

Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit

To be Put Away.—Holiness to be Perfected.—Why the Bible Admonishes the Church, and not the World, Along These Lines.—The Cleansing.*

“LET us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”—2 Cor. 7: 1.

We again call attention to the fact that the Bible is not addressed to the world, but to the Church; not to unbelievers, but to believers; not to sinners, but to those who have already turned away from sin. Many overlook this fact, and the result is a confusion of their minds. But some may, perhaps, be inclined to say that the words of our text are applicable to all sinners as well as saints—sinners especially—even though the epistle itself is addressed “unto the Church of God which is at Achaia.” We answer, No! Our text cannot appropriately be applied to sinners in general, who have not yet come to God, who have not yet repented of their sins and been forgiven. God makes no appeals to such; he merely denounces them as sinners and refuses them all recognition, all fellowship, and tells them that there is no other name given under heaven and amongst men whereby they can be saved from their sins than that of Jesus—through faith in His name. In other words, God refuses to have any dealings whatever with those who cannot or will not accept of the great Sin-offering which He has provided. As Jesus expressed the matter, “No man cometh unto the Father but by me.”—John 14: 6.

The reasonableness of the divine position is evident upon reflection. God in the present age is gathering out of the world a little flock, whose peculiar trait of character is faith in Him and a desire to please Him. In the age to come, the Millennial age, God proposes to deal with the remainder of mankind, and then all His dealings and requirements will be made so plain that the wayfaring man, though a simpleton, need not err therein. (Isa. 35: 8.) The Sun of Righteousness shall shine forth in that glorious Millennial day, and clearly manifest right from wrong, and show forth the divine character and attributes, so that every creature may see—yea, all the blind eyes shall be opened and all the deaf ears unstopped, as is clearly stated by the Prophet. (Isa. 35: 5.) But now in the present age there is a test of faith for this special “little flock” whom the Lord is selecting and whom He designates His Church, and any who cannot exercise the faith cannot be of this elect Church, but must wait for their blessing at the hands of the Church during the reign of Christ’s Kingdom, for which we still pray, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Not only has God made faith a necessary element of acceptance in the present time, but also, additionally, love of righteousness is made a part of the test. It is not enough that we should have the eye of faith which would recognize Christ’s death as the redemption price for the sins of the world, we must

additionally have hearts that love righteousness in order to come under divine favor in this age. The heart that loves righteousness discerns the weakness of its own flesh, its downward tendencies; and the moment that heart recognizes Jesus as the Redeemer it is glad to flee to Him, not only to be covered with His merit as respects the sins that are past, but also to have the imputed covering of His righteousness as respects the unwilling blemishes and imperfections of the present and the future—imperfections that are contrary to the will and the result of weaknesses inherited.

THE SAINTS NOT ALL NOBLE.

This class, not in harmony with the sin of the world nor with their own weaknesses, is referred to by our Lord in His message, “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden [under the yoke of sin and appreciating its penalty, death], and I will give you rest, Take my yoke upon you and learn of me.” These learners—“disciples,” pupils in the school of Christ—are the class to whom the words of our text are addressed. It would be useless to address to the world in general the exhortation to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, because the world is in sympathy with this very filthiness and has no desire to cleanse itself, has no just appreciation of what it is to be clean in spirit, no just appreciation of how filthy it is in the sight of God and those who have His spirit of holiness. The Lord describes the condition of the world as one in which anger, malice, envy, and various lusts are the usual and normal conditions by turns. Lust, selfishness—which often amounts to brutality in its self-seeking of wealth or power or pleasure—seeks to fill the natural mind, so that if it were taken away, with nothing substituted, life would lose all of its charm. What would be the propriety in exhorting such to put away their filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit when they have nothing as a substitute?

Some may, perhaps, urge that there are as many noble-minded people not believers as amongst believers. We answer, Yes! the Scriptures agree to this, assuring us that amongst believers are not many great or wise or noble according to the course of this world—assuring us that the message of God’s grace often lays hold upon the lowest and meanest and more degraded members of the human family rather than upon the noble, who feel less keenly their own depravity and less necessity for a Savior and His assistance. If, then, amongst the world are to be found some who are noble minded, and if believers are generally of a lower stratum, how comes it that God has a more particular interest in these than in unbelievers? By what kind of a rule is it that the Lord accepts as His children some who naturally are less noble and does not accept some who naturally are more noble?

