

THE NEW LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS

by

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CHAPTER NINE

DEFILEMENT AND CLEANSING

TEXT:

- **“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”** (II Corinthians 7:1).
- **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”** (I John 1:9).
- **“Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me”** (John 13:8).

WE ARE now to consider Defilement and Cleansing as connected with Consecration.

You remember that we have been looking at the subject of consecration, first through the Temple-type; secondly, through the Priest-type. We, as believers, are both temples and priests; and we found in the consecration of the temple for the abiding presence of God, and the consecration of the priests for the service of God, a two-fold type which instructed us concerning our own consecration.

Now, while it is true that neither temple nor priest was ever reconsecrated, it is, alas, true also that both were frequently defiled, and whenever that occurred, cleansing from that defilement was imperative. A defiled priest was still a priest; indeed, he was born a priest, and consecration was but the ceremony which inducted him into his priesthood, into the exercise of its functions, just as coronation puts into rulership one who is born a prince, born with a royal right. We are priests by the new birth, and consecration but opens the door to our service as such. Defilement suspends this privilege of service. A priest defiled was sternly

FORBIDDEN TO SERVE

in the things of God until cleansed, but the method of cleansing was not reconsecration, that was never done again.

Without doubt, it occurred oftentimes, when there was a low spiritual state in Israel, that the priests, who really in God's sight, and according to the Book of God, were defiled, still served at the altar.

But nothing could have been more displeasing to God than for them to persist in serving Him with unclean hands; it was, as we might say, a wanton insult. It was shocking that one of God's priests should be defiled; it was insolent for him, with that defilement upon him, to presume to continue in the service of God. I might quote from the New Testament in this connection to show that God will have no service from a defiled servant. He has made abundant provision for

INSTANT CLEANSING

from defilement, but this He insists upon. **"They that bear the vessels of the Lord must have clean hands."** I am persuaded that one reason why there is so little fruit from very much of the service of those who unquestionably are God's children, is that they persist in service, or the forms of service, while living upon a low level.

Now I want to take up briefly these two things: defilement and cleansing as connected with consecration.

1. And, first, unpleasant as the matter is, look at defilement. Let us turn in our Bibles to the eighth chapter of Ezekiel. It may be we shall not need to go beyond that chapter, or, at most, to look at one or two other passages which may serve to bring before our minds the biblical idea of defilement.

"And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord God fell there upon me. Then I beheld, and lo, a likeness as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins even downward, fire; and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the color of amber. And he put forth the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the

VISIONS OF GOD

to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy."

Let me say a word here. This **"image of jealousy"** was simply an idol. Ezekiel goes in the spirit into the temple, and looking through the gate northward, right toward the altar, he found an idol set up in the very court of that temple, which had once been consecrated to God.

"And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there."

That was not the proper place for the glory. The proper place for the Shekinah was in the holy of holies over the ark, between the cherubim. We shall see presently why the glory had withdrawn from the holy of holies of the temple, and was abiding there; probably invisible to the eyes of apostate Israel, but visible to the faithful prophet.

“Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes the way toward the north, and behold northward at the gate of the altar, this

IMAGE OF JEALOUSY

in the entry. He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary?”

God, as it were, had withdrawn from the inner room, from the place of His enthronement, but still standing by the altar that spake of sacrifice. The higher blessings withdrawn, there was still the brazen altar for a point of meeting with God. Justification remains, blessed be God, even when His people have no heart for holiness.

“But turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations. And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall. Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door. And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about.”

There was defilement with a vengeance. They were not going in by the usual way through the veil; they had made themselves into the holy of holies. They had actually gone into the inner abiding place of God, which He had taken possession of at the consecration of that temple by the shining cloud of His glory, and had painted those golden walls with all the abominations of lust and idolatry!

“And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up.”

They had dispossessed God, so to speak, from the holy of holies, and there they had pictured their idols, which were too filthy and obscene for the world to see. And, in secret, getting in by a hole in the wall, they were offering incense to those unspeakable things.

Out in the outer court, where everyone could see, the priests were still going through the form of the regular ritual of Israel; the lamb smoking on the altar every morning and every night, and by it stood the priest in the sacred garments of priesthood! And there, just there, invisible to the defiled eyes of His priest, awful in His nearness, was the God of the altar—cast out of the holy of holies, which was painted with abominations.

“Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery?”

Surely, exposition is not needed here. In the court an idol. Within the holy place an idol. Within the holy of holies,

ALL CONCEALED

from the eyes of man, unspeakable abominations upon the painted walls, and the elders of Israel secretly offering incense.

But apply the type. We are, in ourselves, that which corresponds to the temple, the court, the holy place, and the holy of holies—the body, the heart, the mind. Do we know something of all this? Putting Jesus, by the act of consecration, into possession of the whole being, enshrining Him in heart and mind— and then letting loose the imagination to paint the walls of that inner chamber with pictures we would not wish the world to see? And do we like to go in there to see all this while keeping up our church-going—perhaps preaching or teaching Sunday-school classes—living before the world in the profession of being God’s people? Do we know anything about that? Or, if that be not our case, are we putting some idol into the temple,

SOME DARLING THING

that comes between us and God, while all the time our lips are saying: “Yes, God is supreme”; do we know anything of that? It may be money, or social position, or a habit, or just self—the ugliest idol of all.

“Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chamber of his imagery?”

All this was in the dark. I wonder if we would be willing to have the pictures which our imagination paints taken right out and shown to our fellowmen!

“He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than they do. Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord’s house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz.”

