

QUALIFYING A NEW PRIESTHOOD

The Power of Cleansing



*“The conscience is forever; justice is temporary –
Martin Luther.*

B r o o k y R S t o c k t o n

Qualifying a New Priesthood

Version 1.0



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Preface

This work is for Christians with a tender conscience.

When one becomes a believer, he feels the relief of forgiveness and his new standing with Christ. But, it is not long into his Christian walk that he fails, feels the whip of guilt, and begins looking at himself instead of Calvary. Without knowing it, the young believer may shift his trust from Christ's doing and dying for him, to his own doing for God.

This subjective shift is permitted by the Lord so the young believer will investigate the gospel in a deeper, significant way to focus on the faithfulness of Christ and **not** his own failure; to experience cleansing again and again by faith in His work for us at the cross and His work for us in His session at the right hand of the Father.

Sanctification, the process of becoming holy, is temporal, but justification is eternal; that is, the man of faith will focus on His faithfulness and His forgiveness at the cross; and, not upon his own failures . . . or successes to be holy.

Thus, confession of sin and faith in His blood is the key that clears the conscience and enables a man to enjoy his Lord – like tasting honey after a long fast.

In so doing, he qualifies himself to be a priest of Almighty God.

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1. Preparing a New Priesthood

1 Peter 2:5, 9



◆ Hebrews 3:1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

1 Peter 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:9 But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

The Book of Leviticus is about God setting up the Levitical priesthood to serve the needs of ancient Israel.

The New Testament is about the end of the Levitical system and the beginning of a new priesthood to serve the needs of the nations.

Jesus is many things to His people. He is the Chosen one, the Seed of Abraham, the Messiah, Savior, and High Priest of His people. At the time ancient Israel rejected their Messiah, our Lord prepared a new priesthood to replace the Levitical priesthood serving in carnal Jerusalem. He prepared them to go into the world to teach the gospel and to serve the needs of the nations.

Every priest, old or new, had to make a distinction between the clean and unclean.

Leviticus 10:10 And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean;

In washing the disciples feet, Jesus inaugurated a new priesthood to perform mediation between God and men (John 13; 21:15-17).

The audacity and pride of men to think they can come to Theos without a holy priest to mediate their concerns to him. Thus, the greatest need in the world today is not more money, but holy priests that can represent men to God.

The church does **not** have priesthood; it is a priesthood (1 Peter 2:5-9). Every believer has the potential to be a holy priest, lead men to Christ, pray for blessings upon others; to mediate the concerns of God to men, and represent the concerns of men to God (1 Timothy 2:1-5, 8).

Thus, this work is an aid to help men qualify themselves to be holy, clean, priests unto the Father – like constructing a scaffold before building a tower.

2. Qualifying a New Priesthood

John 13



◆ At the Last Supper in John 13:4-5, Jesus “got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. Afterward, He poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.” In so doing, Christ was equipping His disciples to be clean priests through the metaphor of foot washing.

Leviticus 11:32 . . . it must be put into **water** . . . so it shall be cleansed.

Leviticus 14:9 . . . and he shall wash his clothes, also he shall wash his flesh in water, and he **shall be clean**.

Traditionally, this passage has been interpreted as a lesson by Jesus on serving one another. While this is indeed one of the intended directives for the disciples, it is not the prime message in this chapter.

Another way to look at this amazing scene is that Jesus was qualifying his disciples for their **new role as priests of Almighty God**.

Consider the following as evidence that Jesus washed the feet of his disciples in order to commission them for their new ministry in the new, holy priesthood -- a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6). They were the first qualified priests in a new and holy nation a.k.a. the New Israel, or the True Israel of God (1 Peter 2:9-10; Romans 9:6; Galatians 6:16).

Peter refers to the church as a "holy priesthood" and as a "royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:5-9) -- far superior to the Levitical priesthood.

The church does not have a priesthood; the church is a priesthood. All believers are priests, though not all have qualified themselves to serve in this holy ministry.



Jesus is the church's High Priest, the archetype of the Aaronic Priesthood (Hebrews 5).

He established a new priesthood to service the grand and glorious holy temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 9:13; Ephesians 2:21).

The priests in the Old Testament, Aaron and his sons, were qualified to be priests through the following sacred protocols:

- Washed with water (Leviticus 8:6)
- Clothed them with white priestly vestments (8:7)
- Anointed with oil -- a symbol of the Holy Spirit (8:10)
- Identified with the bull of the sin offering (8:14)
- Identified with the ram of the burnt offering (8:19)
- Sprinkled with blood of the ordination ram -- a peace offering (8:22-23)
 - ✓ blood on the right ear so they could hear the Word of God
 - ✓ blood on the right thumb so they could serve the will of God
 - ✓ blood on the right toe so they could walk in the house of God
- Consecrated the hands with the bread offering placed on top of the oil, fat, and blood of the ordination ram with, and then offering it to the LORD as a wave offering (cake, meal, or grain offering) -- a type of the character of Christ (8:26-29).
- Sprinkled their priestly garments with oil and blood in order to consecrate them to this ministry -- even their garments had to be clean (8:30)
- Enjoyed a fellowship consecration meal in the Tabernacle (8:31)

- Seven day period of consecration in the Tabernacle (8:32)

Once ordained, Aaron and his sons, washed their hands and feet in the brazen laver every time they entered the Tent of Meeting to perform their daily duties . . . lest they die;

The Aaronic priests not only had to be washed and cleansed when they were ordained, THEY HAD TO BE WASHED on a daily basis, week after week, month after month, and year after year, as a holy discipline **to maintain their qualifications to perform their priestly duties** (Exodus 30:19-20).

19-20 For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD:

This daily discipline of washing with water is a giant symbolic device to educate us that (a) sin is very defiling and infectious, (b) that we live in a dirty, filthy, morally contaminated society, (c) that coming into contact with sinful people and modern modes of communications, we are easily defiled (James 4:1-7); (d) that Christians must be cleansed with the washing of the water of the Word and confession of sins on a daily basis in order that their prayers and service may be acceptable to Christ (Ephesians 5:26; 1 John 1:9; James 4:8).

As the priestly family had to be washed, clothed, and anointed with oil, the new priesthood has to be washed, clothed, and anointed with the Spirit.

- The disciples were baptized as a figure of separation from sin, identification with Christ (the sacrifice for sins, Savior, and High Priest) and dedication to God (John 3:23; John 4:1; Acts 2:41).
- The disciples were cleansed by the blood of the Lamb (Romans 5:9; Ephesians 1:7).

- The disciples were clothed in robes of righteousness (Isaiah 61:10; 2 Corinthians 5:21).
- The disciples were anointed with the oil of the Spirit (John 7:39; 1 John 2:27).
- The disciples had to personally, individually wash themselves and renew their devotion to holiness on a daily basis (1 John 1:7- 9).

In reference to the clothing consider the following: All priests clothed themselves in sacred, holy garments when ministering before God and serving the duties of reconciliation. According to instruction in the Book of Exodus these garments included *"a breast piece, an ephod, a robe, a woven tunic, a turban and a sash."* (28:4).

When people believe in Christ, they are clothed in the holy garments of salvation. As priests in the New Holy Temple (the church), Christians receive a breast piece of truth, an ephod of salvation, a robe of righteousness, a woven tunic of peace, a turban of redemption, and a sash of faith (Ephesians 6:14-17).

Christians are required to be washed with the Water of the Word and to wear priestly vestments while offering "up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" and proclaiming His praises to those still trapped in darkness (1 Peter 1:5-9).

Believers are required to wear these vestments (righteousness and holiness) whenever they proclaim the Gospel of Christ to the sons of darkness.

The above vestments are spiritual. However, Paul required women to wear a physical, material veil on her head as a visible symbol of authority in temple services -- which is an icon of God's law-order; and for men to remove their hats in church. Additionally, Paul advances three symbols in 1 Corinthians 11: the veil (or scarf), the bread, and the wine.

Jesus washes his disciples' feet to purify and cleanse them for their priestly service to God.

“Unless I wash you, you have no part with me” (the true temple of God) (John 13:8).

The washing of the disciples’ feet can be compared to Exodus 30:20 wherein our Lord taught his disciples to cleanse themselves regularly from defilement in order to preserve their qualification to serve in the priesthood.

Through this simple act of foot washing, Jesus demonstrates to His disciples His eternal role as God’s High Priest and Mediator and their part in the new priesthood.

This act assured them, even though he would be subjected to the cross, that God would hear his prayers and the prayers of the new priests:

“During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek” (Hebrews 5:7-10).

In John 13, our Lord performed His duty as High Priest to qualify his disciples as priests in the new priesthood through the icon of foot washing — an instructive tool to educate these men on the necessity of continual sanctification and the need to be cleansed from defilement on a daily basis.

As God's High Priest, our Lord ordained His disciples to be priests unto him — not to be priests for the church, but to prepare the church to be a priesthood. The New Testament knows nothing of the Roman Catholic church structure!

Now sitting at the right hand of the Father, our Lord continues to pray on their behalf, *“he always lives to intercede for them”* (Hebrews 7:25), and will

empower them through the Holy Spirit to perform their priestly duties to the glory of God. Moreover, His resurrected life stands between the disciples and death.

People sometimes ask me, "What do you do?" I answer, "I am a priest of Almighty God! What do you do?"

Though this is true, I am reminded from John 13 how I must continually live a separated life and submit to the daily discipline of "self-cleansing" from defilements of the world picked up in the course of daily life.

Holiness is not an option. It is a requirement for priestly duty (1 Peter 1:15ff).

Addendum:

Hebrews 10:22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown - with a true heart—without hypocrisy; "in truth, and with a perfect heart"; a heart thoroughly imbued with "the truth" (Heb 10:26).

Gill - and our bodies washed with pure water; **not** baptismal water, but the grace of the Spirit, which is often compared to water, in Scripture: the body, as well as soul, needs washing, and renewing; internal grace influences outward, actions, which adorn religion, and without which bodies cannot be presented holy to God. The allusion is to a custom of the Jews, who were obliged to wash their bodies, and make them clean, when they prayed. So Aben Ezra observes on Genesis 35:2

Vincent - This qualification for a right approach to God is stated typologically. As the priests were sprinkled with the sacrificial blood and washed with water before ministering, so do you who have now the privilege and standing of priests in approaching God, draw near, priestlike, as sharers in an

economy which purges the conscience (Hebrews 9:14), having your consciences purged. Your own hearts must experience the effects of the great sacrifice of Christ, - pardon, moral renewal, deliverance from a legal spirit. On the priesthood of believers see 1 Peter 2:5, 1 Peter 2:9; Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 61:6. This idea is dominated in our epistle by that of Christ's priesthood; but it is not excluded, and is implied throughout. See Hebrews 13:15. For sprinkled, see on 1 Peter 1:2.

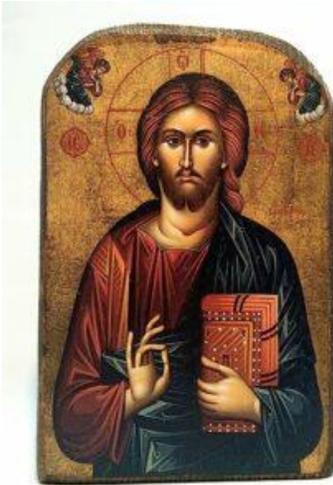
Bodies washed (λελουσμένοι τὸ σῶμα) could refer to baptism, but many think it refers to the breaking of bad habits and setting aside tongues, hands, and feet for holy purposes.

Some expositors think "bodies washed" refers to baptism. The most significant passage in that direction is 1 Peter 3:21; comp. Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:5. But, "bodies washed" could be typological. Dr. Bruce thinks that it indicates generally the thoroughness of the cleansing process undergone by one who surrenders his spirit, soul, and body to the Lord. Moreover, our bodies are to be offered as a holy sacrifice (Romans 12:1) . . . but, the problem is that untied bodies tend to crawl off the altar.

Nevertheless, the great lesson here is of cleansing from defilement that believers pick up while interacting with the world; that is, dust must be washed from the window to let the light in.

3. If I Wash Thee Not

John 13 :1-17



◆ Only John records Jesus washing the disciples feet at the Last Supper -- perhaps, to show us the extent of His love and humility, and to instruct us about the need for sanctification and the duty to love one another.

"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me" (13:8).

Without purification (sanctification) it is impossible to have fellowship with the Lord.

Furthermore, it should be observed that only John does **not** mention or comment on the Lord's Supper, but he does record the means of purification in I John 1:5-2:3 by blood and by confession.

His blood secures the legal grounds for forgiveness, and confession (water) is the practical means of maintaining our relationship with Him.

Before us is a chapter with layers of lessons for the pious.

A lesson on the omniscience of our Lord

John 13:1 Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father,

That Jesus "knew his hour" is evidence of His omniscience and His deity. Every word in this section releases tears of humility, love, and truth. Here the floodgates of heaven rains down love on the disciples showering them with a deluge of affection and devotion flowing from the heart of Christ.

"Nowhere else do the blended lights of our Lord's superhuman dignity and human tenderness shine with such lambent brightness. Nowhere else is His speech at once so simple and so deep. Nowhere else have we the heart of God so unveiled to us. " (MacLaren).

Jesus knew His purpose in the world. He was the only man earth who was born to die. He was the true Passover Lamb sent to die for His own. Those with His blood on their doorposts will never see the second death.

Jesus knew that He had less than a day to live on earth, yet He was not in an emotional frenzy over the climax of His life.

Jesus knew that He was going to the Father through the gates of death.

Jesus knew. Yet, His thoughts are not about Himself, but His disciples.

Jesus expresses no concern, worry, fear, or fretting about the coming hour. At peace, He was occupied with the needs of His disciple and not the hour of agony.

A lesson on amazing love

having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

"having loved his own" refers directly to the disciples and indirectly to the elect. He knows that these, His "little children" (John 13:33) will be left as orphans (John 14:18) (Ellicott).

"He loved" is used twice -- "Loving, he loved them with fullness of love." Hebrew syntax employs repetition to express intensity. All of Hebrew poetry is marked by repetition of words or thoughts. See the use of "pits, pits" in (Genesis 14:10); and, "that red, red, thing" (Genesis 25:30); "destroying" "destroying" in Amos 9:8; and, "peace""peace" in Isaiah 26:3.

"end" (*telos*) refers to the completion of a project . . . to the "outer limits of a matter." He showed them the full extent of His love. In this case, we

have Heaven's Crown Prince humbling Himself to serve the needs of weak, flawed, imperceptive, defiled men. But, it is more than "outer limits." The use of the word "end" shows us the perpetuity of love . . . to the end of eternity. Even the volcanic tremors of the cross did not interrupt His love for the disciples.

"Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

Such amazing love deserves my response.

My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee."

A lesson on betrayal

2 And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him;

"The supper being ended" is better translated, "the Feast of the Passover having come . . ." This would be Tuesday night before the Passover lamb(s) were slain at 3:00 on Wednesday. Jesus followed the Essene Calendar and not the Priestly Calendar; that is, the Essenes celebrated the Passover on Tuesday evening and most of the nation celebrated the Passover on Wednesday evening.

A lesson on authority

3 Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God;

Fully conscious of His supreme power and divine purpose . . . and fully aware of his destiny beyond the cross, He manifested His love to the disciples leaving them an example of love and self-denying humility.

Moreover, He peeled back the meaning of foot washing to instruct the disciples on the necessity of sanctification -- for "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 13:14-15), or as Jesus said, "You have no part with me." **Cleanness is the first qualification of being a priest.**

A lesson on humility

4 He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.

While the disciples were arguing about which of them should be the greatest (Luke 22:24-30), King Jesus rose from the table, divested Himself of His royal robe, and girded himself with a servant's towel.

5 After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

Was the "bason" made of clay or brass like the brazen laver used by Aaron?

A lesson on perception

6 Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?

Sitting at the triclinium, Peter was the last disciple to have his feet washed by Jesus.

We see in Peter a mixture of good and bad, of spiritual insight into Christ and a lack of perception of Who Christ really is. He had enough insight to see the disparity between Christ the King performing the duties of a household servant, but he lacked perception about how inappropriate it was for him to command the Lord not do something.

Peter's humility is true enough to allow him to see the incongruity of Jesus washing his feet; but not deep enough to make him conscious of the inappropriateness of opposing and commanding his Master.

Neither Peter nor the other disciples understood the spiritual significance of the act of foot washing or how important sanctification is to maintenance of one's relationship to the Lord.

It is not humility to refuse Christ's service to us. True humility gratefully receives what Christ offers believers.

"No" and "Lord" should never be used in the same sentence.

A lesson on cleansing

7 Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

These are the first words Jesus speaks in this chapter. Up until this time, we see our Lord serving and not talking. Servants act. They do not speak.

The washing is symbolic — a lesson the Lord promised to share with them after he completed the task of washing their feet.

Jesus is cleansing the feet of the disciples represents the ordination of a new priesthood -- preparing them as clean vessels for their future ministry.

Exodus 30:19-20 For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD:

8 Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

What Peter had difficulty submitting to was that Christ, the Son of God, should be His servant. Knowing His love and receiving his love are two different matters.

Before us is the master lesson of foot washing -- the value of cleansing the soul from the pollution of sin . . . of cleansing from defilement caused by being in this world surrounded by sinners.

Peter does not wait for the after knowledge Jesus promised in verse 7. The emphasis in Peter's statement is **not** upon "Thou" or "my" but upon "never"! He sees no ground on which our Lord's act can possibly be one which he can permit. (Ellicott).

Peter learned that it was **not** his place to command the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter learned that unless he accepts the love of Christ he can have no part with Him. The word "no part" means "no fellowship with;" no relationship with; no contact with; no means of serving Christ.

"If I wash thee not . . ." is a 3rd class conditional with the subjunctive -- a true condition. "thou hast no part with me" is an indicative, the mood of reality.

All those who are spiritually washed from the world's defilement by Christ, have a part in Christ.