We answer that the rule or standard of divine acceptance is faith and obedience of the heart.

* From the *Pittsburgh Dispatch’s* regular report.—Pastor C. T. Russell’s Discourse at Uniontown, Pa.

Read this to please me - C.

Those who with their hearts, their minds, their wills, turn away from sin and by faith accept the divine arrangement, the Lord is pleased to accept according to their wills, their intentions, and not according to the flesh and its blemishes. Their unwilling defects according to the flesh are veiled from His sight by the robe of Christ's righteousness covering them, according to the inability of their new minds, which despise sin and seek to war a good warfare against it in their flesh and everywhere. Such is the class addressed by the Apostle in our text, saying, "Dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit."

THE WORLD'S BELOVED AND GOD'S BELOVED.

The Apostle as the mouthpiece of the Lord speaks of all believers who have fled away from sin and who at heart are striving to be pleasing and acceptable to God as "dearly beloved." The Apostle, a noble-minded man himself, appreciated the fact that many of these dearly beloved brethren had weaknesses and imperfections of the flesh. He did not love them on account of these blemishes, but in spite of them—because at heart they were loyal to the principles of righteousness and striving to walk in the narrow way of harmony with the Lord, to overcome sin and its inclinations in their own mortal flesh, and—so far as their influence would go—in the world. But the world does not love these whom the Father loves, whom Jesus loves, whom the Apostle loves. Our Master's words were, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should be permanent."—John 15: 16, 18, 19.

The world does not like these because, confessing their own weaknesses and striving against them, they call them by their proper names—sins, meannesses, filthinesses of the flesh and spirit. Every effort made by these to cleanse themselves is that much of a reproof to others who are not striving to cleanse themselves, and who hate to be reminded that the things in which they take their greatest pleasure are greed, selfishness, inordinate affections, strifes, pride, vain glory. Whoever is fully satisfactory to the world may be sure that he is not satisfactory to the Lord, and whoever is satisfactory to the Lord need not expect to be satisfactory to the world, because the fellowship of this world is enmity to God, and, therefore, the world is not subject to the divine standard, neither indeed can be, as the Apostle explains. (Jas. 4:4; Rom. 8:7.) Its heart is in the other direction, and the law of the New Creation—love for God with all our hearts and for our neighbor as ourselves—is to the world unreasonable, unthinkable, undesirable every way, and every reminder of it, even by the presence of those who at heart are on the side of righteousness, causes displeasure and discomfort. To these the Lord and His footstep followers have always been unwelcome intruders—they prefer to be let alone, to have no suggestion offered to the effect that they are wrong. True, some of them have a pleasurable pride in generosity, a love of a good name, and a reputation for honesty and virtue, but they wish to be considered as standards and exemplars, and resent any intrusion, any measurements of their thoughts, words or deeds by the

divine standards, and those who continually recognize and are honoring the divine standards are disesteemed by them.

THE NECESSITY FOR CLEANSING.

But why should the Apostle suggest that himself and others of the Church should do a cleansing work in their hearts and in their flesh when we find that God has wholly covered their blemishes from His sight? If the blemishes are covered, why trouble about them further? Ah, that is the point! Those who at heart are loyal to the Lord and His righteousness are distressed by their blemishes, their sins, the weakness of their flesh, even though they are aware that the Lord has graciously covered all these, and is not imputing their guilt because at heart they are opposed to them. The desire of this class is to build, to establish character by faithfulness to principles of righteousness, that their minds may become more and more established in faithfulness to the Lord and His Golden Rule of love, and that, so far as possible, the new mind shall control the fallen, imperfect flesh and bring it into subjection, into accord, with the divine law. Whoever, after having experienced the Lord's blessing in the forgiveness of His sins, has no desire to war a warfare against them and to bring into subjection to his new mind the powers and talents of his mortal body, has not the true spirit of sonship? He would thereby be giving evidence that he does not truly love righteousness, and that he does not truly hate iniquity, and would thus be testifying that he is not of the class that the Lord desires as His sons on the spiritual plane—as members of the "little flock," the "Bride," the "Lamb's Wife."