Tammuz—sun-god worship. When the sun went down, they worshipped him by weeping, as if he had died. And every morning they greeted the sun as if he were born again. That was pretty bad for the temple of the Lord, was it not?

“Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt

SEE GREATER ABOMINATIONS

than these. And he brought me into the inner court of the Lord’s house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east.”

Now sun worship, in the very essence of it, is simply nature worship. The sun is the most glorious object which meets the eye as we look abroad upon nature. It is that on which life and comfort and all those things depend, and naturally, therefore, to the heart that has gone away from God, a kind of center of that worship which goes out toward the powers of nature.

You may say that I am wasting time to dwell upon this, that we have nothing like sun worship in this country, nothing like turning our backs to the altar of God, and worshipping the sun.

I beg your pardon, we have. This is precisely

THE MOST SUBTLE ABOMINATION

permitted today in the thoughts and hearts of Christian people. It finds expression in the extraordinary deference of the modern church to so-called science. Multitudes are turning away from the Bible accounts of creation, and of the origin of man, to the improved theories and plausible hypotheses of alleged scientists; theories which hide God behind phenomena, and deny the supernatural. Witness the purchase by professed Christians of thousands upon thousands of volumes of "Natural Law in the Spiritual World."

Witness the importation by professed Christians of Henry Drummond to lecture upon the "Ascent of Man," while they know that their Bibles give one long testimony to the descent of man.

Never perhaps in all the history of the church was there such a turning of the back upon the altar of God and the temple of God to worship nature, as now, and never were these things doing such serious harm. To millions of professed Christians Drummond and Darwin are more authoritative than Moses.

Now to sum up for a moment these defilements: The idol in the holy place; the

INNER CHAMBER PAINTED

with all manner of vileness, and the elders of Israel loving to be there, while out in the court men turn their backs upon the altar of God, too "advanced" to endure a dripping cross, and esthetically worship the sun.

Turn now to the New Testament:

"And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: and when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise" (John 2:13-16).

Perhaps, we are beginning to apply the doctrine of this passage to the temples of brick and stone and wood which we have erected for the worship of God; but the deeper truth always lies back of the symbol, and we have here the thought illustrated for us of the prostitution of the natural powers of man to the mere pursuit of gain; the taking of the body and making

A MONEY-MAKING MACHINE

out of it, or an eating and drinking machine, nothing else; that body, which is the temple of God. Do we know anything of this?

Without going further, we have here certainly that which ought to search us. We have the thought of idols coming in between ourselves and God, and claiming our affections, also the thought of the mind polluted, the imagination suffered to wander into things that are unclean and painting the inner chambers with foul imagery kept very secret; of turning the back upon the altar of God in mad worship of nature and nature's laws.

2. Let us turn now to the provision, alike sublime, simple and adequate, which God has made for our cleansing.

First of all, let us look for a moment at one of the most familiar passages in the word of God. **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"** (I John 1:9).

There is something then for us to do in the matter of cleansing when we have become defiled. **"If we confess our sins."** That is a very different thing, and far more searching in its import than the mere confession of sinfulness. We do that very readily. There is not one of us but what would say: "Yes, I am a sinner."

"If we confess our sins." That means just taking the hateful things up one by one and showing them to God, saying: "I did this, and that, and that." Every parent has observed that it is very easy to get a general confession from children that they have been disobedient, but it is not so easy to get them to tell just what they have been doing that is wrong.

Confessing our sins is taking a hateful sin and holding it up before God, and letting Him look at it. Held up before God, in that white light, a sin does not look nearly so pretty as it did when we yielded to the temptation.

That is the human side of cleansing—confession. I need not say that this is a believer's privilege. The Christ-rejecter might confess his sins until he fell into perdition, and his sins would be just the same as before. **"No man cometh unto the Father, but by me,"** says Christ. There is but one way of salvation—the way of faith. But when we who have believed have confessed our sins then we may claim the promise:

"He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

First, forgiveness; then cleansing.

How simple this is! Now connect it with the third text I gave you: Peter saying “**Thou shalt never wash my feet,**” and Christ saying: “**If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.**” You see, there is no other resource. When we have become defiled we must

RUN AWAY TO JESUS

and humbly put the defiled feet in His pierced hand. But when that has been done faith says: “Now I am cleansed.”

The Christian who has confessed his sins ought not to go about with a sense of the divine displeasure, nor with the sense of defilement.

Faith says: “***I have done that which God requires from me, and now I believe He is indeed faithful, and has done His part of it. He has forgiven me, and there is no frown on His blessed face. He has cleansed me, and I am clean, and am going forward in His service with the full assurance that He is abiding sweetly once more in the very secret chambers of my being.***”

We must, as in salvation, take the divine part of it by faith.

As in consecration we yield ourselves for it and then believe we are consecrated because we dare not doubt that God does His part, so, when that consecration has become defiled, we confess the thing in all its detail to God, and we go away happy because we believe God has again done His part—has forgiven us, has cleansed us.

After all, it is all by faith. We begin by faith and we go on by faith. That which is required of us is simple and reasonable and we do it, and then we believe God has done that which He promised he would do.

After all, how very simple it is! I may have made it very difficult, although it was in my heart to make it exceedingly simple. First of all,

THE YIELDING TO GOD

for consecration, followed by a definite act of faith which says: “***God has done it; I am consecrated.***” Then when defilement comes in, confession, and then again the act of faith, which says: “***God has cleansed me, and once more I am clean every whit.***” Then we go forward in His service expecting the manifestation of His glorious power, and then His peace “**keeps** [garrisons] **our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.**”

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