entirely. There was this guy that was looking for a house. A realtor was working with him. And he just ended up making me mad. I've admitted that. I got mad. And I said you know, and I have realtor license down in Florida. I said you know what I would do to a guy like that? I would say you just find somebody else to find your house and I'm going home. I wouldn't represent Him. So, I'm telling you, this can happen. I mean I got aggravated with the guy. He was so critical. House was either too far from his work or the house didn't have a swimming pool, or the house had a swimming pool but didn't have very good views at the back door. I mean he criticized everything. Do you know there's some people like that? I'm going to turn around and not look at you. Okay? I'm not nearly as bad as I used to be. I'm not nearly as bad. Rob, how are you doing? Hanging in there. How are y'all doing? Do you have a critical spirit and it's in your mind and it just works on you? Well, it can't be if you're following the Spirit. If you're allowing the Spirit of God to have control over your life, you can't do that. And just tell me how much peace do you have? Who you have a mind that's angry? A mind that is critical. A mind that just can't seem to find anything right? Is there any peace in your life with that? Can I answer that? No. There is not. Romans 14:4 "Bless those who persecute you bless and do not curse them." Now what's the attitude there? The attitude is, you know, just because they don't agree with me, or may say I did something wrong, doesn't necessarily mean that I'm going to have a critical spirit. Matthew seven three, "Why do you see the speck that's in your brother's eye and do not notice a log that's in your own eye?" Boy that's a good one. "Or, how can you say to your brother, let me take the speck out of your eye and then there is a log in your own eye?" The Bible can help us. For those of you, for those of us, that are dealing with this secret sin thing. Not the public, not the private, but the secret sin. Do you know how you get rid of it? I will tell you how I got rid of it. Now I'm not suggesting you wake up at 430 every morning. Okay? But that's about the time that I get up. And I will spend about an hour a day praying and reading God's word. And you know, that is the antidote? That is the antidote. Study God's Word and pray, pray, pray. And if you don't do that, if you just get up and go every day and then you come in and you go and you get the things just in your life all the time things are bothering you and people are criticizing you. It's going to eat you up and you will not have peace. You won't. And I'm trying to help you this morning. Just go through some of these real things that cause us to have difficulty. We do not need to quinch the spirit that should be within us.

Okay, husbands and wives. How about this one? What are you doing looking at him? Huh? She says Oh, he's talking about us now. I'm sorry, I saw that, and I shouldn't have. This is where husbands and wives get in trouble with each other. They store up things and they seem to hold them against the other one. And so, after they had a difficulty, and that difficulty kind of settled down and we thought well, we thought it was all gone. No. No, it wasn't. Still here. And three years later, something comes up. And the other one says, you know I told you three years ago that you were wrong on that. Yeah. Three years ago. You mean you've been thinking about it for three years? And the answer is yes. I've just been waiting for the next time you've talked about it or brought it up. Are you kidding me? And the Spirit of God is dwelling in you. And you said you did that? Matthew seven, three again. Why do you get the speck out of your brother's when you can't get log out of your own. In other words, having this

relationship of realizing that I cannot hold that in my heart. I cannot hold that in my brain and then use it as a weapon.

The next one on the board is a very serious situation. This morning, I was going to show it to Linda, but I didn't. I was on The Weather Channel. And the Weather Channel has decided over here a little strip of that you can click on a little different thing you can look at. Guess what was at the very top? A young lady at the beach had something on but not much, just enough to say okay, click on this and see where it will take you. Well, we know where pornography is. We know that pornography is something that is right here. And it will destroy you. We had a series recently with brother Bowen directing that, Brett, and I can't get into a full discussion of that right now. Except to say this: It is a secret sin. You're sitting there looking at it. It's in your brain. Nobody knows it. They won't know it unless they came to your computer and looked at the history and realized where you had been. But most of most people are not going to do that. So, there you are. You click on that image. And that image takes you to a location that has even more opportunities and you click on more. And all of a sudden you just keep going. You keep going and it's all right here. Nobody knows it except you and God. But it's more than that. It's a mind that goes out into the public and you see a young lady that's really not dressed as properly as she should be. And you spend more time looking at her than you should. I'm not saying you shouldn't look at her, but you spend more time looking at her with an eye that's saying something else. So, it's like this young man that we see up here. And this young lady walks by and he turns around and makes a point to look. Do you do that? Has it taken you that far? Or it may be a lady that looks at a man with the wrong intent. Look at the mind. Look what it's doing to your mind. And if it is doing that, that is going to have great danger in your life. "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by," listen, "His own desire." See, we think that the devil tempts us to do these kinds of things. Now, I'm about to say something that you might disagree with: I don't think so. Not in this day. This verse says, "when he is lured and enticed by his own desire." As when he's letting the flesh take over. That's when he is saying step aside spirit God. My spirit wants to do this. And that is wrong. And that's where we're losing the spirituality that we should have. John 10, "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish." Listen to this, "and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father who has given them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and the Father are one." Do you realize that you can get yourself in a position of holiness and purity that you're in the hand of God? No one can snatch you out of God's hand. But if we have a spirit, that is sensual, that's angry. That's critical. And we do not clear up that spirit in our mind, then we have great difficulty. We're going to have great difficulty. And this is the verse, I think, I was talking about earlier. "We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning." Listen to that. Are you born of God? Am I? Yes. Well, you don't keep on sinning. Yeah, but nobody knows about it is that me? It's kind of in my mind. Yes it is sin. But you don't keep on sinning if you have been born of God. And the Evil One does not touch you if that is the case.

