

# SIMPLE TALKS ON THE TABERNACLE

by

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## CHAPTER TEN

### THE LAVER OF BRASS AND THE LOOKING-GLASS

**“And he made the laver of brass, and the foot of it of brass of the looking-glasses of the women assembling, which assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation”**  
(Exodus 38:8).

I AM not surprised that many good women had assembled at the door of the tabernacle. They generally form the majority in our congregations now. I am glad though that the Holy Spirit draws our attention to it in the Old Testament.

The world does not recognize what it owes good women.

- Women were the last at the cross and the first at the grave.
- It was a woman who, through her joyful testimony of the Lord, had living water to give and drew a whole town to the feet of the Saviour.
- It was a woman who, more than any of the apostles, showed a deep understanding for the Lord's mission, and to whom the Lord gave that desirable praise: **“She has done what she could.”**

No, I am not surprised that they were attracted to the door of the congregation.

And, of course, they wanted their share in offering their gifts to God. And again, I am not surprised. Women are more liberal than men any day. They like giving. I cannot help smiling when their thoughts fastened on looking-glasses. They had been given them by the Egyptian women. They were wonderful specimens of Egyptian handicraft. They were of brass and were highly polished — quite equals of the best modern mirrors.

God had said the laver had to be made of brass; it seemed natural to them that they should bring the only brass in their possession, their looking-glasses.

Many years ago my wife and I visited the famous palace of Sanssouci at Versailles. We paused a little in the private royal apartments and thought of the sad fate of the weak king, Louis XVI, and his beautiful wife.

The guide led us into the hall of mirrors. All the walls were covered with the most costly mirrors. With a smile the guide pointed out to us a large looking-glass in the corner. If you looked at it from one side you could hardly recognize yourself. All the little spots and wrinkles you never had noticed were magnified. In fact, you hardly saw anything but spots and failures. It was rather discouraging.

To comfort us, he had us look at the other side. We saw ourselves in the best possible light; the spots and failures had disappeared. We were rather gratified. He told us Marie Antoinette liked to spend some time in the hall of mirrors. At which side of the mirror she preferred to look he did not know.

It seems that many of God's children have a mirror room and like to look at their own picture from the best side.

They know many others who do less for the Lord and give less for the Lord's work than they. They are ready to give themselves a good testimonial. It is remarkable how little perspective some of God's children have. They have a different standard for themselves than for their brothers and sisters in Christ. They put them in the bad corner of the mirror room and see their failings with a magnifying glass. They see the mote in the brother's eye, but not the beam in their own.

What a harm a spirit of criticism does in our gatherings; what a harm we do to ourselves and others.

It is like cancer and wormwood. It keeps back conversions; it hinders our own growth; it grieves our loving Saviour who had such a keen eye for the good in others and who has warned us:

**“Judge not that ye be not judged. With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again”** (Matthew 7:1, 2).

Remember, we are prone to see those failures in others which we have ourselves. They look heinous in others; we excuse them in ourselves.

David may have had many excuses for his sinful deed with Bathsheba, but when Nathan showed him its heinousness in another, he was ready with the judgment.

**“As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die”** (II Samuel 12:5).

There is a danger in looking glasses. I am glad the good women put theirs in the clever hands of Bezaleel to make out of them a laver of brass.

Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat. The laver is for God's children, not for the unconverted. Water cannot regenerate anybody. The laver is not for sins before conversion, but for sin after conversion.

Sins of His own hurt the Saviour far more than sins of the worldly.

If your children wrong you, that hurts you far more than if a stranger does it. One of the most pathetic verses in the Bible is, **“He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”**

**“And one shall say unto him: What are these wounds in thine hand? Then he shall answer: Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends”** (Zechariah 13:6).

Those are the wounds that sting, that break the heart. Peter hurt the Lord more than the servant of the high priest, that smote His face.

Sin is a hateful thing; it is evidence of black ingratitude.

You know the story of the noble lady who threw herself at Cromwell's feet and begged him to spare her husband's life. The answer of the man with the iron heart was, “A man, a man; a word, a word. When the vesper clock from the tower strikes six, your husband's head shall fall.”

The scaffold was erected in the market place. Soldiers led the prisoner to the scaffold. His head was on the block. The executioner stood with drawn sword awaiting the stroke of the clock. The sun was going down blood-red. The people were waiting in dead silence. The clock did not strike.

“An oracle, an oracle,” the crowd cried. “Spare his life!”