"Unless Christ should purify Peter, he could have no evidence that he was his disciple . . . 'Unless by my doctrine and spirit I shall purify you, and remove your pride Matthew 26:33, your lack of constant watchfulness Matthew 26:40, your anger Matthew 26:51, your timidity and fear Matthew 26:70, Matthew 26:74, you can have no part in me'(Grotius)" (Barnes).

Thus, water is a huge symbol of practical cleansing of the soul through confession and practically forsaking sin (1 John 1).

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13)

- Peter learned that unless he accepts the humility of Christ, he can have no part with Him.
- Peter learned that unless he is cleansed of daily defilement, he can have no part with Him.
- Peter learned that unless he sacrifices himself for his brethren, he can not have a part with Him.
- Peter learned that unless he surrenders to the Lordship of Christ as his authority, he can have not have a part with Him.
- Peter learned "from yesterday's pardon, we should be strengthened against this day's temptation" (Matthew Henry).

If Peter would not permit our Lord to wash his feet, how could he permit Christ to serve him as Savior at the cross?

"Superficially these words might mean that unless Peter allowed Jesus to wash him, he could not sit at table with Him." (EGT).

"Christ tells him, that except he washed him, he had no part with him; that is, he should never be saved" (Matthew Poole).

The lesson here is one of sanctification. Holiness is necessary to have fellowship with Christ and to be His servant-priest: "For them *I sanctify myself*, that they too may be truly sanctified" (John 17:10). Sanctification involves learning His law, confession, repentance, and obedience.

That Peter was struggling to understand the significance of the act is self-evident by his quick reponse in verse 9.

A lesson on Cleansing

9 Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.

Peter did not fully grasp the meaning of Jesus washing his feet, but he was true to his impulsive character.

Peter reasoned, if foot washing is important, then why not give me a full bath that I can have full fellowship with Thee. Moreover, it appears that Peter considered Himself totally unclean which was **not** true.

10 Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

In saying this, Jesus acknowledge that Peter was clean . . . saved . . . and a true child of God . . . but, as a future minister he would have to undergo many washings, many periods of purification in order to be a vessel through whom Christ could work mighty things.

Two ways of cleansing

One: interaction with the Word of God

"You are clean through the word I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3-5).

"That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:26).

Two: Confession

When a man trusts the Son, he is washed clean by the blood; that is, he is totally bathed (1 John 1:5-7); but, as he conducts his affairs among men in the course of life, his feet are defiled. When defiled, the man must acknowledge that defilement and confess his sins as the means of washing. The Scripture testifies that "He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Those who experience moral purification to begin their walk with God must undergo many cleansings in order to maintain that relationship.

In interfacing with the world, godly men pick up "dirt," and must separate from sin again and again and again.

"The true believer is thus washed when he receives Christ for his salvation" (Matthew Henry); and, he is cleansed from defilement when He confesses his sins (1 John 1:9).

A Lesson on Betrayal

11 For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

All were clean, but one. All were saved, but one.

Eleven were saved that we might have hope; one was lost that we might not presume.

Those that are justified must be sanctified. Those that are not sanctified must question if they are justified.

A lesson on service

12 So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?

Now Christ fulfills His promise in verse seven: This foot washing ceremony was a lesson on love, of humility, of service, and of the importance of sanctification in the Christian ministry.

13-14 Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

Much of the Christian life is wrapped in the duty to help our brethren live a holy life.

"Duties are mutual; we must both accept help from our brethren, and afford help to our brethren" (Matthew Henry).

15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

Jesus did not turn "foot washing" into a church ordinance like baptism, communion, and headcoverings. Rather, "foot washing" was His illustration or "example" (*hupodeigma*) of the type of service Christians need to perform one to another. When Christians cook meals, do dishes, clean houses, or help another believer with plumbing problems, they fulfill this command, "do as I have done to you."

"We must address ourselves to duty, and must lay aside every thing that would hinder us in what we have to do" (Mathew Henry).

"The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

Moreover, the lesson is about qualifying men for the priesthood.

16 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.

"That lesson every servant and apostle of Jesus Christ must learn, for the servant is not greater than the Lord, nor the Apostle than the Sender" (Ellicott).

Since our Lord stooped low, so must all believers. Since Christ cleansed His disciples, each man (or woman) must sanctify himself.

A lesson on obedience

17 If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

Serving one another was an old lesson that had to be relearned and initiated in now time. Action had to be combined with knowledge. Knowledge had to be transformed into work.

The opposite of serving one another is speaking, commanding, ordering, and complaining. True Christians do not race to the top. Rather, they scratch and claw their way to the bottom. They seek to be hod-carriers and bellhops for those in positions of authority and those in need of help.

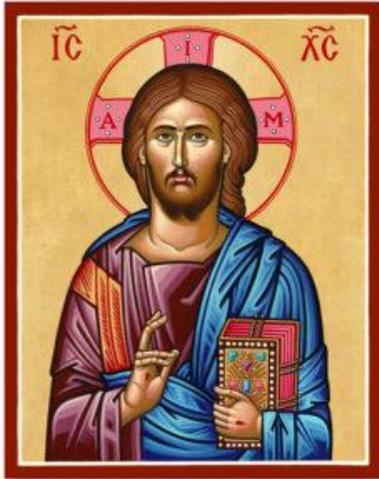
Perhaps, it would do us good to review the power of the blood and sanctification in 1 John 1, and the power of love in the Book of 1 John.

With feet washed and hearts cleansed, the disciples were ready to go into the world as priests of Almighty God . . . and they did in Acts 2.

A tree that has weathered the storms can provide shade for the weary.

4. Walking in the Light

1 John 1:1-2:2



◆ During John's ministry, many men professed to know God. But, pretenders migrated to Christian circles spoiling the purity of the church.

In his letter, John seeks to unmask these pretenders (Gnostics and Judaizers) and at the same time assure struggling Christians of their glorious standing before God in Christ.

John's challenge was how to encourage believers, who are aware of their sins and imperfections, and are insecure in their faith; and, at the same time expose wolves in sheep's clothing who claimed perfection.

Thus, John applies the lesson of cleansing (the metaphor of foot washing) he learned in John 13 to the day-to-day struggle believers have with sin in them (1:8-10).

You can be assured that you are a Christian by studying the marks of a true Christian and the character of pretenders.

The Grounds of John's Claims

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

John claims to know the Word of Life. He is not a fideist, but an empiricist providing the legal grounds on which his claims are based.

Notice how John's claims about Christ are **not** based on analytic theories but upon the Hebrew / Roman legal Rules of Evidence: What did you see, hear, touch, and feel? The highest form of proof is based on eye-witness testimony and not upon speculation, analytical-theory, or presumption. He declares what he saw, what he studied with his eyes, what he heard with his ears, and what he touched with his hands; that is, he shows us the fingerprint on the chalice.

John's Claim of Authority

2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)

3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

John's Claim that God is Light

5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

Having laid down the legal grounds (type of proof) upon which his claim is made, John now makes his claim.

While John asserts that "God is love" (4:7), he states his first claim that "God is light" with no darkness at all (1:5). He is the star that never dims; the eternal candle that always burns.

"Light" is a metaphor for holiness, purity, perfection, and beauty.

"Darkness" is a metaphor for sin, evil, and moral depravity.

Many in the early church must have claimed to have happy communion with God, even superior spirituality. But, upon closer examination,

the lives of these pretenders were filled anomalies associated with darkness.

John wants us to know that the one claiming to know God must share a measure of His light.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

John had no tolerance for those walking in the shadows, and did his best to expose these imposters. Creatures of the night have no relationship with the God of light. Those who say they know the Father of Lights, but live in caves are liars.

"To walk in darkness, is to live and act against religion. God holds no heavenly fellowship or intercourse with unholy souls. There is no truth in their profession; their practice shows its folly and falsehood " (Matthew-Henry).

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light,

This wonderful text has three important clauses.

The contingency word "if" introduces a 3rd class conditional clause with the subjunctive" -- maybe you do, but maybe you don't, but if you do, you will walk in the light.

we have fellowship one with another,

John did not say, "if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with God;" but, "fellowship one with another."

Walking with God's people is primary evidence one is walking in the light. Instead of calling the pretenders "liars," john flips the coin on its edge to expose false claims; that is, those claiming to walk with God must also walk happily with the flawed, fractured people of God. God's heart is with His people, and if professing Christians do not love God's people, they don't know God. If one claiming to know the Shepherd does not hang

around the sheep, he is probably a wolf in sheep's clothing lip syncing with baaing sheep.

and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

The verb "cleanseth" (*katarizo*) introduces the subject of sanctification, and not justification.

We get the word "catharsis" from this Greek stem. "*Catharsis*" is "a metaphor used by Aristotle in the *Poetics* to describe the effects of true tragedy on the spectator. The use is derived from the medical **term** *katharsis* (Greek: "purgation" or "purification"). Aristotle states that the purpose of tragedy is to arouse "terror and pity" and thereby effect the catharsis of these emotions" (Britannica).

The spirit uses the term "*catharsis*" to define the healing of lepers in Matthew 11:5.

The concern in 1 John is **not** being saved from the penalty of sin, but the power of sin and its haunting influence on the conscience. He is **not** discussing being "redeemed" by blood, but being "cleansed" and "healed" by blood. Even the best of saints sin and "feel" the ring, pop, and thump of guilt pounding away like kettledrums in the conscience.

This text ministers to the conscience informing believing men that nike-faith in the blood cleanses and qualifies them for moment by moment fellowship with the Father and the Son. Faith in the blood, therefore, silences the percussions troubling conscience (Hebrews 10:17).

Rest, soul, rest in the sufficiency and efficiency of the blood of Christ which is working now, this moment, to cleanse your conscience.

- Believing men are propitiated through His blood - Romans 3:25
- Believing men are justified by His blood - Romans 5:9
- Believing men are redeemed by His blood - Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14, Hebrews 9:12, 1 Peter 1:18-19, Revelation 5:9

- Believing men are made near to God and His promises by His blood - Ephesians 2:13
- Believing men secure peace with God through His blood - Colossians 1:20
- Believing men obtain a clean conscience through His blood - Hebrews 9:12-14
- Believing men attain boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus - Hebrews 10:19
- Believing men are sanctified by His blood - Hebrews 13:12, 1 Peter 1:2
- Believing men are repaired and equipped to serve God by His blood - Hebrews 13:20-21
- Believing men are cleansed by His blood - 1 John 1:7
- Believing men are washed from their sins by the Blood of Christ - Revelation 1:5
- Believing men are made white in the blood of the Lamb - Revelation 7:14
- Believing men gain victory over Satan, the accuser of the brethren, by His blood - Revelation 12:11

In 1 John 1:7, the apostle is not occupied with the cross, but with the throne; not with the blood that purchases sinners, but the life-giving blood of Christ which purifies and sanctifies the saint forever. Blood in this text has "the cleansing power of life" similar to Paul's statement in Romans 8:2 "the law of the spirit of life in Jesus Christ makes me free from the law of sin and death."

We are not only saved by his death from the penalty of sin, we are saved by His life from the power of sin (Romans 5:10); by the cross, and by the throne; by His sacrifice and by His priestly ministry on the throne.

When Zachariah gained insight into the Christ-child, he saw the hope that "we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear" (Luke 1:74). How can we serve Him without fear? The answer is in 1 John 1:7 and Hebrews 13:20-21.

In Hebrews we read, "**through the blood** of the everlasting covenant, **make you perfect** (katartizo) **in every good work** to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight" (13:20-21).

The word "perfect" (*katartizo - tisai*) (aorist optative - a wish) means "to equip thoroughly" and "to repair." It is translated "perfectly joined together" in 1 Corinthians 1:10; "fully furnished" or "equipped" in 2 Timothy 3:17; "to mend" nets in Matthew 4:21; "to restore" in Galatians 6:1; and "to frame" in Hebrews 11:3. In using the optative the apostle is expressing a wish – the possibility that a believer's faith-consideration of the blood will fully equip him to serve God.

Christ not only saves us through the power of His death unto justification; He saves us through the power of His risen life unto sanctification. The One saving us through His death from the penalty of sin is the present-risen Christ saving us from the power of sin. He saves men from the condemnation of sin through faith in His death, and saves men from the domination of sin through faith in His highly exalted life at the right hand of the Father (Colossians 3:2).

A cleansing from the dominion and the power of sin is granted to us, if the life of Jesus Christ is breathing in our lives as we depend on His heart-beat operating within us by His Spirit.

The sacrifice on the Cross is the basis of everything, but that sacrifice does not exhaust what Christ does for us. He died for our salvation, and lives for our sanctification. He died for us; He lives in us. Because He died, we are forgiven; because He lives, we are made pure (Maclaren).

That only way we can become free from the tyranny that dominates us, is having the life of Christ as the energizing principle helping us to be holy. When we depend on His life as the animating principle of our lives, the spirit of Jesus emancipates us from the power of sin and death (Maclaren).

The blood of Christ redeems us from the penalty of sin unto justification (*being declared righteous*), but the quickening blood of Christ in His

intercessory work at the right hand of God cleanses us from the power of sin unto sanctification (*being made righteous*).

The verb "cleanseth" is a present active indicative indicating His blood cleanses and keeps on purifying the saint. Believing men are not only redeemed by His blood, but sanctified by His blood so they are qualified to walk in the light. Like silver is refined by heat, the heart is refined by continual reliance on the life of Christ as the animating power of his life.

If the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from ALL sin. What does that leave for baptism . . . or prayer . . . or penance . . . or saying the Rosary to cleanse? Ans: zero, zilch, nada, zippo.

Claiming the Power of Confession

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

John was an apostle of love, but he was also a "son of thunder" totally intolerant of "goodie-two-shoes" type Christianity where people claim to have achieved a state of perfection. His intense moral sincerity and his love for Jesus made him hate evil and spiritual pride.

That men are sinners is a fact regarding our humanity. To deny the presence of sin in the flesh (the unregenerated part of man) is to deceive ourselves and to build life on a fiction and not truth. That men are born good is denied in the gospel (Romans 3:10-12). Failure to see the problem makes it impossible to see the remedy.

Even after we are both justified and regenerated, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. Those in the kingdom of God have experienced the blessings of salvation in a first fruits way, but **not** the full harvest. Men are regenerated in soul, but still possess an unregenerated body with all its components. Christ saves men from the penalty of sin and the power of sin, but not the presence of sin – that blessed state awaits the *Parousia*.

The wretchedness of deception is the deceived does not know that he is deceived. Those around him know he is a deeply flawed, but the deceived can't see it because they are like marionettes controlled by puppeteers.

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Truth be known, many Christians are tied up in knots over their failures which prevents them from enjoying the Lord and His accomplishments for them at the cross and the throne. Thus, 1 John 1:9 is the remedy for the guilty-misery pounding like drums in our conscience.

The word, "confess" (*homologeō*) means to agree with -- part of the 3rd class conditional clause involving a subjunctive – a call to honesty.

The word "just" in this context means "faithful to His promises;" that is, God is a Promise-keeper.

"Walking in the light" involves naming and confessing one's sins as the Spirit identifies them to him. Honest, formal admission of sins to God is evidence the believer is walking in the light with God. Silence, denial, and concealment belong to the darkness.

Know that confession by itself does not sanitize the soul. There is no forgiveness apart from the doing and dying of Christ. Confession is the catalyst that enables the blood to be applied to our sins so we can maintain our walk with the Father and the Son moment by moment. Light cleanses because the Truth reaches the man.

Know that as light dispels darkness, confession exposes sin so that light of Christ's accomplishments can heal the man. Mothers used to say, "Play in the sunshine" because of the therapeutic nature of sunlight. As sunlight disinfects and heals wounds, walking in the light with an honest and open heart heals the sinner; that is, confession enables the man to come into the sunlight where the blood of Christ can be applied to the soul (1:7).

Know that confession to a "priest" does not cleanse the soul. The "blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin." Confession of sins to God (and forsaking them) enables the Spirit to apply the cleansing power of the blood to our soul (Proverbs 28:13).

Know that confession to Mary is as worthless as a chocolate tea pot.

Know that God is faithful to purify the believer because of the doing and dying of Christ.

Know that confession connects the Christian with the cure (blood) to effectively maintain the man in his walk "with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Because Christ is the believer's Representative at the throne of God, he can afford to admit guilt before God. Walking in the light means the man can be humble and acknowledge the worst about him knowing that he will not be rejected. The one honestly confessing known sins in their full extent has the full assurance of free and full forgiveness necessary to walk in the light "with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

Know that those walking in the light are given a promise. Confession, as opposed to suppression, enables the believer to claim God's forgiveness and enjoy the cleansing of the conscience from ALL unrighteousness.

This confidence is not based on one's "victory" over sin or the strength of one's resistance to sin, but upon God's character: i.e. when we come into the light and confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all sin because His Son shed his blood as a payment for our sins. Being so cleansed equips us to pray and serve Him.

1 John 2:20 For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

Know that confession of sin is more like a "foot washing" than a total bath (See John 13) -- a necessary process to wash away the defilement that comes from walking among sinners.

Know that confession must be accompanied by nuke-faith. Faith has to be aggressive after the conscience has been defiled. For this reason the psalmist (Psalm 32) exhorts confessors to triple down on the benefits of confession by **denying** one's feelings and **believing** the promises – sing like a nightingale *until one's feelings match the truth of God's promises*.

Know that joy over forgiveness is evidence of nuke-faith. These acts of obedience make the heart glad. Know it; Believe it; Claim it.

Psalm 32:11 **Be glad** in the LORD, and **rejoice**, ye righteous: and **shout for joy**, all ye that are upright in heart.

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Another way people handle guilt is to say their trespass was not sin; that they have no sin.

The verb "sinned" is part of a 3rd class conditional clause. It is a perfect, active indicative meaning that one has sinned in the past and continues to be a sinner in the present. The adverb "no" negates the verb; i.e., these pretenders deny they have sinned in the past; that they are sinners still; and that their sins are not really sins.