Now here's one that we may not have a lot of problems with. I think, maybe, I have had in the past. I am a southerner. I was born in the Deep South. I was on the campus of Ole Miss when James Meredith was admitted in 1962. I lived in an environment that was extremely prejudiced. And I have, by the grace of God, I married a girl and her family helped me get out of that. But you know, I think, I still have a little bit of that in me. Some prejudice. Do you? Do you have that in your mind? Where you look at a certain ethnic group or color of skin or whatever and it kind of negatively affects you? Does it bother you that

maybe over 50% of the commercials you see on TV today are not like they were 20 years ago. Maybe you notice that? See, I have and that bothers me. For you younger people that are coming up you don't wrestle with that as much as some of us that are older, and we have to work hard to get that out of our minds. Because this thing of being prejudiced to any ethnic group endangers us in doing what's right First Corinthians 16:24, "Love all men." Love all men. "And wish them well." How about that? "Do them what good as in your power. But those most have our dearest affection. Who are dear to Christ and lovers of him." Do you know back in the 60s, I was in a congregation, and there were some members, some Christians, some brothers and sisters in Christ, came into the building to worship with us. You know that some of the members got up and walked out? if some Muslims would come in this morning into this assembly, how would you handle it? Well, it depends on how we're thinking. It depends on what is up here and how we've been able to purge it with the power of God and the power of His Spirit. To try to help us get rid of that. Paul says in Galatians "There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There's no male or female but you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Ladies and gentlemen, spirit-controlled mind. What about it? Do you have a spirit-controlled mind? "So, then brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh to do according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die." Listen to that. "If you live according to the flesh, you will die." If you're thinking all these things in your mind and you can't get rid of them, you will die. It's what the scripture says. "But by the Spirit, you put to death the deeds of the body and you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God." We must do this, and we must work at it and work at it hard. Hebrews seven the writer says that Christ is Holy. Jesus Christ is holy. In Romans eight verse seven, "for set the mind on the flesh is death." Set the man on flesh is dead. "But to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God for does not submit to God." Indeed, it cannot. Then the verse Peters says, "But as he who is called you is holy, you also must be holy in all your conduct." You must be holy in all of your conduct. "And since it is written you shall be holy, for I am holy." Now, that settles the matter. Christ is holy. God is holy. The spirit is holy. And we must be holy.

And so somehow this morning, I want this lesson to influence you. That you may not be doing bad things publicly. People may not be seeing you do things that are bad. Even in a little private environment you've got good relationships. People don't see you doing things bad. You come in this assembly and you're doing things good. But I ask you this where's your mind? Where's your mind? If your mind is not right, if it's not controlled by the Holy Spirit, then it's death. It's death. And that's a very difficult and shameful thing. "Finally, brethren, whatever is true." Listen. "Whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise," listen, "think about these things." That's where we should be. And so, I'm going to ask you to get up at 4:30 every morning. And I'm more I ask you to read the Bible every morning. I'm going to ask you to read these verses every single morning. And I'm going to ask you to get on your knees and pray to God to give you a clear mind. To clear your mind of prejudice, anger and any other thing that can be associated with the flesh. "I appeal to you therefore by the mercies of God, to present your bodies, a holy sacrifice acceptable to God which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed." You know, one of Kenny's favorite words is transform. Transformation. He likes that word. He talks about it. And that's good. But you know what a transformer is. It takes a certain product coming in one end and delivers something different at the other end. It transforms it.

And that's what he wants us to do not to be transformed to the world. "Which is your good and acceptable service."

I hope this lesson has done you some good. Little long. I could have gone another hour. You wouldn't have minded that. But I'm suggesting to you that we need to work on it. And I appreciate David McClister's lessons a couple of weeks ago on the spirit because it helped me so much. And I've taken some of that, to move it over here to get us to think about this one instrument, right here, the mind. Get the mind clean. Clean it up, somehow clean it up.

You might be in the audience this morning and you're not a child of God. To some extent, this lesson means very little to you, because your sins have not been washed away. You're not pure and holy inside like you should be. I'm thinking that you want to be. Or it may be that you're in this audience and you are a Christian and you say, you know, I need some help. I'll try my best to help you. And I know the Elders would too. If you're a person that is burdened by the things that are in your mind, and you want some help to try to get it out. Why don't you come and let us try to help you also? If you're subject to the invitation, would you come as we sang and sang the song?