The officer and the soldiers went to the tower. The verger was tolling, pulling hard; frightened sweat was on his forehead. The officer mounted the steps to the steeple.

There the brave woman with both hands was clinging to the clapper as it was striking the bell.

She fell down in a swoon, the flesh torn from the crushed hands. She had saved her husband's life. The iron man said, “A man, a man; a word, a word. The clock did not strike, her husband's life is spared.”

I want to ask you a question. When that husband was sitting at his dinner-table, looking at those crushed hands on the opposite side, could ever a harsh word against her pass his lips? As we stand at the laver! Let us ask our Lord to cleanse us not only from sin but from the love of sin.

Your Saviour did more for you than that noble woman did for her husband.

Let us not play with sin. Eve did: she looked, she saw, she ate and she gave. Those are the four steps downwards. It is not the first look. You often cannot help it. It is the second, the third look. Psychology will tell you that the moment comes when you are no longer able to resist.

Eve had eaten the apple long before it touched her lips. Many a servant of the Lord has in a weak moment spoiled a life of useful service, but the fall had begun long before. He had been playing with sin.

Job made a covenant with his eyes. Will you do it too? (Job 31:1).

When the heart is full of Jesus, and realizes what Christ has suffered for him, then there is not room for the love of sin. When your surrender to Christ is not entire, when you do not surrender to Him your whole life, remember, what you keep back does not belong to you, it belongs to Satan.

Drummond spoke of the propelling force of a new affection. He meant love to Christ drives out the love to sin. At the laver we learn that love to sin, however hidden it may be in our hearts, is already uncleanness.

*The Lord expects His children to have clean hands.*

**“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart”**  
(Psalm. 24:3, 4).

You cannot serve the Lord with unclean hands. If your hands are unclean, wash them at once; do not wait till the evening. When the Holy Spirit convicts you of having sinned, go immediately to the Lord and confess your sin. Ask Him to cleanse you. If you put it off, you will lose your joy, you will neglect the study of the Word, you will be backsliding.

In nine cases out of ten, backsliding begins with the neglect of the Word. Your prayer life will suffer, you will be no longer keen to win others for the Lord.

Dr. Torrey used to counsel new converts to keep short accounts with the Lord. It was good advice. Only with clean hands and clean feet you can have fellowship with the Lord in the sanctuary.

**“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded”** (James 4: 8).

I want you to make a mental picture: it is the upper room, Christ being with His disciples His last evening on earth. He is going to eat the Passover with them. He knew that the hour had come that He should depart to the Father. He knew, too, that the way to Father would go over Gethsemane, Pilate's Praetorium, and Golgotha. He knew it all.

I want you to watch the Lord as He goes from one to another taking the towel and stooping to wash His disciples' feet. Do you follow Him? Do you know who the man is before whom He is stooping now? It is Peter.

He objects.

The Lord tells him that unless He washes his feet, he had no part with him. Do you long to bring others to Christ?

*Clean feet, clean hands, a pure heart.*

The Lord knew the human heart. He knew what proceeded out of the heart. What about the hidden motives of our actions? Jesus said, **“I seek not my own glory.”** Does not “self” protrude in our service for the Master?

A pure heart seeks only the glory of Jesus.

What about your thought-life? That is a secret between you and God. No one else knows of it. Do you ever make mental pictures which you would not like your mother to see? Do not say that there is no harm in thoughts. Psychopathology will tell you that the effect of sinful thoughts may be more injurious than sinful deeds.

Ezekiel had a sad vision of profanation of the temple. He tells us of the seventy ancients and of their chambers of imagery. Every form of creeping things and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel were portrayed upon the wall round about (Ezekiel 8:10).

Our Lord knew the thoughts of the scribes (Matthew 9:4), but He also knows ours: **“The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity”** (Psalm. 94:11).

**The heart, Evan Hopkins says, is the central region of our being where three things are focused: the thoughts, the desires, and the will. Everyone is constantly thinking and desiring and willing; and the nature and current of his thoughts, the character and aim of his desires, as well as the attitude and direction of his will, determine the state of his heart. The man who by God's grace is regenerated has received a new nature and cannot become unregenerate though he may degenerate. But his heart may change from day to day.**

Today the Lord's beatitude may belong to him — **“Blessed are the pure in heart”**; tomorrow he may relapse into sin and lose that blessing. Now it is our privilege and our duty to be cleansed in thought and in desire, to be brought in a condition of loyalty in will and purpose, and to be kept in this state of conformity to Christ, moment by moment. **“Faithful is he who hath called us, who also will do it.”**

And the heart which the Lord cleanses He also fills.