Again, John reveals his intolerance of those with a "holier than thou" attitude. Those claiming perfection or a superior spirituality make Him a liar, and are disobedient to His Word!

Claiming the Power of His Intercessor Work

John's Intolerance of careless, reckless living.

John's words are so simple that a child can understand them. He does not argue or reason, he declares the truth in a simple way in order to open the windows of the mind.

2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.

John's purpose in writing is clear! He writes so believers will "man-up" and not sin! He is totally intolerant of casual, careless, reckless living and the tolerance of those that support an irresponsible, permissive, indulgent behavior.

And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

An advocate is a representative, interpleader, legal-counselor, or defender; that is, one who pleads the cause of another in a court of law.

The believer has two advocates (*parakletos*): (1) the Lord Jesus Christ who is the Christian's Advocate in Heaven; and (2) the Holy Spirit who is his Advocate / Comforter / Helper on earth (John 14:16).

This Advocate is said to be "righteous;" that is, John wants believers to know their standing in this Court is based completely on the merits of Another — a Christian truth that ought to produce peace in the heart and praise on the lips —like sunlight breaking through a London fog.

John does not want his flock to sin, but if any do sin, he doesn't want them to despair or flagellate themselves as if one has to wear a crown of thorns on his own head. He reminds the people that **Jesus is their competent, effective Advocate before the Father . . .** and that He is the "propitiation" for their sins.

Claiming the Power of His propitiatory work on the Cross

2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

The term "propitiation" comes from the Greek term *hilismos* which is the root word for "propitiation" or "mercy seat" resting as a lid above the Ark of the Covenant. As the cherubim looked down on the ark, they saw the law (two stone tablets) -- a giant visual representation instructing students that God is obligated to punish sin. In OT times, the priest put blood on the "mercy seat" cover -- another Herculean metaphor of

propitiation instructing students that the debt of sin has been fully discharged by the doing and dying of Another (Romans 3:24ff).

The New Testament points us to the cross and to the fact the blood of Jesus paid the debt for sin; that He is God's Mercy Seat; that the Judge accepts His blood as currency to settle the debt of sin. Therefore, He is our propitiation, mercy seat, and *hilasterion*. Since the Creator-Judge is satisfied with this transaction, the sinner's soul can rest. The debt is paid! Hallelujah! Rest, Soul, Rest like you are wrapped in a cocoon of warm silence!

John's Evidence that One is in the Faith

Over the next few chapters, John lists the marks of a true Christian in contrast to the Gnostics and fake Jews who claimed to know God but in their works denied Him. The marks, like obedience to God's Commandments, provide evidence that one truly walks in the Light. We have the right, even the duty, to judge whether one is truly in the faith.

Notice a few **marks of a true Christian** in the Book of 1 John:

- True believers keep the Ten Commandment and all relevant case law in His Word - 2:3, 3:24
- True believers love the brethren - 2:11, 3:14; 4:8, 20
- True believers do not love the world - 2:15ff; 4:4-5; 5:4
- True believers confesses that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God - 2:22; 4:2, 15; 5:1, 13
- True believers have the Holy Spirit - 2:20, 27; 4:13
- True believers seek to do what is right - 2:29-3:10
- True believers make a break from sin - 2:9 (i.e. do not continually keep on sinning)
- True believers practice charity (1 John 4).

We live in a dark world, but God's Word is the light that challenges the darkness. Walk in the light and we won't stumble on loose stones in the path.

5. Clearing the Conscience

1 John 1:9



◆ Truth be known, many Christians are tied up in knots over their failures -- failures that prevent them from enjoying the Lord and His accomplishments for them at the cross and the throne.

Confession is the remedy for the misery of those suffering from the megaphone of guilt.

1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The word "confess" (*homologeō*) means *to agree with* -- part of the 3rd class conditional clause involving a subjunctive: *If we confess our sins,* and few do, but if we do . . .

The word "just" in this context means "faithful to His promises;" that is, God is a Promise-keeper.

"Walking in the light" involves naming and confessing one's sins as the Spirit identifies them to him.

Proverbs 28:13 "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper:
But whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy"

This confession is not to men . . . to pastors . . . or to Catholic "priests" in confessionals – a concept foreign to the New Testament. Sins are private matters and not topics for public notice. Confessing to a clergyman may make you feel better, but it does **not** cleanse the soul. Confession is to

God, not men; in private, not in public; in the prayer-closet; not a church confessional.

Further, there is no such concept, idea, or Biblical doctrine about confessing to Mary. She is not a mediator to God nor is she the fourth person of the Trinity. Confessing to Virgin Mary is as about as helpful as pouring water into a sieve.

Formal admission of sins to God (in private) is evidence the believer is walking in the light with God. Silence, denial, and concealment belong to the darkness.

Confession by itself does not sanitize the soul. Cleansing is ONLY accomplished by His sacrifice at the cross. There is no cleansing from sin apart from confession to the Lord. All the prayer in the world cannot cleanse the soul unless one has appropriated the cleansing power of His blood -- the currency of the spirit-world.

Cleansing from defilement for the Christian is achieved by confession. Christ need not die again! Confession brings the stained believer in contact with the cleansing power of the blood and the water of His Word.

Confession acts like foot washing – a metaphor for cleansing from daily defilements.

Light cleanses because the Truth reaches the man. As light dispels darkness, confession exposes sin so that the light of Christ's accomplishments can heal the man. Mothers used to say, "Play in the sunshine" because of the therapeutic nature of sunlight. As sunlight disinfects and heals wounds, walking in the light with an honest and open heart heals the sinner; that is confession enables the man to come into the sunlight where the blood of Christ can be applied to the soul (1:7).

Know that confession by itself does not cleanse the soul. There is no forgiveness apart from the doing and dying of Christ. Confession is the catalyst that enables the Spirit to apply the benefits of the cross to our

sins so we can maintain our walk with the Father and the Son moment by moment.

Know that confession to a priest does not cleanse the soul. The "blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin." Confession of sins to God (and forsaking them) enables the Spirit to apply the cleansing power of the blood to the conscience (Proverbs 28:13).

God is faithful to purify the believer because of the doing and dying of Christ. Confession connects the Christian with the cure (blood) to effectively maintain the man in his walk "with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Because Christ is the believer's Representative at the throne of God, he can afford to admit guilt before God. Walking in the light means the man can be humble and acknowledge the worst about himself knowing that he will **not** be rejected. The one honestly confessing known sins has the full assurance of free and full forgiveness necessary to walk in the light "with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

Those walking in the light are given a promise. Confession, as opposed to suppression, enables the believer to claim God's forgiveness and enjoy the cleansing of the conscience from ALL unrighteousness. This confidence is not based on one's "victory" over sin or the strength of one's resistance to sin, **but upon God's character**: i.e. when we come into the light and confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse us because His Son shed his blood as a payment for our sins. Being so cleansed equips us to pray and serve Him.

1 John 2:20 For if our heart condemn us, **God is greater than our heart**, and knoweth all things.

Luke 1:74- 75 That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies **might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness BEFORE him**, all the days of our life.

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love; but **perfect love casteth out fear**: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

Confession of sin is more like a "foot washing" than a total bath (See John 13) -- a necessary process to wash away the defilement that comes from walking on dirty city streets filled with sinners.

Confession must be accompanied by faith. Faith has to be aggressive after the conscience has knowledge of failure. For this reason the psalmist (Psalm 32) exhorts confessors **to triple down** on laying hold of the benefits of confession by denying one's feelings and believing the promises until one's feelings match the truth of God's promises. Joy over forgiveness is evidence of faith. These acts of obedience make the heart glad. Believe it, then achieve it.

King David, in his great confession said,

Psalm 32:11 **Be glad** in the LORD, and **rejoice**, ye righteous: and **shout for joy**, all *ye that are* upright in heart.

Confession enables God to work, but faith enables the man to enjoy the intended effect of forgiveness. Confession without faith in the Promise leads to misery. That is, happiness after confession is like a garden that must be worked, watered, and weeded by faith in God's Word.

6. The Power of a Clear Conscience

1 Timothy 1:18-19



◆ This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck:

Men are in search of power, but have you ever considered the power of a good conscience?

A healthy conscience is essential for not only walking with God but for spiritual service in the battle against the unholy and profane.

The conscience is forever; justice is temporary – Martin Luther.

This spiritual insight means that man-made laws and judicial systems are imperfect and temporary, while conscience is eternal — a moral compass in a dark world that is constant and enduring

The apostle Paul sent his son Timothy into the Roman Theater to wage war against crafty Jews and indomitable Romans armed only with the “faith” (the gospel) and a “good conscience.”

Are we arming our children with a good conscience so they can fight against the demoralization of our age? Truth be known, we do not train the consciences of our children like we ought. Americans are more interested in their boys being tough football players than sensitive holy men. Parents want their children to be popular in school rather than approved by the Holy Spirit. Moreover, being blasted with images of

murder and sex on TV harms children; that is, the need of our time is people with a pure conscience.

The Greeks honor a mystic Saint named Demetrius (13th century) in the Village of Basarabov who sought to live a holy life through asceticism. As he was taking out the cows to pasture, he stepped on a nest of baby birds hidden in the deep grass crushing them to death. Distressed over his carelessness, he decided go barefoot for three years as an act of repentance. Later, he joined a monastery and spent much time in prayer and service to God.

The power of his life was a pure conscience. He was considered so holy and pure, that after his death miracles were said to happen by touching his coffin.

When I was a young boy, my father gave me a BB gun. I couldn't wait to prove my marksman skills. One day, I aimed a bird and got it dead center. I proudly took my kill to my grandmother who looked at me with one of those disgusted expressions asking me, "Now what are you going to do with it?"

Suddenly, my conscience came alive. The bird did not hurt me, nor did I need it for food. Yet, I had killed it without cause. From that day forward, I never killed another animal unless it was an act of necessity.

Raised on a farm, I loved all the animals God had given us. We gave them the best life we could . . . and, when I was grown up, and it came time to take the cows to market, I would cry all the way to the slaughter house. Yes, I gave the order to have many an animal killed, but it was to feed my family and to build my business.

When piglets were born, I was there at 2:00 in the morning cleaning them up and making sure mom didn't squash her litter. For those newborns that struggled, I would give them mouth to snout resuscitation. Some made it, others died in my hands. This 200 pound man, ex-football player, now farmer, always grieved at the death of a young piglet.

When I was in high school, I had a special girl friend. One day, we were enjoying the afternoon, when a rude driver pulled in front of us forcing me to slam on the brakes and swerve off the road. In my frustration, I uttered an expletive, "D**m!"

My girlfriend started to laugh, but I pulled off the road, looked her in the eye and said, "I am so sorry I swore in your presence. It will not happen again. Can you forgive me?"

I was so stricken with guilt and so ashamed, I asked the LORD God right then and there to help me to never swear again . . . and I was not yet a Christian. Shortly thereafter, I bought a Bible and started to read it every single day.

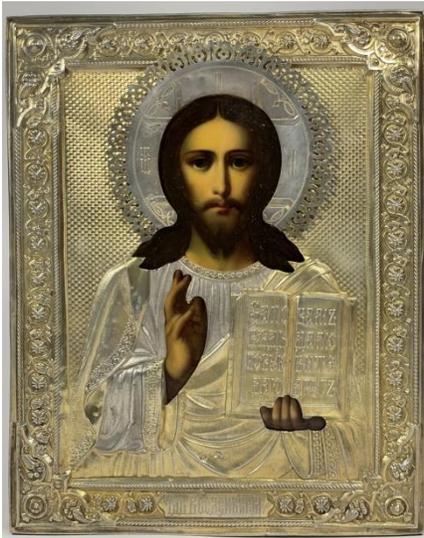
I thank God for my grandmother who awakened my conscience. Though I played football in college and had to play on a team with many a foul mouth lineman, swear words never touched my lips Why? Because I saw the importance of a good conscience and hated the guilt associated with breaking any of God's Ten Commandments.

The term conscience means "with knowledge," and it refers to knowing right and wrong, good and evil.

The conscience is the soul's alarm system. What a smoke alarm is to a homeowner, the conscience is to a man. The conscience is a gift of God that lets a man know when evil is near. But, what shall a man do if his conscience does not work correctly?

7. Six Conditions of the Conscience

1 Timothy 1:5



◆ Six conditions of the conscience are mentioned in Scripture.

A Good Conscience:

“Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned” (1 Timothy 1:5; 1 Peter 3:16, 21).

A good conscience is one that works right. It is like a smoke alarm that works properly. It is programmed by God’s Word and sounds an alarm when evil is present. How can you avoid evil if your conscience does not recognize its presence? A good conscience is indispensable for happiness.

A good conscience is one that has been trained by a proper study of God's law. It acts like a spiritual sensor that protects the soul from the flames of sin. It does not, however, go off over trivialities like driving ten miles over the speed limit or being five minutes late for an appointment. The Bible warns against misplaced pity and shunning duty related to justice and the punishment of evil doers (Deuteronomy 7:16). A good conscience rejoices in justice where the unrighteous fear to tread, but is grieved by personal sins that others applaud.

A Defiled Conscience:

“Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled” (Titus 1: 15).

A defiled conscience is a dirty conscience. It is like a car windshield that gets dirtier and dirtier. A dirty conscience is undependable, unreliable, overloaded, tired, and sluggish. It fails to produce a loud alarm in the presence of evil. Moreover, it blinds men to dangers.

The solution for a dirty conscience is a thorough scrubbing by the Word of God (Psalm 119:9-11). It is like cleaning a mirror with Windex so you can see clearly.

A Seared Conscience:

“Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron” (1 Timothy 4:2).

A seared conscience is like scar tissue with no feeling. Though wickedness is present, the conscience does not sound a warning. It is like a smoke alarm in the middle of a fire that doesn't work or only works when the flames engulf the system. By then, it is too late.

One develops a seared conscience by ignoring the alarm during a fire; like ignoring the alarm clock and sleeping in. Sinning again and again creates spiritual scar tissue.

The solution for a seared conscience is deep, deep repentance.

A Weak Conscience:

“But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ” (1 Corinthians 8:12).

The Jews of Paul's day had a weak conscience (Romans 14). Though God pronounced all foods clean, their conscience sounded an alarm in the presence of pork, shrimp, and ham sandwiches. A weak conscience is a conscience that rings over trivia: eating an extra hotdog, stuttering over a word, or driving five miles over the speed limit. A weak conscience is a nuisance because it sounds an alarm in a time of peace. It is like a smoke alarm that goes off on a humid day.

The solution for a weak conscience is to reprogram it according to God's Word – to update the software in your soul by studying God's law to determine the character of right and wrong.

An Evil Conscience:

“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:22).

An evil conscience is a conscience that feels bad for doing something right. Like a virus on your computer, bad programming produces an evil conscience. For example: you may hear of convicts that won't snitch on fellow inmates out of a false sense of loyalty. They feel good about protecting a murderer, and they feel bad about helping the police find a suspect. Such a condition is the work of an evil conscience.

The solution for an evil conscience is deprogramming. One must trash bad instructions, delete bad files, and then reprogram the conscience with instructions from God's Word.

A Pure Conscience:

“Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience” (1 Timothy 3: 9; 2 Timothy 1:3).

The word “pure” is the word “*kartharsis*.” A pure conscience is one that has been inspected, scrubbed clean, and programmed correctly. The key to a pure conscience is (1) accurate knowledge of God's law; (2) faith in the blood of Christ (1 John 1:7); and, honest confession – that is, the acknowledgement of our trespasses to God (1 John 1:9).

God does not want us to play “Christian.” He does not want us to be devils during the week and play angels on Sunday. Better to be a devil all week than play angel on Sunday. Better yet, be an angel all week!

Greek sculptures were often chipped and cracked. In order to hide these cracks, Greeks put wax over the defects. When a sculpture was sold

without wax, it was said to be “sincere.” Likewise, God does not want us to pretend to be holy. He wants us to be real and honest about our lives. A real Christian, cracks and all, is preferred over a Christian that hides his faults with spiritual wax (acting) like a politician.

There is nothing in public education that develops the conscience. In fact, most humanistic education teaches students how to sin without guilt; that abortion isn't murder; that homosexuality is an acceptable practice. It is an education that justifies sin without justifying the sinner. Public education prepares youth to be inmates because prison are filled with people without a good conscience (satire).

Americans would do well to remember Saint Demetrius and to cultivate a good conscience; to fear sin, and to lay hold of the grace of God that produces a correct knowledge of God's law. For God's law is the canon of right and wrong.

In Summary, God calls us to “fight the good fight.” He arms us, not with skills and wealth, but a good conscience and a sincere faith. Armed with these weapons, you will have power in your life to serve God even in the presence of your enemies – like an evergreen tree in the winter; like a lighthouse in a storm; like a candle that refuses to go out in the wind.

8. Confession and Restoration

Psalm 51



◆ Except for verse 18, there is little doubt this psalm was written by David -- the principle confession of his terrible sin regarding Uriah and Bathsheba. A must study for all who desire to walk with God in truth.

A Prayer for Pardon

Without any attempt to justify himself or to blame others, David confesses his sins and pleads for mercy. There is nothing superficial about this confession. David expresses deep repentance for his deep sins. He prays for pardon, for cleansing, for a new heart, for a new relationship, and for new joy.

That David could ever recover from such serious sins as adultery and murder is nothing short of astounding. Most of us believe God can forgive little sins, but believing that He will forgive big, fat, ugly, inexcusable sins is another matter.

Maybe the real miracle of this passage is that God heard his prayer, forgave the man, and then set about to mend and restore his sin-shattered soul.

The fact is that God did forgive David, but it is also a fact that David was never quite the same after his fall. The battle with shame and guilt plagued David the rest of his life.

Forgiveness is available to all men, and some find it. But repairing the sin-tortured heart is like repairing a locomotive after a train wreck -- very painstaking and difficult. Best not to sin in the first place.