We see, then, good reason why the "brethren" should be appealed to by the Apostle in our text—a good reason why all begotten of the same spirit of holiness should give heed to His words and make the cleansing of the flesh and of the spirit the principal work of the remainder of life. We see that unless they do this they will belie their pretensions of love for righteousness and hatred for iniquity. We see that by such a warfare against the weaknesses of the flesh and of the spirit the Lord designs that they shall establish a crystallized character, and thus, as the Scriptures express it, be "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light"—fit in heart for the divine service. Such as are thus fit in heart for the service of the Millennial Kingdom will, we are assured, be granted new bodies free from all blemish in the First Resurrection. Thus, having perfected their minds and established character in their hearts in the present life by controlling the flesh so far as possible, they demonstrate that at heart they have the character-likeness of their Lord and Redeemer; and only those who do thus develop into copies of God's dear Son will constitute the "very elect," the Kingdom class, the Seed of Abraham, through whom the world will shortly receive its blessing.

"LET US CLEANSE OURSELVES."

The Apostle, by the words "Let us cleanse ourselves," does not have reference to our getting rid of Adamic condemnation. Such cleansing from original sin is impossible on our part, as he elsewhere explains—we cannot have it unless we receive it as a free gift from God. In what sense, then, do we cleanse ourselves? We answer that having been reckonedly cleansed by the Lord, and brought under the influence of His holy Spirit and the enlightening understanding of His Word, we are now invited to

show our zeal for righteousness and to co-operate with Him in the work which He has already done for us reckonedly. While all the condemnation is reckoned as having passed from us, we still have the opportunity of showing the Lord what our spirit, our intention would be by striving against sin in our minds and in our flesh. The incentive to this cleansing is of the Lord, but the cleansing itself is something for us to do—"Let us cleanse ourselves." The cleansing work is a tedious one, because at first we did not discern how deeply defiled we were, how nearly all the suggestions of the mind were of a selfish character; at first we did not even recognize selfishness as being sin.

It was as the eyes of our understanding opened more and more widely that we got the proper views of the Lord and His righteousness, our own conditions, the need of His covering robe, etc. Day by day as we have since striven to put away sin, selfishness—yea, every element of ungodliness and unloveliness—we have become more painfully conscious than ever of how deep was the stain which we at first, perhaps, thought was merely superficial. Too many of the Lord's people, after years of labor in seeking to cleanse themselves from the filth of the flesh and of the spirit, now, alas, see more of their own blemishes than they discerned at first, even though they are conscious also that they have gotten rid of much of this natural filthiness, selfishness, etc. This would make the work of cleansing a very discouraging one if it were not for the assurance of the Lord's Word that He regards us not according to the flesh but according to our intentions, our desires, our endeavors, and reckons us as overcomers because of our good warfare against them, whatever may be the measure of our success.

The distinction which the Apostle draws between the filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit should be noted. After we have accepted the Lord and taken our stand with Him as the Captain of our Salvation, to be soldiers of the cross and to fight a good fight against sin and all the works of the flesh and of the Devil, we find ourselves in company with others of the same class, and naturally and properly at once begin to cleanse the flesh, to put away evil practices, outward wrongdoing of every kind. This is well—what fellowship could there be between children of the light and any works of darkness? Ere long, in the case of many, a considerable outward change is manifested, careless language is avoided, passions are restrained, selfishness is curbed, at least in its outward manifestations, neighbors and friends may see a considerable change. This is good, but not sufficient. We must also cleanse our spirits, our minds. It is not sufficient that we avoid outward wrongdoing—our minds must be cleansed, must learn to hate sin, to repel its first advances. We must learn that our minds and bodies are the temples of the Lord, and everything contrary to Him and His law of righteousness and love must be barred.