We have paused a long time before the laver. For many it has been a solemn hour. We have seen that hands and feet are unclean; that some sin had obtained a power over us because we secretly loved it; that we often have sought our own honour and sought praise of men, instead of waiting for the **“Well done”** from the lips of the Master.

With the leper we had to cry: **“Unclean and unclean.”**

We cannot clean ourselves; we could not convert ourselves — we have tried it. And we cannot sanctify ourselves — we have tried that too. But what we cannot do, God the Holy Spirit is waiting to do for us.

**“Thou shalt put water therein”** (Exodus 40:7).

The laver itself cannot cleanse us. It is the water that cleanses. God gave water for cleansing, the blood for forgiveness.

**“According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost”** (Titus 3:5).

**“Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word”** (Ephesians 5:25, 26).

Our Lord prays, **“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth”** (John 17:17).

It will be clear to the reader that the cleansing water is a symbol of the Word, of the living Word, the risen Saviour in the Word. Purposely I have let the Word speak in these talks. I hope that the readers will meditate on the words I have quoted. There is more power in the Word than in any human explanation.

I said above, the water is for cleansing, the blood for forgiveness. I do not want you to infer from this that two fountains have been given us: one for forgiveness, the other for cleansing. Water and blood in God's Word are closely joined together. The unclean person was cleansed by the sprinkling with running water, but in the water were the ashes of the red heifer (Numbers 19:17).

Of our blessed Lord, John said: **“This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth”** (I John 5:6).

**“One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water”** (John 19:34).

*We cannot cleanse ourselves, but God can.*

He promised it to Israel after He had taken them from among the nations and brought them back into their own land. What the Lord promised to Israel, He also promises to them who by faith are the children of Abraham. If you have given up the hope of ever becoming clean, take hold of the promise:

**“I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them”** (Ezekiel 36:25-27).

I need not add a word nor detract a word. I believe that God means what He says.

We like to see something and to feel something. God says nothing about feeling. We walk by faith, not by sight. He does not say anything about what you have to do; it is all about what He is going to do. The Lord said: **“I will give.”**

Cleansing and Sanctification is a gift as well as Salvation. A gift must be given; a gift must be accepted; a gift must be used. It is faith that takes the divine hand which offers the gift. **“And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them (that means us Gentiles, we that were afar off) the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts BY FAITH”** (Acts 15:8, 9).

*The life of a Christian is a walk of faith.*

**“As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him”** (Colossians 2:6).

- By faith we accepted our Lord as our Saviour, who bore the punishment of our sin;
- By faith we accept Him as our Cleanser through water and blood.

How the process of cleansing is taking place, I cannot tell you because it is an inward process. Trust the Lord Jesus for your cleansing and trust Him for keeping you clean; and He is able and willing to do so when you abide in Him, when you can say with Paul:

**“I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me.”**

Christ in us the hope of glory and of cleansing. It is all in Christ, nothing apart from Him.

Let me make this clear through an illustration.

I well remember the time when there was no gas, no electricity. I am going to tell you something which is an impossibility. Here is a room pitch dark; you cannot feel your way in it. (I was going to say you feel the darkness). Now I am coming with a brightly burning lamp into your dark room. I put so much light into the room that the room is now full of light and remains light. It does not require the lamp any more.

Now let us use the same illustration once more, but this time there is nothing impossible about it: the darkness in the room signifies sin in our hearts, the lamp our sanctification. What the lamp is for the room, the Lord is for the heart of the believer.

By the light of his presence sin is kept without the sphere of our consciousness.

Cleanness is not something we have in ourselves, it depends on the indwelling of Christ in the heart. As long as Christ reigns in my heart, the power of sin is broken.

Shall I feel sad because I have nothing in me apart from my Lord?

On the contrary, I rejoice that I have to depend altogether on Him and have to lean hard. A simple sentence has helped me greatly.

- Jesus is stronger than the devil. Do you also believe that?
- Jesus is stronger than temptation. Do you believe that too?
- Jesus is stronger than my old nature. Do you really believe this?

The laver is the only vessel of the tabernacle of which no dimensions are given in the Bible.

There is no limit to the cleansing and keeping power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen” (Jude 24-25).**

**~ end of chapter 10 ~**

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