Psalm 51:1 <To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.> Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

This is the utterance of a crushed, broken heart. David is not dealing with "guilt feelings," but with true guilt, real guilt, real law, the breaking of law, condemnation, and the penalty for lawbreaking. Hanging his head in shame, he pleads the mercy of the court.

There is no attempt to excuse his sin, to cover it up, or to justify his actions. Moreover, David does not complain about God's law or the high standards or righteousness. Guilty and totally at fault, David pleads for mercy -- undeserved favor.

Deep sins call for deep repentance.

2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

This verse begins with an infinitive verb with an imperative meaning "multiply your washing toward me." That is, David needed continual, constant, effective cleansing from the filth of his sins from his conscience. He was not a victim of parental neglect or childhood traumas. He was totally responsible for his sin and therefore pleaded for total cleansing of his lust, his homicidal mania, hypocrisy, and hard-hearted cover up.

A warehouse full of Borax Soap could not cleanse his conscience, but the "blood of Christ" cleanses us from all sin. Sin is not in the environment. It is in me . . . in you . . . in all men.

3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

David did not hide or conceal his sin. He came clean and confessed the particulars of his sins. David does not play the victim. He was not a prey,

but a predator; he was not injured, he did the bruising; he was not hurt, he did the hurting; he was not wounded, he did the wounding.

4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

David viewed his immoral acts as sin. These were not foibles, flaws, shortcomings, mistakes, or blemishes, but deliberate, willful acts of rebellion against God's righteous law. He did not violate his own personal principles, but intentionally violated the law of the LORD God (the 10th, 7th, 6th, 8th, and 9th Commandments). Moreover, a case could be made that in his sin with Bathsheba, David violated all Ten Commandments.

David did **not** justify his acts; rather, he justified God by declaring His law to be right and just.

5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

"shapen" means "molded." David did not trace his sin back to his parents, early childhood training, or poverty, but to the fact that he was born a sinner with a desire and capacity to sin. Though inexcusable, David did what he wanted to do; and, what he wanted to do was sin. The problem was his own sin, not his parent's sins or society's sins.. He did not blame his environment or the government, but sin at work in his person.

David's problem was not a lack of self-esteem, but too much self-esteem. He sinned when he became lust-centered instead of duty-centered.

6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

"desirest" means "to take pleasure in."

God delights in truth; man takes pleasure in fables, fictions, and fantasies. To be right with God who is truth, one must give up fairy tales,

myths, and utopian ideals; that is, a man desiring to be right with God must repent of all that is contrary to truth (God's law). He must seek deliverance from presumptions and falsehoods that trap him in sin.

7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Hyssop, a small minty plant, was used by Hebrews in their sacred rights and cleansing rituals. Thus, hyssop was a symbol of purification. David didn't seek ceremonial cleansing, but substantial cleansing by the power and purity of the Holy Spirit. Little did he know that his greater son, the Lord Jesus Christ, would have to shed His blood so he his debt could be discharged.

8 Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.

Instead of listening to the bone-crushing roars of guilt, David longed to hear the sweet harmonies of shalom.

Spiritual alarms blasted away in his conscience like air-raid sirens. The cacophony of ear-splitting sins with all their blaring discords deafened David to the Word of God. He longed for the quiet, peaceful melodies of "forgiveness," "joy," "gladness," and "pardon."

9 Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

"Hide thy face from my sins" (an anthropomorphism) - That is, do not look at them; take my trespasses away; turn your ears and eyes from my ugliness; do not let my sins march into Court and make charges against me. Please don't allow these true witnesses to testify in this Court anymore. I admit I am guilty. Therefore, I plead the mercy of the Court.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

"Create" (bara) means to create something ex nihilo — something that was not there before (Genesis 1:1). Lord, you have every right to hand

down a sentence belonging to murderers and adulterers, but hear my plea before the sentence is passed. I plead the mercy of this Court. Instead of executing your servant, create in me a clean heart, scrub me down, and wash me free from the power and defilement of sins that ruled my heart.

11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

"Cast me not away from thy presence" means do not reject me, abandon me, or throw me away like an oil-stained cloth. Please, LORD, do not leave me in my sin . . . to be ruled and controlled by the spirit of rebellion.

"take not thy holy spirit from me" must be taken in the Old Testament sense and not from a New Testament perspective. In David's day, the Holy Spirit guided David, spoke to David and influenced him in good ways. David is praying that God would again be pleased to lead him by His Spirit. It is highly unlikely that David was thinking of the Spirit as the 3rd Person of the Trinity, the Agent of rebirth, the Downpayment of salvation, and the One indwelling the temple of his heart as the Representative of Christ.

12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

David knew what it was like to know God and to fellowship with Him . . . a delight which he lost when he sinned against God. His prayer is simply, "Cause your joy to return. Hold me up! Don't destroy me."

Before us is a great lesson of fellowship: the only way to enjoy "religion" is to do it right: to hear God's Word, to obey it, and to keep short accounts of wrongdoing. There is no joy in being half-hearted and lukewarm.

A Prayer for Personal Restoration

Bowing to grace, David expresses how he will respond to forgiveness by humbly giving himself to praise and proclamation of righteousness.

13 Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

The "then" is not in Hebrew. It was added by the translators to correctly separate these two sections in this psalm.

David jumps into the Hebrew religion with both feet. In befriending the LORD, he makes himself an enemy of sin; i.e. he not only forsakes sin, he devotes himself to building up the "church" in his day . . . to encourage others to repent, forsake their sin, and serve Him as Lord.

14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

"bloodguiltiness" refers to the sin of murder and the penalties associated with crime -- "life for life." No doubt the murder of Uriah weighed heavily upon David's conscience . . . and, rightly so. He sought deliverance from the pounding drums of guilt, shame, and judicial condemnation. If he was ever going to serve God again, he had to have a clear conscience. How can a man serve God with a dead chicken tied to his neck?

From a Biblical perspective, God cannot forgive sins just because men pray and ask to be forgiven. If this were the case, there would be no need for the Father to send His Son to die on the cross. Let all remember, that forgiveness is only possible because the Lamb of God accepted our sins, paid the debt by dying as our substitute on the cross.

Therefore, all confession and prayers for forgiveness must be grounded on the Savior's sin-bearing work at Calvary. Without Christ it is not possible to obtain forgiveness. With the eye of faith, David anticipated a day when the Christ would pay for his sin; and, we look back in history with the eye of faith and claim the marvelous benefits of His propitiatory death on the killing tree (Romans 3:23-28).

15 O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

Who can deny that David's lips moaned and groaned over his sin. Somehow, somehow, praise had to replace sorrow; happiness had to replace remorse; and confidence in God had to replace guilt. Open my lips to praise and not to grief.

16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.

Oh, that there was some ritual, some hill to climb, some log to carry, some sacrifice, some holy-water ceremony that could wash away guilt, but there is none. There was no Levitical offering powerful enough to remove willful sin in the Old Testament. Only the blood of Christ and faith in His blood can cleanse the conscience of the sinner and restore joy to the heart (1 John 1:5-10: Hebrews 10:1-17).

17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Many people sin . . . but brokenness is as rare as pretty on an ape.

The word "contrite" means "to be broken and crushed to pieces."

"I'm sorry" is not brokenness. Feeling bad is not the same thing as being ashamed over the energies of sin at work in the heart.

Penance is not the same thing as repentance. True repentance says three difficult words, "I was wrong!" Brokenness involves a man staring at the law God with knees "a knockin" and with a floodlight on his heart. Remember the tax collector's prayer. Pounding his chest, he cried, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!"

When it comes to repentance, God requires truth, brokenness, and humility. Fake repentance; quicky confessions; hum-drum prayers, and superficial sorrow does nothing to restore man to a right relationship to

the Lord. God responds to truth . . . to humility . . . to grief over sin . . . and to a submissive heart.

Sometimes, the way up is the way down. Darkness precedes the dawn. Sickness precedes healing. Authenticity precedes connectivity; and deep repentance precedes true restoration.

The good news of the psalm is that triumph follows trouble, kindness follows grief; forgiveness follows bent knees; healing follows honest confession; and, faith leads the parade of joy and gladness.

18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem.

This text may have been added during or after the exile in 586 B.C. Because there is no record of walls being in disrepair during David's day. This prayer seems to be the concern of the exiles in Babylon. However, building the walls could be David's metaphor requesting God to restore him, to build the people, and to bless the nation.

Moreover, a healthy, restored heart will transition from a concern for one's own soul to a concern for the souls of God's people.

19 Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

The particle adverb "then" (*kallyl*) presupposes honest confession and contrition. Ceremonies are important, but not all important. Once the repentant confesses his sins in truth, he can rebuild healthy habits, renew religious rituals, and carry out the performance of religious duties -- but, not until he has fulfilled the requirement of confessing and forsaking his sin.

Proverbs 28:13 He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: But whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

9. The Blessing of Forgiveness

Psalm 32



◆ This is a psalm by a sinner for sinners; by a beggar telling other beggars where to find food and shelter; by a repentant saint telling others how to find healing and forgiveness.

Because this psalm throbs with emotion traversing the polar regions of despair and joy, the reader must "feel" his way through the sinner's experience to reap the blessedness of the psalm. This is a psalm for the heart, not just the head.

The psalm begins with a blessing, but this is not where the psalmist started. He announces his conclusion first and then explains the lessons he learned on his journey back to the Lord.

The blessedness is what he discovered at the end of his pilgrimage, not at the beginning. At the outset, David felt the kettle drums of true guilt pounding on his conscience when the Spirit said, "Thou art the man!"

After hiding in the dark, this sinner came into the light. While exposed to the sunshine of truth, he felt the warmth of Divine forgiveness restoring life in his soul.

The Blessing of Forgiveness

1 (A Psalm of David, Maschil.) Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

A maschil hymn is a teaching psalm that instructs the congregation on how to walk with God.

The term "blessed" is in the emphatic position of the stanza stressing the awe and wonder of being right with God (Romans 4:6-8).

Guilt is like living with a thundering headache. Three words are used to describe the cause of David's migraine: transgression, sin, and iniquity-- the trinity of evil. While they mean basically the same thing, there are subtle differences.

Transgression refers to deeds that cross the line of forbidden behavior like trampling on the rights of others. It is doing what God says thou shall not do. It expresses apostasy and rebellion, the breaking of God's law (Romans 4:15; 1 John 3:4).

Sin is a falling short of Divine commands. It is more than failure or doing wrong, it is a departure from God by way of disobedience to his commands.

The word "forgiven" means "to carry far away." The word (*nasa*) is used in connection with Noah's ark when it was "lifted up" above the flood of judgment safe and secure (Genesis 7:8).

Covered: What can possibly cover scarlet red sins? Ans: Only the waters of judgment that buried the Egyptians in the Red Sea (Exodus 14:24-28), or blood on the mercy seat (Exodus 12:13; Hebrews 9:12).

When God takes sins off a man's shoulders and removes them as far as east is from the west (Psalm 103:12), the heart hums with joy. With praise on his lips, this pardoned poet penned this wonderful psalm.

Imagine a toy soldier red with rust. Oiled, painted, and reclaimed, the little marine shares the blessedness of returning to his company and his Commander. He thought it would take a million years to heal his wounds, but after coming into the light, he is all smiles.

Matthew Henry notes how hard it is to bring a sinful man to humbly accept mercy; but, this is what the psalmist did.

2 Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit *there is no guile.*

“Blessed” is used a second time to reinforce the psalmist contagious joy. The second use of the term "blessed" emphasizes the happiness that pardon brings. The psalmist and happiness were not strangers. Like nuggets of gold in a miner's pouch, forgiveness makes the poor man rich. Like the prodigal son who returned to his father's house, there is joy and celebration in reunion between the wayward creature and his wonderful Creator.

Next, we are introduced to the 3rd monster at the gates of hell.

David is **not** concerned with peccadillos or hurt feelings, but sins that injure men and offend God.

“Iniquity” (v. 2, *avon*) refers to the willful, shameful foolishness of sin -- an act that deserves lashes because it is willfully performed. It is doing what one knows is wrong to do. The Hebrew word *avon* refers to guilt worthy of "punishment" in Genesis 4:13; "bear your iniquities" in Numbers 14:14; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children" in Deuteronomy 5:9; "bringing iniquity to remembrance" in Numbers 5:15; and "eyed David" for punishment in 1 Samuel 18:9; 20:1.

Oh, the terrifying groans that sin, transgression, and iniquity cause within the guilty soul. The Lord Jesus silenced the roaring of these monsters at the cross of Calvary. The trinity of evil is defeated by the Holy Trinity.

Let us never forget why forgiveness is possible. God cannot forgive sin just because a man prays for pardon. If God could forgive sin through prayer, there would be no reason to send his Son to the cross. Forgiveness is only possible because Christ discharged the sinner's debt at Calvary by a blood bond (Isaiah 53:5; Numbers 14:18;).

Remember, the first prophet in the Bible taught us that blood is the currency of the spirit world. Eternal redemption is by the shed blood of Christ and not by beans, broccoli, and beets (Genesis 4; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

The word "impute" is an accounting term. It means "to think or account or ledger." The adverb "not" negates any idea that God keeps a little black book of his children's sins in order to indict them at a later time. Like a drum major leading the band, the phrase "not impute" announces pardon to men of faith.

The term "forgiven" and "not impute" express the blessed sound of one in harmony with the LORD. Fountains of joy bubble within the heart when the burden of sin is lifted off one's shoulders. The one in whom God does not account iniquity feels the night embrace and the moon smiling down upon him. Forgiveness is sweeter than the sounds of magic bells on angels wings.

The author of Hebrews says, "He remembers them no more" (Hebrews 8:12). Believers can remember their sins, God can't. Thus, the believer can experience dissonance between his mind and the mind of God -- discord that can only be reconciled by tuning in to the benefits of the cross and believing God's Word.

"Guile" refers to deceit, trickery, and treachery. Guile is saying one thing and doing another; it is talk without the walk; a smile without sincerity.

"no guile" refers to the man who is as true as a carpenter's level. Because forgiveness is not a deception, the pardoned is not a pretender. Because forgiveness is real, the man is free from the chains that bound him in darkness. Those washed in the blood of the Lamb are free of deceit, pretense, and hypocrisy.

The blessed state of the forgiven is that they do not force their cheeks to smile. What you see is what you get. Because God has forgiven them, they do not grovel around in the graveyard of sins digging up corpses at midnight. There is no purification here through self-torment. Knowing

that Christ paid for their sins on the cross, those seeking forgiveness afresh do not flagellate themselves with beat sticks. Because God lifts sins off their shoulders, they do not go in search for them. Forgiven, they walk in the light on the highway of life without shackles of guilt cutting and ripping their soul. By faith, they claim and enjoy the grace-benefits of forgiveness.

Though the godly take sin seriously, they triumph over haunting memories knowing that God's promises of forgiveness are true, correct, certain, and not misleading; that his promises to remember sins no more are more real than their own eerie awareness of past transgressions.

The Burden of a Dirty Conscience

3 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.

The term "silence" describes the psalmist's spiritual condition after he sinned. Knowing he played the fool, he hid from God. His voice was so thick with conviction he became mum and mute. He couldn't pray or praise God. Guilt sucked certainty out of his soul and turned his backbone into jelly.

"my bones waxed old" is the psalmist way of telling us that sin stressed him to the core robbing him of strength. As David's world turned charcoal grey, his spirit groaned like a coal miner's mule pulling a wagon of rocks.

4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.

The psalmist uses the metaphor "thy hand was heavy upon me" to express the tonnage of guilt weighing on his conscience.

"my moisture . . ." is a reference to dehydration of his entire body. With hot needles from the sun piercing the eye of his conscience, his tongue dried up like a mouth full of dust during the dog days of summer.

“Selah” may refer to a musical note, but it has come to mean, “stop and think about this.”

Indians understood how guilt dried out the mouth. If three men were suspected of a crime among the Indians, each had to stick out their tongue. The prosecutor would then take a hot knife and touch the tongue of each suspect. The one with a burnt tongue was considered guilty.

The Blessing of Confession

5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

Like a criminal caught red-handed by the sheriff, David confessed to everything.

"Acknowledge my sin" is David's way of telling us he could no longer live with the pounding headache of guilt. A fugitive from justice, David came into the light to make a full confession of sin. Because he could no longer live a lie, he bore his soul to God. Like a man with a huge boil on his arm, the psalmist submitted to the lance. Out came the puss and toxins created by sin in his heart.

David quit the game of "Escape & Evasion" and made a full confession. He did **not** call his sin a *mistake* or *blunder*, nor did he hide behind the fig leaves of self-righteousness. He called an "ace an ace, a spade a spade," and sin a sin. He did not call the death of Uriah a "casualty of war," nor did he call his romance with Bathsheba an "affair." He confessed to the somber facts of murder and adultery.

He called his feast at Satan's Yum Yum Tree near the gates of hell a transgression, iniquity, and sin!!

This drama closes with a simple, sweet reality: "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

As long as men call sin a sin, there is hope. God forgives "sin," but there is no Divine remedy for "mistakes, blunders, and errs." Confessing, "I was wrong" is much better than saying, "I am sorry."

How did David know his sin was forgiven? Because Nathan the Prophet said, "God has put away thy sin:" that is, David believed the Word of the Lord and then claimed the joy of forgiveness.

6 For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.

The psalmist applies the lesson to the "godly" reader. Truth seekers pray in the darkness as well as in the sunshine; in stormy seas with its ocean spray and on calm waters with its blanket of peace.

"For this" means on "this ground" or "for this cause" (legal footing). The Hithpael verb is reflexive in meaning; i.e., let the godly apply the didactic shared by the psalmist to their own conscience-battles with sin!

"in a time when thou mayest be found" or "in the time of finding," means to confess and repent while there is a window of opportunity to do so; that is, keep short accounts while your heart is tender towards him.