Others are witnesses to some extent of our trials and triumphs of an outward kind, but the most important battles of the New Creation are those which are known only to ourselves and to our Captain—the battle of the New Mind or will against the influences of the old, natural disposition. The true soldier of the cross will find this battle-ground quite sufficient to engage all of his combativeness and destructiveness and to keep him fully occupied. Such as are on the alert to develop the new character have much less time than others to criticise their neigh-

bors, friends and brethren—they find so much in themselves requiring vigilance and restraint. And as they progress in this direction they become more sympathetic toward others who have the same or other weaknesses and inclinations contrary to the divine standards. They sympathize especially with the brethren of the New Creation, who similarly have covenanted their all to the Lord, and who similarly are battling against the advances of the world, the flesh and the Adversary, in their flesh and in their spirits.

"THE PERFECTING OF HOLINESS."

Our text declares that such a purification of flesh and spirit, body and mind, constitutes a perfecting of holiness. The thought here is that holiness cannot be attained in a moment, but it must be gradually effected, perfected. A right view of this matter will hinder us from falling into certain dangerous errors. Holiness is not a charm which we may put in our pockets; it is not a garment which may be worn occasionally. Holiness resembles more the tempering of a piece of metal: it enters into the entire fiber, changing its general characteristics, transforming in its influence. True, there is a holiness reckoned to the Lord's people in the robe of Christ's righteousness, which is granted to us when first we turn from sin and accept the Redeemer; but this measure and degree of holiness is Scripturally called Justification. Then we have Sanctification or setting apart, full surrender to the Lord of our wills, with all that they control of time, talent, influence and means. But this is not sufficient: we must work into our characters that which we have willed—or, as the Apostle expresses it, we must allow the Lord to work in us the holy will, and subsequently the holy conduct which must necessarily accompany the holy will as opportunity and conditions will permit.

But how is this holiness perfected in us, how does God work in us to will and then to do his good pleasure? Our text answers this portion of the question, too, assuring us that it is God's part to give the promises, and that these promises constitute the incentives to those who are of the right attitude of mind. Without these divine promises of the present and the future blessings who would battle against his own weaknesses? who would strenuously resist the attacks of the world and of the Adversary? More than this, who would willingly sacrifice his life and all his natural rights to serve the Lord and His cause, if there were no exceeding great and precious promises to quicken and energize him to the service of the King in battling against sin, in assisting all who are on the side of righteousness? Surely there would be few, if any at all. And so our text intimates, saying, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves," etc. The promises are indeed the power of God.

"GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISES."

Looking into the context to see to what promises the Apostle refers, we find in the preceding verses the declaration, "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty." What a promise! What a suggestion!—that we, by nature defiled and imperfect, should not only have the notice of our sovereign Creator, but should be invited to become His children and be given the assurance of His parental affection for us—that "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that

reverence Him." How wonderful it seems! And then, as the Apostle elsewhere declares, this is not the end of the matter, but merely the beginning, for he says, "If children then heirs, heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together."—Rom. 8: 17.

Yes, it is this thought of what is implied in the terms children of God, sons of God. The blessings and riches of the Father are to be extended through our Lord Jesus especially to the little flock, which is now being selected from amongst men to be His Bride and associates in the Kingdom. These are not accepted at once, but as it were on probation, as the Apostle says, "Now are we the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be"—if we are faithful. As sons of God in the present life we have the joy of knowing of our Father's character through His Word, which we are permitted to understand, but which the world does not understand. We are assured of divine supervision, so that not the slightest thing can happen to these sons except as their Father sees would be to their advantage. But they must show their love, their devotion, their oneness of spirit with the Father and with the Redeemer ere they can be counted in as the Bride in the full, absolute and complete sense, and be granted a share with Him in His glories.