"Floods" are a metaphor for trouble and adversity. If the godly seek restoration to the LORD, He will "lift away" their sins, and row them to safety away from the danger of the deluge. Think of Noah's ark being lifted up out of the sea of death.

Benson claims, "As the temptations of the wicked one touch them not, 1 John 5:18, so neither do the troubles of this evil world; these fiery darts of both kinds drop short of them."

7 Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.

"Thou art my hiding place" is a confession of trust by this saint. Oh, the warmth and peace one enjoys finding shelter from the storm! Our Lord is

not just the God of the masses; He is the Savior and Protector of individuals.

"thou shalt preserve me from trouble" refers to God's providential dealings with the psalmist. Storms are difficult, but they cannot destroy the soul. No harm shall come to the man leaning on the everlasting arms. In response to his prayer and pious ways, God saves the pilgrim from leveling floods and the sting of the sea.

"Compass me about" refers to Heaven's angels that surround and protect the godly.

"Songs of deliverance" are on the lips of mariners caught in the wind and surf of a sinister sea. The hope of deliverance presents an occasion for praise and rejoicing. The Christian man does not fear the roar of the waves nor wallow in self-pity. Because he accepts grace, he is a grateful man.

In review, this didactic teaches us that David humbled himself, came into the light, confessed his sins, accepted forgiveness, and rejoiced in a renewed relationship with God by faith.

The Blessing of God's Guidance

8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.

"I will" is the voice of the Spirit providing an answer of assurance to the sinner's confession.

"Instruct and teach" -- With sins confessed and slate clean, the Spirit promises instruction in the way the man should go; that is, God teaches the teachable. We are not pardoned so we can play near the gates of hell, but we are pardoned so we can learn Heaven's ways. The world regards a man as poor if he doesn't learn Plato, Darwin, and Freud, but the man that learns the law of the Lord and the grace of the gospel is rich beyond measure.

The verb "instruct" (*sakal*) refers to providing practical guidance consistent with God's law; and, the term "teach" (*yarah*) means "to cast" or "to shoot." The latter is translated "direct his face" in Genesis 46:28; "teach thee what thou shalt say" in Exodus 4:12; "to teach when it is unclean" in Leviticus 14:57; and "shoot three arrows" as a code instruction in 1 Samuel 20:20.

"I will guide you with my eye" is a tender promise from a caring father. Guidance with the eyes stand in juxtaposition to masters that to beat their stubborn slaves.

Looking at the eyes, children can discern whether their father is sad, mad, or glad. When a father's eyes are narrowed to a pinprick, the child knows he'd better change his behavior. Thus, we learn that a godly man studies the face of God to discern the way he should go.

What a comfort to those who feel the cold chills of those who believe we live in an anthropocentric world.

This promise of guidance requires the righteous man (1) to study the Word of God, and (2) to follow God's leading. "Quench not the Spirit!" (1 Thessalonians 5:19). The Christian life is not like a walk in the city with all its "Don't Signs" and barriers. It is more like a walk in the forest that demands discernment and decision.

9 Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.

"Be ye not" is a Jussive exhortation (command) to sinners. Sin ends in sorrow. Transgression leads to trouble. Iniquity rhymes with wickedly.

The horse loves to run and often bolts ahead of the rider. To slow a horse down wranglers pull back on the reigns. This text is instruction for "eager beavers" among us who are prone to go, to do, and to run without being sent.

"The mule" is the opposite of a horse in that the owner has to kick and whip the animal to *giddy up and go*. Out of the American West came the idiom "stubborn as a mule." This instruction is for the indecisive, reluctant, and fearful. Don't be like a mule God has to smack in order to force performance.

10 Many sorrows *shall be* to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.

"Sorrows" is a reference to grief and trouble.

The term "wicked" does not refer to Christian men. Rather, the term identifies the godless man who has chosen a course to follow evil.

This is an argument to reinforce the proceeding exhortation. God has ways to motivate and chastise the wicked in order to subject them to his will, but don't be like them!

Those who are not reformed by gentle instruction must learn through the rod of affliction. But, the one who learns at the feet of the Master will enjoy his goodness and protection. Mercy shall "compass him about" like a warm blanket on a cold day.

The Blessed Responses to Forgiveness

11 Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

The Spirit instructs the forgiven on how to respond to the King's pardon: Three imperatives are ordered by the Spirit: *Be glad, rejoice, and shout!* - a triple remedy for melancholy of soul!

Being pardoned and enjoying that pardon are two different staircases.

The Spirit knows that Satan is the accuser of the brethren who seeks to blind men to God's forgiveness and bind them to melancholy by focusing them on their sins, transgressions, and iniquities (Revelation 12:7-12).

Because Christians know that God will **not** punish them, many have a

tendency to beat themselves with a guilt stick. The remedy for this phenomenon is to remember that Christ was punished for our sins . . . and to take comfort in his salvation.

Obedying these three commands is essential to being released from the pounding headache of guilt. Faith digs deep to find the power to obey these commands.

(1) "Be glad in the Lord" is an imperative that takes positive spiritual energy to fulfill. The Christian life is not a choice between melancholy and happiness. Being glad is duty. God is not glorified when we pine in sorrow over our sins. He is glorified when we celebrate his pardon. There is no glory for him when we visit the graveyard of past failures, grieve over our sins like mourners, and beat our heads with a brick.

(2) "Rejoice" -- Double your effort to be glad! Stir your own soul to rejoice. The righteous rejoice in his pardon whether they "feel" like it or not. Who can be sad in the King's presence with pardon in hand?

In case we missed the proper response to a pardon, the Spirit repeats his instructions a third time. Gladness and joy is hard for those who have mourned over the trinity of evil. But, it **MUST BE DONE!**

(3) "Shout for joy" is a Hiphil imperative meaning prod yourself "to overcome, and cry out" with joy because of his pardon . . . even when you don't feel like doing so!

Triple your effort to rejoice in his pardon. The Hebrew word for "shout" is *ranan*. It is translated "sing" 20 times; "rejoice" 11 times; and "sing aloud" 4 times. For serious conservative Christians this takes an act of the will! Sing, soul, sing!

One time I saw a powerful preacher singing to himself in his car before a service. I went over to him and asked, "What are you doing? Are you all right?" He explained, "I am very discouraged. I am going to sit here and sing until my heart is filled with joy." I immediately understood.

The last command is addressed to the "righteous." Let us find our supreme joy in the Lord, and not our alleged victories. Our focus **must be** upon the King and his gracious pardon, **not** upon our cruel sins, transgressions, and iniquities that sentence us to a debtor's dungeon. Because the wicked will never praise God, let us triple rejoice in Jesus and his salvation. His blood cleanses us from ALL sin! (1 John 1:5-7).

Rejoicing requires double spiritual energy like the Sun breaking through after a storm.

"Rejoice, and again I say rejoice" - Paul (Philippians 4:4).

10. The Perfected Conscience

Hebrews 10



◆ Q: How can a sensitive believer conscious of his sins find relief from the squawking accusations about his transgressions bellowing from his conscience – transgressions that separate him from fellowship with the Father?

The answer is in Hebrews ten and the exercise of niki-faith in the cleansing power of the cross.

Hebrews nine announces eternal redemption and remission of sins due to the shed blood of the Savior; and, chapter ten announces the perfect effect of faith in the blood has upon the believer's conscience. Thus, a perfect conscience is based on claiming the effects of a perfect sacrifice.

Chapter eleven informs us of the importance of combining faith with the blood in order to enjoy eternal redemption.

Hebrews 10:1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

This passage addresses the first century Jewish mindset due to their sacrificial customs.

"The law" refers to the sections of the Torah that establish and fortify the Levitical System.

A "shadow" is an incomplete reflection of a thing. In this case, Levitical law shadowed Christ and His righteousness. The Savior is not the shadow; He is the substance of OT offerings.

Like shadows cannot be heard, touched, tasted or smelled, the Torah and the sacrifices offered could not silence the blaring sirens coming from a guilty conscience. Thus, these shadows could not quiet the conscience. The Lord Jesus' sacrifice on the cross not only sprinkled the golden altar in the heavenly sanctuary to quiet the wrath of God, but touched the guilty conscience with sin-cleansing, stain-removing power.

The law and sacrifices were silhouettes of the cross which could **not** remove the dark stains of sin corrupting the heart; but, Christ and His work at the cross "perfects" the cleansing of the conscience; that is, the cross cleanses, purifies, sharpens, hones, and betters the conscience. The precious blood of Christ scrubs a man clean from all the grub and grime caused by eating fruit at the Poisonous Tree.

The word "conscience" means "with knowledge" and refers to that part of man's soul which is sensitive to right and wrong. It is that part of the soul which senses danger.

The conscience acts like a fire alarm notifying the man that he is in eternal jeopardy. When a man sins the buzzer goes off and sometimes stays on keeping the sensitive soul awake and agitated. The shadows have no power to silence the alarm, but the doing and dying of Christ bring rest to the soul when believed. One only needs to investigate Calvary and claim its benefits by faith.

The word "perfect" describes the purifying effect of the blood upon on the conscience when perceived by faith – His blood cleanses us from ALL sin (1 John 1:7).

The weakness of the Levitical System

2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

(a) the offering of goats and lambs could **not** remove the knowledge of sin from the Jewish conscience. Because Hebrews were battered by guilt, they had no sense of real pardon. Annual ceremonies were a testimony to the imperfections of the Levitical system to maintain a relationship with a holy God. If the temple offerings, bulls and goats, could remove sin from the worshippers' consciences, they would not have been offered year after year.

3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

Instead of relieving the roaring of a guilty conscience, these sacrifices only caused the priests and the people to experience hyperthymesia – the ability to remember sins with unfailing accuracy – This ritual was like flogging yourself with a beat stick.

4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

(b) Not only were the sacrifices ineffective at cleansing the conscience, it was impossible for these Levitical offerings to purify the sinner. At best, the sacrifices shadowed the reality of the cross.

5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:

"Wherefore" (result or reason) – on account of the powerlessness of these offerings, God sent His Son bodily to do what Levitical sacrifices could not do -- to save and purify the sinner from sin.

"Sacrifice and offerings" represent two divisions of offerings -- the former of necessity, and the latter as an act of worship.

The verb “wouldest not” refers to the will and pleasures of the LORD God. The Father took no joy in those sacrifices except for the fact the bull and lamb offerings reflected in shadow-form the willingness of Christ to do the will of God in His body – the instrument for doing the Father’s will; c.f. with Psalm 40:6-8 and Hebrews 9:25-28; 10:7.

6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.

(c) the sacrifices did not please God. In looking at the two offerings, (1) OT burnt offerings and (2) the living, obedient Christ, there is no comparison. Moreover, the Father had no pleasure in the death of lambs except for the fact they foreshadowed the obedience of the Son unto death to satisfy the judicial standards of a holy God.

7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.

The “I” is direct reference to the Messiah-Son. Every promise, prophesy, and command of law was fulfilled in Christ to the delight of the Father.

8 Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; 9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

(d) The purpose of OT sacrifices was a temporary system -- a stop gap until Christ appeared in history to resolve man's sin issues. They were merely a shadow of the Son – a paving of the way for the Savior – an announcement of the Lamb’s work at the cross. These shadows, to the shock of the Jews, were removed so men could study and grasp the efficacy of His blood shed at Calvary.

10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

First benefit of the cross – sanctification. The word “sanctified” (hagiozo) means “holy” and it is the opposite of being “unclean.” It is a

perfect indicative announcing that His substitutionary, propitiatory work redeemed believers from sin and made them “holy” (clean) in His sight . . . by one act at the cross for the benefit of all believers.

Want to be “holy” in God’s sight? Embrace the Son by faith and claim the marvelous, day-to-day benefits of His sacrifice for your sins – a perfect offering that cleanses every stain and silences every alarm when grasped by faith.

11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

(e) The ineffectiveness of temple sacrifices: Priests never sat down in the temple. There were no chairs. They stood as a statement that redemption required continuous effort to satisfy the claims of Divine law and the cries of the conscience. The contrast between the Old Testament Levitical sacrifices and the one-time offering of Christ continues. The Spirit wants us to know it is an undisputable fact those animal sacrifices could **never** take away sins . . . but the sacrifice of our Lord **takes away all sins**, big and small, ugly and sweet, near or far, forever.

12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

Second benefit of the cross – acceptance; i.e. the action of being received as suitable. How do we know this? What is the proof? Fantastic claims demand proof with strict proof of claim.

Christ’s resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God in history (Acts 1) is proof of claim that God accepted Christ’s redemptive work at Calvary to satisfy man's debt.

13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

Third benefit of the cross -- a guarantee of victory. Not only did Christ defeat the main enemies of man at Calvary -- Satan, sin, and death, His

resurrection is proof that all enemies of righteousness will be put under His feet – the flesh, the world, and the proud.

14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Fourth benefit of the cross -- perfection.

"For" introduces the main truth of this chapter. His redemption not only satisfies the claims of perfect justice, they also cleanse the conscience.

"one offerings" is set in contrast to the "oftentimes" offerings in verse 11. The Savior died for the sins of all men born BC and to be born AD; past sins and future sins. His work at Calvary perfects all who come to Him for salvation. He cleanses all men: big sinners and small sinners. His blood washes away sins of men and sins of women; ugly sins and comely sins; mammoth sins and peccadillos; scarlet sins and grey ones.

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The word "perfection" (*teleioo*) refers to the end of a matter, the omega at the end of the Greek alphabet, and the Z at the end of the English alphabet, the finish line in a race, the maturity of a matter.

As a verb "perfected" is in the perfect tense indicating a past action with present results. Perfection (justification) is a fact to be enjoyed. The verb "sanctified" is a present tense participle indicating that practical holiness (sanctification) is still in the process of being accomplished in our lives.

15 Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, 16 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

Fifth benefit of the cross -- regeneration by the Holy Spirit as a result of the inaugurated covenant.

Christ not only cleanses sinners; he perfects believers by empowering them to do good and to serve Him with a clear conscience; that is, to obey His law and to keep His Word (Romans 8:4).

This blessing is not for all men, but it is available to those those who believe and are under the new covenant.

When a man believes he is saved from the penalty of sin and the power of sin. He is not saved "from law" but from the penalty of breaking the law - - not saved from law but to law -- not saved by law, but saved in order to keep the law.

Saying, "I will put my laws into their hearts . . . and minds" is the writer's way of announcing the effects of the new birth. The believer's position is one as "justified;" but his condition is one of being born again with holy desires. When the Spirit regenerates the man, he not only receives power to keep the law, he receives a desire to keep the law. Though the believer may fail many times, he wants to do what is right and will constantly make decisions to live consistent with the will of God.

"Putting law into their hearts" means the law of God is engraved in the man so that doing righteousness becomes part of his character; that is, he now has the power and will to keep and obey God's law.

17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

Sixth benefit of the cross is that sins in the mind of God are consigned to oblivion -- a state of being buried or erased from history and from God's consciousness.

So perfect is Christ's work at cross, it removes our sins from the mind of God; that is, He has buried the record of our sins in the sand.

I can remember my sins, but God can't; and, since God forgets my sins, I must leave the corpse in its coffin and not go digging it up.

In offering the OT sacrifices there is a remembrance of sins every year. When God looks at the blood of Christ, there is non-remembrance of our sins; that is, His blood affects God's forgetfulness. What a shower does for a filthy farmer coming in from the field after a day's work, the blood of Christ does for the soul.

18 Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

Seventh benefit of the cross -- complete satisfaction of debt; hence, a man can live debt free in his life – he is no longer a debtor, but a creditor.

The word “remission” refers to being released from the debt of sin. Since the debt has been discharged, there are no more payments to make. If I sin, Christ need not come again and die again. But, I must claim the power of the blood by faith. Nike-faith affirms the benefits of the death of Christ and applies it to the sirens blaring in his own conscience.

19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus

Eight benefit of the cross -- spiritual boldness to walk with God.

“therefore,” touches the application of eternal redemption.

The word "boldness" (*parthesia*) refers "to freedom" and "courage" to enter into the holy place to fellowship with God. The word is translated "openly" in Mark 8:32; John 7:32; "plainly" in John 10:24; "freely speak" in Acts 2:29; "boldness" in Acts 4:13; and "confidence" in Acts 28:31.

This kindness is not a license to sin more, but a solemn reminder that we are not debtors to justice, but debtors to grace.

Out of debt, we have boldness to accept the invitation to come into His presence . . . a boldness not based on pride, but one based on assurance “His blood cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7; Hebrews 9).

There are only two religions in the world; the religion of Cain and the religion of Abel; the religion of beans, broccoli, and beets; and, the religion of blood. Christianity is a very bloody religion. Hebrews announces the cleansing power of blood that satisfies the Divine claims of holiness (propitiation) which perfects the conscience. Salvation is meant to be enjoyed. Moaning and groaning over personal failures does not please the Lord.

Let us enjoy the cleansing power of the blood by nike-faith. The foundation of salvation keeps us sane and from going insane due to the siren of guilt roaring within our hearts.

11. A Benediction for God's People

Hebrews 13: 20-21



◆ Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

This is a prayer for the complete restoration of the sheep; as silver is refined in the furnace; let us be revived so we might perfectly reflect His image under heat of trials.

The title “God of peace” is the subject of the sentence and “make you perfect” (*katartisai*) is the optative verb; that is, it is a wish, not a command; a hope that is not yet a fact. Thus, the “peace of God” is lighthouse on rocky shores; a candle in the dark.

“Perfect” (*katartisai*) means “to mend what is broken; to make whole or complete; to sew a rip in a garment”

Paul’s prayer is grounded on the work of the “God of peace” — not the God of truth or the God of righteousness, but the “God of peace.”

This “God of peace,” having been propitiated by the death of His Son on the cross; and, our debt having been fully discharged by the blood of Christ; and, God having forgiven us of our sins by the mediation of the Savior, reached into hell and raised the Lord Jesus from the dead.

Use of the title “God of peace” implies there was some kind of strife or conflict to which His work was needed. Possibly, (a) the strife and division among the Hebrews needed repair or (b) the conflict regarding God and sinners having ended through Christ, God being at rest restored the life of His Son. Walking with the “God of peace” is like sailing with the wind at your back.

Jesus is called “the great shepherd of the sheep.” He is great in character; great in war; great in love; great in holiness; great in courage; great in His accomplishments, and great in Shepherding of God’s flock.

Believers are called “sheep” probably because we do not understand what the Shepherd did for us at Calvary and does for us in His present exalted life. As the good shepherd, our Lord died for the sheep and protects them from Divine wrath (Psalm 22); as the great shepherd He lives and provides for His sheep (Psalm 23); as the Chief Shepherd he reigns . . . and rewards the servant-sheep with eternal blessings (Psalm 24).

“The blood of the everlasting covenant” implies that God works to mend us completely based on His covenant promise and consideration of the price paid for our salvation; that is, since blood is the currency of the spirit world, and we were purchased with His blood, “making us perfect” in His sight is a continuation of His promise.

There is an illusion here to Isaiah 63:11 – “Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of His flock?”

Here the shepherds are Moses and Aaron (Psalm 77:20), God having delivered the people from death also brought Moses and Aaron out of the Red Sea to lead His flock to the Promise Land via Mt. Sinai.

His salvation at the Red Sea was based on the covenant of blood — a completion of His promise to deliver His people from bondage. The blood that saved the people from the death angel secured all other blessings including their redemption from Egypt by way of the Red Sea.

The great work of mending and bringing the people to perfection must have a strong foundation: God of peace, blood, covenant, raised from the dead, a living Shepherd, great in power, love, and peace.

The great work of conforming us to His will is total reconciliation of the total man to the total image of Christ; that is, that there might not be any part of the man that is not committed to the will of God. To wake up thinking one has a choice whether to do good or evil demonstrates the lack of reconciliation of the man to God. The perfect man has no choice but to do, "every good work" and what is "well pleasing in his sight."

When praying we do not look at ourselves, but to the resources of Another — the God of peace. We start with the fact of God's accomplishments through the Son, and reach for the impossible — perfection. Let us remember, the Good Shepherd died for us to save us from the penalty of sin and that the Great Shepherd lives to save us from the power of sin. One day the Chief Shepherd will save us from the presence of sin.

The "God of peace" is used six times in Paul's epistles (Romans 15:13; 16:20; Philippians 4:7; 4:9; Colossians 3:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:23)

The title "God of Peace" acts like a benediction over our restless lives, unsettled hearts, and heated conflicts to bring us peace that we might walk where angels walk (MacLaren).

His peace is like a calm sea — undisturbed by winds and waves; like a still forest at dawn — the hush before life stirs.

Tapping into the "God of Peace" would calm their fears, temper their anger, repair relationships, and restore their ability to pursue holiness.

This "God of Peace" dwells above the conflicts, gloominess, and irritations common to men; and in His presence the restless heart can find shalom and shelter from the anger of men. His peace can shed light on our shadows, calm the waves on our turbulent seas, minister sweetness where

there is bitterness, and bring a dove's wing where there are clenched fists and tight jaws. "My peace" I give unto you declared Jesus.

The only way to obtain peace is to be good — "Make you perfect in every good work to do his will . . ." There can be no peace on earth where there is not conformity to Heaven's will. Want peace? Then lighten the load on your ship and throw your mutinous captain-self overboard, your iron anchor attached to the underside of this world, your heavy burdens of collecting silver and gold, and your steel desires to have your way on this voyage.

Philippians 4:9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you

Moreover, the peace of God orders our holiness (See: 1 Thessalonians 5:23). What a man needs for peace is to surrender his vessel to be captained by the Lord Jesus Christ, to allow His peace to be the steersman, and to debar frivolous anger, lusts, and bitterness from standing at the helm.

Exercising the peace of God impacts our relationships for good (Colossians 3:15).

The peace of God acts like an umpire guarding and protecting our hearts (Philippians 4:7).

This peace can only come by prayer. The heart is like a stormy sea tossing our ship on top of white caps and then burying our vessels under tons of wet darkness, fear, and marine debris. Only Christ can say, "Peace, be still!

Come Thou fount of every blessing

Tune my heart to sing Thy grace

Streams of mercy never ceasing

Call for songs of loudest praise

This passage is the only reference to the resurrection of Christ in the epistle. We do not serve a dead martyr, but a living Savior – the high priest of our profession within the veil – the living Shepherd – the Great Shepherd of God’s flock risen from the dead ready to perfect us.

We don’t have to live in the shadows away from the sunshine or sail our vessel on stormy seas during cold, windy nights. Believing in His peace and praying to the Great Shepherd increases the possibilities of happy, holy service. The power that raised Christ from the dead is available to us. There is no mountain we cannot climb; no river we cannot cross; and, no burden we cannot carry when the sunshine of His peace is at our back.

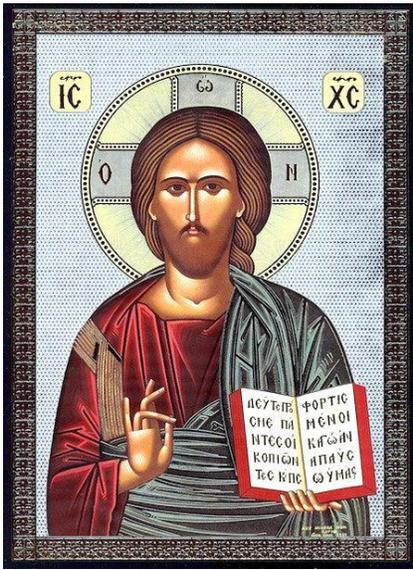
So, like a little bird, open your mouth and let him fill it. He lives to provide for you; to protect you, and to perfect you. Don’t worry about storms on the sea, or getting lost in the forest, or wolves in the pasture, or thorn bushes near the path. The Great Shepherd of the sheep leads. Will you follow?

Rest, soul, rest! Peace, Peace!

Source: Stockton’s e-book, “Shalom, Shalom”

12. The Call to Holiness

1 Peter 1:15



◆ The call to holiness is possibly the most important message to grasp in one's Christian life.

Isaiah's ministry began when He understood that God is kadosh, kadosh, kadosh (Isaiah 6:1ff).

In nearly every religion, there is a distinction between that which is holy and what is profane; between that which is common, and that which is unusual; between what is rare, and that which is ordinary; between that which is formal, and that which is casual; between that which treasured, and that which is discarded; between that which is excellent and that which is mediocre; between that which is original, and that which is derivative; between that which is good and pure, and that which is nominal and tainted; between that which is lawful, and that which is unlawful; between conduct of an officer, and conduct unbecoming of an officer. Such is holiness.

(1) The first question we must ask is, "Do we desire to be holy?"

(2) The second question is "Do we understand the essence of what it means to be holy?"

(3) The third question is "Have we tapped into the power God has given us to be holy -- the power of a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17)?"

Perhaps, you have heard others say, "I've tried to be holy, but it just doesn't work with me?" Such a response reveals they do not understand the nature and essence of holiness.

First, it is God's will that His people be holy.

But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

Peter mentions the five calls of God in his letter to the diaspora, and one of them is the "call to be holy:"

- The call to be saved (2:9)
- The call to be holy (1:15)
- The call to suffer (2:21)
- The call to love (3:9)
- The call to glory (5:10)

"Be ye holy" is **not** a good idea or a suggestion. It is an aorist imperative requiring immediate action. It is **not** grace. It is law -- an absolute order from our Heavenly Father to His children. The failure to see NT commands as law is the product of more than a little evil at work in permissive religion.

Nice boys and girls seem to be quite common, but holiness among Christians seems quite rare.

The model for men today is cutesy, clean-shaven pajama boys with coffee mug in hand that are as frivolous as stringers on a Schwinn Bike.

Modern Christians want to be liked, suave, sophisticated, liberal minded, and "cool," but the Scripture admonishes believers to come out from the world's urbanity, and to "perfect holiness in the fear of God."

"Revenge, lust, ambition, pride, and self-will are too often exalted as the gods of man's idolatry; while holiness, peace, contentment, and humility are viewed as unworthy of a serious thought." (Charles Spurgeon)

Second, it is impossible for our wretched, sinful flesh to be sanctified (Galatians 5:16-17).

Holiness does not involve dressing up a corpse in a tuxedo. It does not involve the eradication of sin . . . that is impossible. But, it does involve saying "No" to the desires of the flesh and using our bodies for holy service (Romans 12:1-2).

Because we are exhorted to please God in all things (Colossians 1:10), and because the flesh is always in rebellion against God, holiness of life involves a choice: (1) to give in to the desires and demands of the flesh, or (2) to obey the commands of our Heavenly Father. We will either be men who please the Lord or men who please the flesh. We cannot do both.

Anytime we put the desires of the flesh above the will of God, we commit idolatry and violate the First Commandment; i.e. treason against Christ (Ephesians 5:1-5; 1 Corinthians 10:14).

Third, holiness involves separation from evil and dedication to God.

Holiness is a paramount attribute of God that seems to be difficult for people to grasp. King Uzziah failed to perceive holiness and lost his life (2 Chronicles 26).

When Isaiah saw the LORD after Uzziah was stricken with leprosy, he heard angels saying, "kadosh (holy), kadosh (holy), kadosh (holy) is the LORD of hosts" – a lesson for Isaiah that though the king had lost his throne, God had not lost His; that is, "the Lord reigns" even though earthly rules are terminated.

Holiness is the only attribute of God mentioned three times in succession. Never does the Scripture say, "merciful, merciful, merciful is the LORD of hosts" even though his mercy is higher than the heavens (Psalm 103:11).

See the "Sanctus" also called the "Holy, Holy, Holy Psalm" where the attribute of God's holiness is mentioned three times as a conclusion after each refrain (Psalm 99).

God's holiness refers to his pure, perfect character. His justice, anger, wrath, and hate is holy. His perfect love, mercy, and grace is holy. Because He is perfect, He is set apart as the holy model for the being and doing of men (Matthew 5:48). He is transcendent in that He is free from sin, defilement, filth, malice, depravity, and evil. He is just without being cruel; merciful without being permissive (Hosea 11:9); transcendent without being aloof and oblivious to the needs of men. In his love, He humbles himself to know the ways of men. He becomes what men need Him to be whether as a judge or Savior (Genesis 6:12; 29:32; Exodus 2:25). His law is the perfect *objective* reflection of His holy character; and Christ is the perfect *subjective* reflection of His holy character.

In 1 Peter, the standard of holiness is the character of God (1:16) as reflected in God's Law-word as well as exhibited by the Person of Christ. Like ancient Nazarites who dedicated themselves to God and separated from "dead things" and "wine," God wants all his people to be holy unto him.

Holiness of men described: To be holy means to separate one's self from the froth and foam of humanity, to study the Father, to love Him, to make His law our law. It involves striving to be like him in His justice and love; to respond to life's contingencies and events in conformity to the law-will of the Father (1 John 5:1-3). Holiness is the exact opposite of modeling Hollywood stars, movies heroes, and boardwalk models which is idolatry.

Holiness is both negative and positive. It is negative in that holiness calls for avoiding evil; it is positive in that it calls for obedience to His Word.

"Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

Justification is by faith without our works; but, sanctification involves the cooperation of the believer with His Spirit. Thus, holiness is a choice, "to be, or not to be;" to be like our Father in all our responses to life's developments with acts of obedience. Holiness demands men respond daily to the pulls and strains of one's own depraved compulsions.

When God told Israel to be holy as He is holy as He is holy (Leviticus 19), he called for godly responses toward the family, and rejection of the practices of the nations like tattooing the body with idolatrous symbols. He instructed them to be different from the other nations by giving them specific regulations to govern their lives. [Note: following the Spirit's declaration that God is holy the first command was for children to obey their parents.]

The issue is NOT power! Holiness is all about knowledge, will, and desire. God has given us the power! Moreover, the soul of the true Christian hums to be holy and to please God because he is a new creation in Christ (Romans 6:1-3, 11; 2 Peter 1:3).

The primary issue is whether we love pleasing God or love amusing the flesh?

Truth be known, most of us just don't love holiness enough or hate sin sufficiently.

The strength of the saints is their holiness. Holiness inspires confidence to fight the battles of the Lord. Sin robs us of conviction and courage. It makes us pajama-boy weak.

Samson was a Nazarite from birth and was known for crushing the Philistines with his Herculean strength. The lesson of his life to the nation of Israel was if God could be this strong in one Nazarite, what could He do with a nation of Nazarites? The nation never learned the lesson. Have we?

The world teaches young men to be cool, nice, and likable . . . but God's Word exhorts men to be holy to Him. Thus, the goal of every Christian should be to be holy.

Four, holiness includes the setting apart of man's spirit, soul, and body.

Biblical holiness rejects any system that creates a dualism between flesh and spirit as did the Gnostics.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and (I pray God) your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The word, "sanctify" means "to make holy;" that is, to separate something of value from profane matters, and to dedicate it to God. The word implies being separated from evil, not from the duties of life: chores, work, daily patterns, relational bonds, or physical maintenance of matters related to the spirit, mind, and body.

The pursuit of holiness is the pursuit of piety; and, the pious seek freedom from sin and dedication to God in matters that pertain to their spirit, soul, and body.

The Spirit is concerned that our spirit, soul, and body reflect holiness. It would be a mistake to attempt to be holy in mind without applying holiness to our body.

The One Who does the sanctifying is called "The God of peace." Holiness comes to those who have peace with God, and pursue the peace of God; moreover, peace does not come to the frantic nor the hurried, but to those who are at rest in their soul. Sanctification comes from the God of peace (the happy, content, orderly God in love with His people). The emphasis here is not on the God of war . . . nor the God of righteousness . . . nor the God of wrath, but from the God of peace, contentment, calmness, and serenity.

Five: Holiness touches our habits, our character, and our relationships.

James 1:19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.

Holiness makes a demand on the mind, mouth, and emotions.

In 1 Corinthians 6, 1 Thessalonians 4, and Ephesians 5, holiness makes a demand on man's sexual nature; that is, to abstain from fornication and impurity.

Six: Moreover, Christians are not only to be holy, they are to perfect holiness in the fear of God.

2 Corinthians 5:17 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.

The main verb is "cleanse" (an aorist, active, volatile subjunctive) urging others to join the apostle in achieving something that is possible--perfected holiness. The aorist implies the believer has already made a decision to be holy but needs to start perfecting holiness in now time.

The object of the main verb "cleanse" is "ourselves" -- not others; not the church; not the nation, but to focus our scrubbing our own body and spirit from the sin that so easily besets us. To understand the difference between sins of the body and sins of the spirit study Galatians 5:16-21.

The word "perfecting" is a *present, active participle* expressing the need for continuous, present action in the pursuit of holiness on the part of the believer rather than indicating the believer can achieve a state of perfection or that there is a finishing point. No one graduates from the school of holiness; rather, we continuously strive to be holy in body and spirit during all stages of our life.

The *active voice* informs us that it is the subject that produces the action. Unlike redemption which involves the substitutionary work of Christ, holiness is NOT substitutionary. No one can "let go and let God." Holiness requires our consent, our will, and our effort to cooperate with the Spirit to be holy.

The "therefore" refers to the preceding verses in chapter 6 -- to come out and leave the fellowship of darkness (6:14), and to avoid "touching what is unclean" (6:17).

2 Corinthians 6:17 is a reference to Isaiah 52:11.

"In their primary historical sense," says Ellicott, "the words were addressed as to the priests and Levites who were to return from Babylon. They were not to bring back with them any symbol of that "unclean" ritual which they had witnessed there. The local and historical meaning has for the Apostle passed away, and the "unclean thing" is identified with the whole system of heathenism" where God's name was "blasphemed all day long" (52:5).

Ellicott continues in his comments in verse 11:

"Depart ye . . . – The command is addressed to the exiles in Babylon. They are not to plunder or carry off spoil that would render them unclean. They are to bring only "the vessels of Jehovah," i.e., the gold and silver which had been taken from His temple, and which Cyrus restored by them (Ezra 1:7). In this case the bearers are the Levites . . . "

Seven: The motivation for holiness in Paul's letter is the (1) the fear of what God can do to the disobedient, and (2) the golden promises given to Christians (7:1) -- the many, wonderful promises in the previous chapter.

If you avoid "touching the unclean thing" (6:17) God will (1) receive you, and (2) father you as sons and daughters; i.e., to provide for you and to protect you.

In Isaiah the promise for those who "touch not the unclean thing" is that God would be Israel's Commander in front of the camp and Israel's Protector in the rear of the camp (52:12;) (See also Leviticus 26:12; Exodus 29:45).

The psalmist puts the benefits of being holy this way:

Psalm 4:3 But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly (holy) for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him.

Eight: The testing of holiness:

Hebrews 12:9-10 we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected *us*, and we gave *them* reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened *us* after their own pleasure; but he for *our* profit, that *we* might be partakers of his holiness.

Our Heavenly Father chastens His children, and His disciplines lead to holiness.

A man's resolve to be holy faces its greatest test when the man feels disappointment with God. God tests his children, not to make them bitter, but to make them better. Nevertheless, all testing feels like punishment, and it is in those times of fear and discouragement, the man is tempted to drop out of the race and to plunge into sensuality and self-pity (Hebrews 12).

Thus, the exhortations found in Hebrews twelve become all important as our obedience and resolve to be holy is being tested (Exodus 15-18; 32; Numbers 1-14; 21ff; Psalm 78; 1 Corinthians 10; Hebrews 12; 2 Peter 1).

In summary, the number one problem among Christian men is failure to accept the authority of the LORD God in Leviticus 19:1; the failure to obey the command to be holy and to keep the first and second command in Leviticus 19:1-3ff.