"IN THE EVIL DAY."—Concluded from Part 3.

titles, honors and emoluments of his position, to proclaim to his confiding hearers the theory of the higher critics respecting the non-inspiration of the Scriptures, that Jesus was born like any other man, and that His death was not sacrificial and His blood a "common thing." (Heb. 10: 29.) We are not surprised that the honorable wolf whose confession we are reading, and who glories in it, honors and admires Doctor Crapsey. For our part, we can admire no such duplicity, but of the two would consider it the more honorable to be in Doctor Crapsey's position, because he is a little the less shameworthy. Let us take another quotation from this glorious confession. The writer says:—

"I have hopes that before many years the heresies, as undoubtedly they are, of the miraculous origin and resurrection of Christ will become at least tolerated opinions. With patience, tact and perseverance I hope some day to bring out this deliverance of my soul, as I have already waited in patience for a time to declare my opinions of the atonement. To expose it now would endanger my real work, which is not to teach history, not even true history concerning Jesus, His apostles, or His Church, but to enlarge lives with real religious faith, and induce some morals and gentle virtues through devotion to duty as God gives me to see it. One shrinks from being called a hypocrite, but it is encouraging to remember that in Jesus' time they were not branded as hypocrites who counted themselves still Jews and went to the feasts while in utter contradiction with the Doctors of the Law and the prevailing opinion."

"WHO GLORY IN THEIR SHAME."

Apparently, there is just a little mite of conscience here, which seems to vaguely realize that there is at least a suspicion of hypocrisy in his course. But note how he seeks to justify himself: he speaks of "devotion to duty as God gives me to see it." Should we expect that God would give such a man ability to see anything? Rather, we should say, as Jesus said to the hypocrites of old, "Ye are of your father the devil, for his works ye do. He was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth." (John 8: 44.) This man, and he is but a sample of others, is a murderer;—he is murdering in a spiritual sense the people under his care, taking from them, if possible, the spark of faith and Spirit-begetting, and doing it as did the great Adversary—by lies and by contradictions of the

It is to demonstrate their possession of these graces that these consecrated ones are left for a time in the midst of evil and unfavorable surroundings—to prove their love of righteousness, their opposition to iniquity, their love to God and their faithfulness to Him, their love to all who are in sympathy with the divine arrangement. If they stand these tests faithfully it will mean that they will endure considerable opposition from the world, the flesh and the Adversary, and that they will be correspondingly strengthened by these experiences. It is this class which the Apostle refers to, saying, "If so be that we suffer with Him we shall reign with Him." We are to suffer as He did for His right doing, and because our neighbors and friends are blind as to what is the right, the proper course. We are to suffer gladly and joyfully whatever cup the Father may permit to come to us, knowing that He is too good to be unkind, too wise to err.

"Let us then, dearly beloved, cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord." As the Apostle Peter declares, "If we do these things we shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."—2 Pet. 1: 10, 11.

Lord's Word. This man's idea of duty is very manifest: it consists in holding all the honors of men he is able to accumulate, and gathering in all the shekels within his reach, and belying his covenant with God and with his congregation. From such duty, such hypocritical wolves, good Lord deliver us! This gentleman and all the higher critics and evolutionists occupying the pulpits of Christendom are in exactly the position of the Scribes and Pharisees of old, of whom the Lord said, "Ye do make void the Word of God through your traditions." He told them that outwardly they were clean and respectable, as this man appears to be, but that inwardly they were full of all manner of corruption—deceit, selfishness, unfaithfulness,—as this man, opening his bosom, shows us he is.

Then, as now, the common people were so hypnotized by their Doctors of the Law and priests that they hesitated to hear the voice of the Son of man and his humble followers, waiting first to get the approval of the hypocritical teachers, who with outward raiment feign to be servants of God and for pretense make long prayers. What the common people needed then was what the same class need now, an awakening. And as the Israelites indeed in whom there is no guile got the message, so a similar class will get the message now. To this class and not to the higher critics and evolutionists is the promise made—"To you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, but unto all outsiders these things are done in parables and dark sayings."

We are in the shaking time, the burning time, when all the wood, hay and stubble of falsehood must be consumed, when only the precious truths of God's Word, gold, silver and precious stones of faith, will stand the test. Let us hearken to the Apostle's words, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men." Seek the "old paths"—not the paths nor the theories of the "dark ages" and their horrible "doctrines of devils," but the doctrines of Jesus and the apostles: that your faith should not stand in the doctrines of men but in the power of God.