If Christian people were holy, husbands would feel respected, children would be trained and disciplined, churches would be straight and center, businesses would operate fairly, there would be fewer divorces, squashing of pornography in Hollywood, and no LGBTQ agenda permitted in government schools. When feminist politicians feel the heat from holy men, they see the light (Deuteronomy 7:5-6; 12:3).

One has to wonder what the apostle would say to modern churches that have voluntarily and without compulsion "bound" themselves together in a 501 c 3 contract with the federal government which obligates the

"religious organization" to accept the headship of the IRS over the "church" and to comply with public policy -- policy that gags CEO pastors from addressing pertinent issues around election time.

But, there is a remedy:

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." Repent and "touch not the unclean thing" (government franchises) and "cleanse yourselves while "perfecting holiness in the fear of God;" and He will receive you as "sons and daughters" (2 Corinthians 6:17, 18; 7:1; Revelation 3:19).]

If Christians would pursue holiness, they would know King Jesus as their Provider and Protector. Then, they would turn the world upside down.

13. The Call to Sanctify Yourself

Leviticus 20:7-8



◆ **Leviticus 20:7 Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God.**

Definition: Sanctification is the act of making something holy or setting something aside for holy purposes.

Here, the Lord commands men to sanctify themselves; i.e. to adopt the character of their Heavenly Father as one's model for faith and conduct . . . not for salvation but for sanctification; not to be saved, but to reflect the

family image. Faith in Christ saves a man from the penalty of sin; obedience to the Lord saves a man from the power of sin.

The essence of holiness is obedience to God's law-order.

Leviticus 20:8 And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the LORD which sanctify you

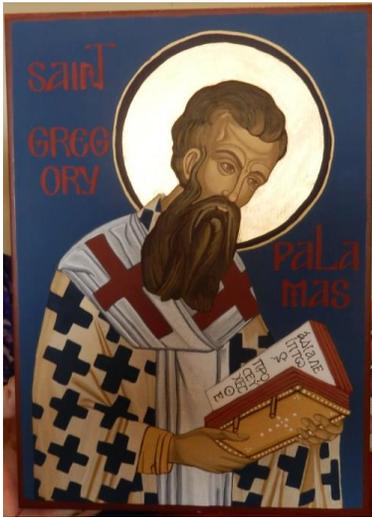
Two errors crop up in the field of preaching: **first**, to preach God's work in us by the Holy Spirit to the near exclusion of God's work for us in Christ; and, **second**, to preach "Christ's work for us at the expense of Christ's work in us."

Sanctification is **not** optional. It is an error to separate sanctification from justification just as separating works from faith is an error.

Sanctification is opposed to eastern mysticism, the new age movement, and pop psychology. Holiness is **not** developed by introspection or by digging around in the graveyard of the past. It occurs mystically following deep fellowship with Christ. Pop psychology is infatuated with personal, historical, archaeological road mapping of people's past personal experiences. This is contrary to the path of holiness in Scripture.

14. Perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God

2 Corinthians 7:1



◆ Perfecting holiness ought to be the intense concern of every Christian. But, how can we do it?

To answer this question, we must *go backward* from 2 Corinthians 7:1 into chapter 6 and into chapter 5.

One: Holiness begins with a volitional act.

2 Corinthians 7:1 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.

The participle "cleanse" comes from the Greek words *karthirizo* which means "to purge." We get the word "cartharsis" from this term which means "to purify" or "to cleanse."

The Greek participle (cleanse) is a subjunctive, volitive aorist¹ referring to a completed action in the past and not an ongoing, moment by moment process; that is, it refers to the quality of a decision – to start now if you have not done so! Paul holds out the hope and duty that all Christians have made a decision to separate themselves substantially from "filthiness . . ." and dedicated themselves to the perfection of holiness.

¹ The aorist subjunctive emphasizes a single, completed action, even as one anticipates a future act: that is, a requisite for a future act is dependent on a past act.

“Perfecting holiness” is dependent on a once-for-all decision to separate from evil and to seek God’s will.

The direct object of the verbal participle “cleanse” is “ourselves” – the act of making ourselves holy; that is, unlike justification which is an act of God, sanctification involves our consent and cooperation.

“Perfecting holiness,” however, is a present participle implying continual separation from “unclean” matters in this life and continual devotion of the man wholly and totally to the will of God.

“holiness” is an attribute of God that refers to His righteous and unique character (5:21).

“holy” is an adjective describing one's separation from sin's corruption and one's devotion and nearness to God or being Christ-like.

“perfecting holiness” comes from the present, active participle “*epi-teleo*” which means “to complete” or “to finish” -- to arrive at the goal line with holiness in our arms. It carries the idea of being totally consecrated and devoted to God and His purposes for members of His family.

“to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit” is the **negative side** of holiness; that is, the phrase references what we must separate ourselves from.

“filthiness” refers to all those things that defile and dirty a man morally and spiritually.

The **positive side** of holiness is drawing near to the Lord.

“in the fear of God” describes the motivation for holiness . . . the fear of displeasing him . . . and, his love to draw us to Christ while saving our souls “reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ” (5:18-19).

Second: Holiness seeks the fulfillment of His promises.

"Having therefore these promises" is a reference back to 2 Corinthians 6:17.

2 Corinthians 6:17-18 Wherefore 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 Almighty.

The pledge "I will receive you" refers to the Father's promise to accept, love, and provide for His holy ones. He is a Father to His children, but to enjoy Him, one must fulfill **three conditions of the promise**:

Condition one: "come out from among them," that is, a man must separate himself from the idolatries of the impious.

Condition two: "be ye separate" refers (negatively) to building a fence between yourself and the goats as well as (positively) dedicating one's self to the Lord.

Condition three: "touch not the unclean thing." The word "touch" (*hatomai*) is an imperative commanding the believer to **not** "embrace," "fellowship," or "make a commitment" to enjoy the unclean (*akathartos*) "pleasures of sin" for a season (Hebrews 11:25).

Condition Four: Holiness avoids worldliness and the unequal yoke with unbelievers sucking on fruit from the Poisonous Tree.

2 Corinthians 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? **15** And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? **16** And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Background: This verse is often used to warn Christians about marrying a non-Christian, but it involves other applications.

Corinth was a major commercial center. To be a business man and to sell a product or service, one had to be a member of a craftsman's guild -- a commercial corporation. Each guild had a "god" or an "idol" that allegedly helped partisans to build and sell their crafts to shoppers. These guilds set up conventions, exhibitions, and expos not only to market their products but to honor the "god" or "idol" allegedly giving them success. Feasting, drinking, and celebrating these gods involved intoxication, frolicking, and debauchery. Many Corinthians participated in these festivals for commercial gain and to build rapport with other merchants. But, in so doing they became a stumbling block or "an offence;" i.e., they hindered the progress of the gospel (See 5:3).

Paul pounds the hammer of truth on these compromisers: ". . . what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" Separation was the order of the day.

Herein lies a principle: *Christians are in the world, but not of the world.* They can interact with and interface with unbelievers, but believers cannot do what infidels do; say what they say; or go where they go without compromising the faith. Holiness is not contagious, but worldliness is. Therefore, the Christian must avoid certain social events in order to carry out his calling to be holy. "Others may, I cannot."

Condition Five: Holy people do "not receive the grace of God in vain."

2 Corinthians 6:1 We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

"as workers together with Him (Christ)" means that Paul's missionary team was in the harness pulling the gospel-plow. They were Christ's co-workers (*eugernountes* - 6:1) co-servants (*doulos*) and co-minsters (*diakonos* - 6:4); that is, they were ministers that gave up certain rights in order please God and to serve Him.

"We beseech you" glows from the sunshine in Paul's spirit: "beseech," *parakeleo*, expresses the tender warmth of Paul's love. He pleads with them to perfect their calling (7:1) and not to receive the grace of God in vain (6:1).

The word "vain" means without complete effect or impact on the soul; i.e., . . . uselessly, fruitlessly, pointlessly. It is like a man being bootless in the jungle. A Christian who understands the love of God in Christ gives Him his all. He doesn't hold back. He yields his mind, will, emotions, and body to Him. Fans of a football team will cheer after a win. Something is wrong if fans don't shout and smile. Likewise, something is wrong if believers don't yield their precious all to Christ after discovering the marvelous benefits of being **reconciled** to God.

The Corinthians, however, woke up every morning feeling like they had a choice to serve God or not serve God; to obey His law or not to obey His law; to do good or to do evil. Ellicott explains,

"Those to whom he wrote had believed and been baptized, and so they had "received the grace;" but "the freedom of the will to choose good or evil remained . . ."

A true minister of Christ has no choices in life in regards to good and evil; that is, he knows the Lord has already made that choice for him; and, he is obligated to surrender to his Lord.

Six: holiness requires the man to be totally reconciled to God in his spirit, soul, and body.

2 Corinthians 5:18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation . . . Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye (totally) reconciled to God.

One of the problems with the Corinthians was that they were fond of the Lord, but not in love with the Lord; that is, they were half-baked, cursory, superficial, and slipshod in their devotion to Christ.

The inexplicable love of God for us is compressed into the text,

". . . all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ. . . . to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. "

"All things are of God." The definite article related to "things" directs us back to "all things" being new in Christ Jesus; and, to Paul's ministry of preaching a gospel of reconciliation to God (5:17-18).

Barnes: "He makes the statement general, however, showing his belief that not only these things were produced by God, but that all things were under his direction, and subject to his control. Nothing that he had done was to be traced to his (Paul's) own agency or power, but God was to be acknowledged everywhere."

This is the first time Paul uses the word "reconcile" in his epistles.

The word "reconciliation" in 5:19 comes from the Greek word "*katallage*" which refers to balancing the books, of enter-changing currency to give the correct change; that is, to make things balanced or right.

The emphasis here is about God working in Christ to reconcile men to Himself; and, **not** upon men being reconciled one to another -- a complete impossibility until the return of Christ.

In punishing Christ for our sins, God' balances the books, delivers us from debt, forgives our sins, and makes it possible for us who were once enemies of God to become reconciled to Him. God did the reconciling, we need only to receive it . . . and *let it have its full impact on our soul.*

Think of a man on death row: accused, tried, found guilty, and sentenced to death when suddenly the judge appears, announces a pardon, pays the

debt, and sets the man free. How should the free man respond? The beneficiary of such grace falls on his knees in thankfulness and offers his precious all to the benefactor. Any other response is insane.

Paul exhorted the Corinthian church *to be totally reconciled to God* in their minds, emotions, and will; to respond correctly to this grace and be completely devoted to the Lord in the home, at work, and in the church; to have no will, but His will; to have no law but His law; and to let every aspect of grace have its full effect; that is, to grow from babyhood into manhood.

The Corinthians seem to have been a church where the grace of God had not yet penetrated the whole man.

- They needed to grow in compassion -- 2 Corinthians 6:12
- They needed to grow in a holy and separated life -- 2 Corinthians 6:14
- They needed to grow in generosity and giving - 2 Corinthians 8:7

Every command in Paul's letter addressed a shriveled condition of the Corinthians who were not that different from modern men.

The true mark of carnality is one that believes he still has choices in life.

The true mark of a Christian impacted by such grace is that he surrenders his precious all to the will of God: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done!"

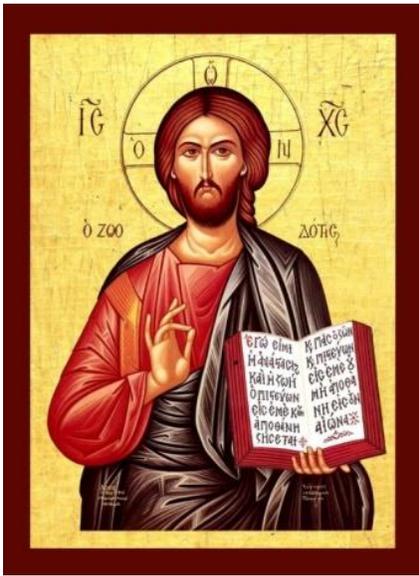
Holiness does not involve "speaking in tongues," jumping up and down in a pew like pogo sticks, or waiving one's hand in the air trying to touch this holy God. Rather, holiness involves separation from the world, and total devotion to the will of God -- the road less followed.

Perfection is the opposite of a glass half-filled with water.

15. How Men Become Holy

2 Corinthians 3:18

How Christians Change



◆ As soon as we enter school our teachers challenge us to change the world.

Soon after college we learn that not only can we not change the world, we can't change our spouse, children, friends or church. We can't even change ourselves.

Today, there are thousands of books telling us how to change. There are even 12 step programs on how to change.

Politicians tell us to change the world we must get out and vote.

Candidates promise change if we give them money.

Professors hold out change to "A" students.

Behavioral scientist promise change if we develop a better understanding of internal obstacles; by "allowing yourself to change" by practicing "positive affirmation;" by eating right and getting enough sleep."

Psychologists tell us to think positive; that words have energy; to put positive words in our mouth. "If you can think it, you can do it," they say. Cultural warriors tell women you can do anything that men can do; that 110 pound woman can out fight, out box, and out jujutsu five 200

pound body builders; that if they think like men, act like men, they can outperform them. All of this, of course, is a lie.

In Christian circles, Armenian behavior scientists abound. Look inside and make better choices. Pray, speak in tongues, receive the Holy Spirit and jibber-jabber, lay hands on people, “let go and let God,” and you can be a change agent. You can be anything you want to be. You are only limited by your negative thinking.

All of this is sheer nonsense.

Anyone offering programs for change are pathological liars, con artists, and money-huggers.

See “How to Change” by Katy Milkman (Amazon).

For the Christian, *there is only one way to be better, to be holy, and to be sanctified.*

The Following Text Tells Us How We Change

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass (mirror) the glory of the Lord (not inside self), are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Note the process of change. We are **not** changed by looking inside to find our true self, nor by looking at our past, nor by taking archaeological journeys into our personal history to locate blame points for our behaviors. We are **not** changed by psychoanalysis or psychotherapy. We are **not** changed by “making the right choices.” The ongoing transformation of believers happens when we meditate, think about, consider, reflect on, and behold the beauties of the Lord Jesus Christ. The participle “beholding” (κατοπτριζόμενοι) is a present participle indicating that the beholding is a continuous action.

The word “changed” (μεταμορφούμεθα) is a passive indicating that change happens to us as a result of a Christ-centered focus. We get the word “*metamorphosis*” from the word Greek word translated into “changed.”

Sanctification blossoms when the believer grasps his new identity in Christ; that is, his “baptism” or forensic consignment and identification with the life and history of Christ (Romans 6:1-11). *It is far more important to understand Christ’s history and victory over sin than it is to grovel around in one’s past failures locating blame points for degenerate behaviors.*

Furthermore, our personal history was dealt with as far back as Adam (Romans 5). Our past no longer exists before God.

Therefore, we must **not** let the past dominate our present behavior. Your future is **not** determined by your past but *what you believe about your past!!* If the past is the leading component that determines our future as pop-psychologists suggest, the people with the most deviant behaviors have no hope—no hope because their past never changes!! This is why psychology is a broken crutch.

The good news of the Bible is that when a person comes to Christ, their past is of no-consequence to God. The believer is viewed as being “in Christ.” He is “dead to sin” and “alive to God” (Romans 6:1-14).

Sanctification occurs when the believer “thinks” (reckons or imputes) correctly about his union with Christ; that is, when he lets his mind catch up with His new identity in Christ (Romans 6:11). Paul is saying, “You are alive to God, now think like it!”

“Likewise reckon (logizomai) ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Sanctification occurs when the believer interacts with truth. The truth will set you free. And, His Word is truth. God’s Word is sufficient. One does not need a psychologist or a psychoanalyst or psychotherapy to be complete. He needs to understand what God’s Word says about his new

position in Christ. The truth of God's Gospel sanctifies the man — **not** the facts about one's distorted past. All truth is not God's truth!! The truth talked about here is the truth of God's Word. If a man seeks holiness, he must seek the Word of God (John 8:32; 17:17, 19).

John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

Sanctification is justification in action, that is, it is the result of living under the judicial declaration of justification. Justification involves faith that God has declared the believer righteous.

Sanctification involves obedience or putting that righteousness into action. Preaching that sanctifying yourself is necessary for salvation or preaching the sovereignty of God to the exclusion of human responsibility is not Biblical. We should **not** sing, "Standing on the Promises" and "sit on the premises" or we'll be like the Ozark who preached virtue while stealing chickens.

16. Justification and Sanctification

Job 9:2



◆ Job asked the most important question ever asked, “How can a man be just before God?” (Job 9:2).

A man’s first order of business is getting right with God . . . but, how can he do it?

The answer is in the gospel (Romans 1-5:1).

Is there a greater misery than lashing guilt — like kettle drums pounding boom, boom, boom in

your soul?

The first blessing of the gospel is a clear conscience where the drums of guilt become mute. Paul’s calls it **justification** – the judicial act of God that forgives a man of his sins and gives him righteousness as a gift in order the man may have a right standing with Him (Romans 3:21-5:1). This righteousness is none other than the virtue of Christ. It is not implanted or infused into the man. It is credited (*logizomai*) to his account when He believes (Romans 4:5).

This righteousness is **not** attained; it is obtained by faith as a gift of God (Romans 4:5; 5:1; Ephesians 2:8-9).

At the same time as one’s justification, God gives His Spirit to the believer to regenerate the man and to empower Him to keep His law

(Romans 5:3-7; 8:4). This transformation does not justify the man, but justification qualifies the man to be transformed and sanctified.

Once a man is right with God by faith, he can now begin the process of sanctification – the act of being holy.

It is important a man does not confuse sanctification with justification or make sanctification the basis of justification – the error of subjectivity.

The Difference Between Justification and Sanctification

Justification Sanctification

God godly

Love lovingly

Hope hopefully

Lord obedience

Savior fellowship with other saints

Just as sanctification is justification in action, sanctification is godliness in action. In justification, we are declared righteous; in sanctification we live righteously. In justification we receive God's love; in sanctification, we live lovingly. In justification we have hope, but in sanctification, we live hopefully. To be justified, we confess Christ as Lord; but in sanctification, we obey Him as Lord. In justification, we accept Christ as Savior and ourselves as sinners; but in sanctification, we seek to accept Christ as our life and live as saints.

Faith is always vertical. It is never horizontal. It is not faith in faith; faith in conversion; faith in church; or faith in change.

- Faith does not look inside at the heart of man.
- Faith does not inspect the belly button.
- Faith always looks up to God's mercy and His work in Christ.
- Faith never loses sight of God's love exhibited at the cross.

- Faith never wants to offend God.

Once a man is made right with God (justification), he feels the urge to be holy, forsake sinful habits, and do works of love. This process is called sanctification.

Romans 8:34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died-

Since Christ died for sins, who can accuse the believer of sin? If He died for our sins, how many are there left for us to pay for?

Moreover, faith goes to work. Galatians 5:6 teaches love is the outworking of faith toward God, thus, we have “faith working through love.”

Martin Lloyd Jones on Sanctification (Jones, 1990)

“Sanctification means being devoted to God, not only separated from the world but separated unto God and sharing His life--it is positive holiness” (Jones, p. 12).

“ . . . the New Testament method of dealing with a particular sins is never to concentrate upon the particular sin as such, but to bring it into the light and the context of the whole Christian position” (Jones, p. 12).

“ . . . sanctification must never be thought of as an end in itself but rather as a means to an end. The goal, I say, is not even to be holy men, nor to attain holiness, but rather to live in fellowship with God. Our goal is the knowledge and the love of God and of His Son Jesus Christ. The goal is not to be sanctified, but that I should be walking in fellowship with Him . . . ” (p. 12, 13).

“You can get the impression that the truth which leads to sanctification is really a very simple truth, just one little message . . . but this truth about which our Lord speaks is the whole Christian truth! It includes all of the epistles, all the Sermon on the Mount and the teaching of the Gospels. It is the whole Bible . . . ” (Jones, p. 13).

Sanctification and the UCMJ

When a man yields to the sanctifying work of the Spirit, he agrees to obey His law. And, in obeying the law he demonstrates his love for the Lord.

Sanctification has a parallel in the punitive articles of the UCMJ (Uniform Code of Military Justice).

Note the similarities between following Christ and becoming an officer in the U.S. military.

ARTICLE 133 - Conduct Unbecoming of an Officer

(2) Nature of offense. Conduct violative of this article is action or behavior in an official capacity which, in dishonoring or disgracing the person as an officer, seriously compromises the officer's character as a gentleman, or action or behavior in an unofficial or private capacity which, in dishonoring or disgracing the officer personally, seriously compromises the person's standing as an officer. There are certain moral attributes common to the ideal officer and the perfect gentleman, a lack of which is indicated by acts of dishonesty, unfair dealing, indecency, indecorum, lawlessness, injustice, or cruelty.

(3) Examples of offenses. Instances of violation of this article include knowingly making a false official statement; dishonorable failure to pay a debt; cheating on an exam; opening and reading a letter of another without authority; using insulting or defamatory language to another officer in that officer's presence or about that officer to other military persons; being drunk and disorderly in a public place; public association with known prostitutes; committing or attempting to commit a crime involving moral turpitude; and failing without good cause to support the officer's family.

Likewise, there are personal standards of Christian conduct which cannot fall without seriously compromising the Christians' standing as a follower

of Jesus Christ. If a man is in the Lord's army, he will do what his Commander orders.

17. Sanctification and the Charismatic Movement

Romans 12:21

◆ "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good"



In NT times, Judaizers robbed the church of joy and sought to chain believers to the dictates of Torah.

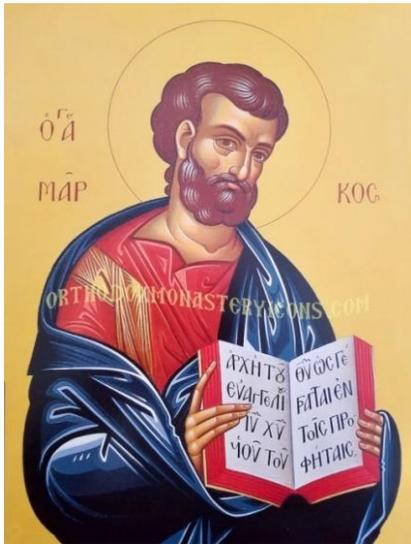
Today, however, the church seems to frown on rules for godly living. Many coming into the church today recklessly pursued a life of drugs and licentiousness. Many are expecting the same high from religion as they

found in their former drug life. And, this "high" is often discovered in Charismatic circles where people speak gibberish and raise their hands like windshield wipers in distress.

But, this movement is a farce and the believer would do well to keep his head down, avoid the wild and fanciful diversions of jabbering Charismatics. Be a Biblical charismatic by looking at Christ, seeking a Spirit-filled life, and growing in Christ-like character—that is, the fruits of the Spirit — like seed breaking through stone into a wildflower (See the Appendix, Nike 138 & 161).

18. Holiness and Lifestyle Evangelism

Romans 14:7



◆ For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

Holiness is the practice of love. If a man knows Christ by faith and is a partaker of the first fruits of the kingdom of God, what kind of man is he if does not attempt to be God's instrument to lead them to the knowledge of the truth (1 Corinthians 15:1-12)?

The Christian life is one of winning others to Christ because no man lives unto himself.

Thus, holy men seek to lead others to the water of life so they can quench their thirst; that is, holy men are evangelists silencing storms with a breath of hope.

Holiness does not mean that a Christian is to live like a recluse and withdraw into some cave like a medieval monk. Christians are called to evangelize the lost which means we must take holiness to the hedges; the gospel to where men live. Evangelists are nothing but water boys giving thirsty travelers a drink of water from the well of eternal life.

Holiness does not mean one has to be bullied about by the conscience of other men. It means he must grow in his knowledge of God's Word, and let God's Word guide him in all that he does; that is, being a compass in a dark storm.

The Problem of Critical Brethren

Holiness involves following Christ and not the convictions of others.

One of the problems that surfaced in the church at Rome was the Jews sought to control the Gentiles by their weak Jewish conscience. The Gentiles reacted by condemning their Jewish brethren for their narrow-mindedness (Romans 14).

John Aldridge once gave a message called, "Meat Eaters Make Better Evangelists." His premise was that in order to be to win people to Christ, Christians must get outside their comfort zones and go where the people are congregating. He recognized the problem of compromise, but said the greater problem was the failure of Christians to mix socially with non-Christians. He argued that Christians were actually trained to be "weak brothers" and, therefore, were ineffective in Evangelism. He called for Christians to exercise their freedoms (without compromise) in order to win the lost, and to not allow themselves to be restricted by the narrow convictions of fellow believers critical of the brethren. He went on to discuss the meaning of Romans 14. Below is a summary of his analysis.

Below is a classification of terms in Romans 14 regarding the subject of "Doubtful Things." (Sermon: Dr. Joe Aldridge)

The Professional Weaker Brother

This person lives a very restricted life. He is ultra conservative on all issues, but he is psychologically and experientially mature. He is weak by choice, and he is in no danger of being stumbled by the freedoms of others. He uses "weakness" as an excuse to control the choices of others. His views are not normative, and the church must not allow itself to be bullied around by domination tactics of this professional weaker brother.

The Genuine Weaker Brother

This brother lives a very restricted life and exercises few freedoms. However, his position may not be lifelong. He has adopted a conservative position out of fear of offending God or offending the professional weaker brother. He needs acceptance, but he also needs instruction so that his life is not dominated by the preferences of others.

The Mature Non-participating Brother

This brother has limited his freedoms out of love for others. He acknowledges the freedom to participate in social practices that are not morally tainted and does not condemn those who do engage in these activities. He is ready to defend Christian liberties, but he is also ready to instruct those who abuse those liberties.

The Mature Participating Brother

This brother chooses to exercise his liberty in order to penetrate the unchurched world. His goal is to draw near to the lost. He is social, and he reflects the culture in his dress, vocabulary, and behavior (without sinning). He is a champion of personal freedom, but his motivation is to win people to Christ.

The Immature Participating Brother

This brother is a champion of personal liberties. He detests the professional weaker brother and the genuine weaker brother. He cares little about the faith of others as long as his liberality is unchallenged. He is a full participant in Christian liberties and he refuses to limit his behavior thought it may cause others to truly stumble in their Christian walk.

Taking Holiness to the edges

There is no doubt that many Christians lack strong convictions, especially on doctrinal issues of Scripture. On the other hand, Christians have also bludgeoned one another with strong views in matters of preference – like hog tying a calf.

How do we penetrate the unchurched, sin-laden society without compromise, and how do we do so without stumbling weaker brothers in pursuit of holiness? How do we keep the limitations of others from becoming our ball-and-chain while seeking to identify with the "publicans and sinners?"

Two models are provided for us in Scripture: that of John the Baptist, the austere, monastic, devoted holy man from the deserts of Judea, and the Lord Jesus Christ, the social, upbeat, in-contact rabbi for the common man in the streets.

Today, we are witnessing two phenomena: On one hand we have a whole segment of devoted disciples who are polarized around the John-the-Baptist lifestyle; and on the other hand we have the moral failures of movers and shakers in the televangelism world being exposed for their contamination with sin.

How do we evangelize without compromise? Consider the following:

There is no impact without contact. Research has shown (1990s) the average person won to Christ has had about five to six contacts with genuine Christians prior to his conversion. But the average three year old believer has no non-Christian friends. The two must come together.

Our mission is to take holiness to the hedges (the land of beer cans and poker chips).

In order to make a radical difference there must be **radical identification** with the non-churched world.

While the mature, personal evangelist must avoid evil, it is not always possible to avoid the appearance of evil. Criticism is inevitable for the one walking through the gutters in order to rescue men from hell.

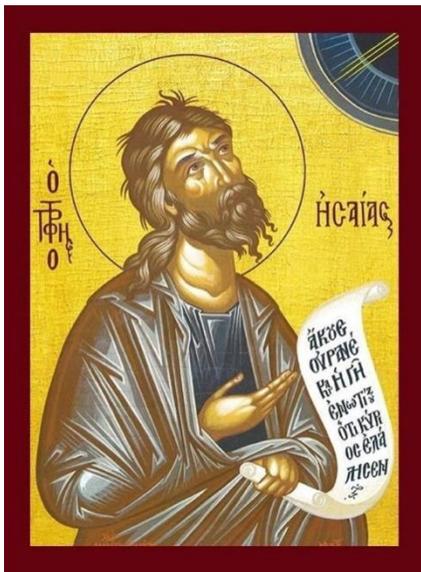
The church needs to affirm the validity of both lifestyles; that of the churchmen who are seeking to live holy lives, and that of the scraping evangelist who penetrates the unchurched network of society to win them to Christ (Sermon Notes from Dr. Joe Aldridge)

[1] Geoffrey Paxton, The Nature of a Christian, Nov. 6, 1973, Lecture to Grace Bible Institute, Omaha, Nebraska.

(Source: Stockton, "Five Pillars of the Gospel", unpublished seminary lecture notes for New Testament Theology)

19. The Holy, Holy, Holy Psalm

Psalm 99



◆ The theme of this psalm is that **the LORD Reigneth**. The foundation of all worship rests on the fact that He rules over the nations and is guiding history towards its ultimate conclusion.

That the Lord reigns is the subject of psalms 95-100 because “The LORD reigneth” is the gospel of the Old Testament. It had to be put to music and sung as a Hebrew liturgy. The noble work of worship and service is built on this truth, “The LORD reigneth.”

This psalm is also called **the "Sanctus"** or the **"Holy, Holy, Holy Psalm"** where the attribute of God's holiness is mentioned three times as a conclusion after each refrain (Psalm 99). When Isaiah saw God in Isaiah 6, he said, “sanctus, sanctus, santus is the Lord” (Latin). Let us remember “the holy God reigns.” He is like white, sun-kissed linen billowing in the breeze.

The Foundation of Praise

Psalm 99:1 The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved.

“The LORD reigneth” means the LORD is installed as King; that He has authority to make law and to judge the people; that He is in charge, and not man!

The word “tremble” (*ragaz*) can mean “to quake,” “to be agitated,” “to rage,” or “to be perturbed.” The Spirit is **not** calling people to be angry

with God, but to be properly moved by His status; that is, for men to take their humble place and to arrange themselves under His authority; for men to confess Him as the holy King, Lord, and Master, and to surrender to His law-order like a river flowing to the sea.

“sitteth between the cherubims” refers to the Ark of the Covenant, the mercy seat, and the law of the LORD God; that is, “sitteth” makes NOTICE that He is the properly installed King.

This reality reinforces the requirement for men to develop a new gestalt and to organize themselves before God’s throne — to accept His government and gladly acknowledge His dominion. In Latin the title “Lord” is “dominus” from which we get the term “dominion” and “dominate.”

“Let the earth be moved” is a call for the earth “to TAKE NOTICE,” “to shake,” and “to tremble,” not literally, but as a hyperbolic metaphorical example to men on how to properly respond to Divine authority. The description is taken from the fury of a storm with all its commotion on trees and seas — an example of His majesty and the terror of His power to which all men ought to prostrate themselves before Him.

Reasons to Praise

2 The LORD is great in Zion; and he is high above all the people.

“great in Zion” refers to the great acts of the LORD in redeeming and delivering His people from dangers. The idea is that God has interposed Himself when the Hebrews were threatened by hostile nations to save His people and to discomfort His enemies. Consequently, Hebrews had high esteem for the LORD.

“high above all the people” refers to His status and jurisdiction; that He rules over the nations; that He has them under his control; that He rules over all men and all the hullabaloo behind politics; that the One ruling in

Zion also exercises authority over all the nations of the earth. Because of this the people have a special reason to praise him.

3 Let them praise thy great and terrible name; for it is holy.

The first call (command) of this psalm is for people to acknowledge His authority and surrender to it. The call ends the first refrain.

The second call is for men to consider the virtue of His name; that is how great and large in scale compared to temporal man. He is great because his redemptive works represent the attributes of God and marvelous acts performed under this banner.

His name is presented with three descriptives: “great,” “terrible,” and “holy.”

The adjective “terrible” means the mere mention of His name ought to cause men to pause, to tremble with reverence, and to honor Him with praise and thanksgiving.

His name “is holy” means that His name is set apart for honor because He is pure and righteous — used three times the word “holy” is a reasonable warning against cursing and blasphemy; that is, His name is treasured, pure, clean, good, awesome, exalted special, sacred, and supreme. You don’t keep your diamonds in a pigsty, and no man should use the Lord’s name cheaply or degradingly. Things done under this holy appellative ought to bring out the best in us.

“Hallowed be thy name” is a prayer that all men everywhere might honor and respect His holy name; that is, we can’t use His name lightly or disparagingly. Men ought to use the name of the LORD sparingly and reserve using His name for solemn matters in courts and in worship.

It is blasphemous to use the precious name of “Jesus” profanely, casually, or carelessly.

Philippians 2:11 And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

4 The king's strength also loveth judgment; thou dost establish equity, thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.

The psalmist provides four more reasons to praise the King.

"The king's strength" refers to the power of God as a king and his exercise of authority among the nations.

"loveth judgment" means He is always on the side of what is right and just. God does not choose sides: He is always on the side of those promoting love and justice, and never on the side of those promoting party politics. To put it in a heavenly way: those promoting justice are on God's side.

"establishes equity" is a common-law term referring to those who advance fairness and impartiality in controversial matters related to men.

"Thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob " refers to God's ability to arbitrate conflicts related to ancient Israel; the ability to balance the interest of His holiness with the needs of the people for their good; to do what ought to be done; to do not only what is right but to do it lovingly for the good of Jacob even though no one else had his interests at heart.

Know that this text applies to Christ, the true Israel, and to His people, the New Israel.

5 Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy.

"Exalt" (*ruwm*) is the second call in this psalm; and is equivalent to the command to "worship at his footstool" – the third command.

The Polel imperative "exalt" means "to rise up" intensely as if one was in church parading the Bible down the isle or going to an honorable court -

"All Rise!" It is a command for the people to stand up in His presence in a manner worthy of monarchs; to lift up His name with high honor so it stands out like a flag on a pole.

The word "worship" is a Hithpael imperative meaning "cause yourself to bow down" before His footstool; that is, humble yourself, kneel, bow, and prostrate yourself before His Majesty.

"Majesty, worship His majesty;
unto Jesus be all glory, honor and praise.
Majesty, kingdom authority,
flow from His throne unto His own; His anthem raise.
So exalt, lift up on high the name of Jesus.
Magnify, come glorify Christ Jesus, the King."

This command answers the "Baptist" question, "How did people get saved in the Old Testament?" The answer is to confess Him as Lord, King, and Master; to bow the knee and acknowledge His supremacy; to arrange one's precious all under His authority -- the foundation stone of Romans 10:9-10.

6 Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the LORD, and he answered them.

The official ministers of the Hebrew religion, Moses, Aaron, and Samuel bowed their knee to His authority and called upon His Holy name. And, God answered them. Likewise, followers of the Hebrew religion ought to follow this example as the grounds upon which petitions are granted.

7 He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them.

Calling upon His name (v. 6) involves "listening to His Word as they did when He spoke from the "cloudy pillar," and obeying His testimonies (law) and ordinances.

"He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble: I will deliver him, and honor him" (Psalm 91:15).

"Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor Me" (Psalm 50:15).

8 Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.

"Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God" provides those approaching His throne with the assurance they too will be heard just like He heard Moses, Aaron, and Samuel. The God Christians worship is the same God that they worshiped. Therefore, we ought to feel the assurance of this promise.

The word "inventions" refers to misdeeds, sins, and wantonness.

"tookst vengeance" refers to judicial judgment and severe fatherly discipline.

We are often flogged by our own sins; and, this guilt hinders prayer. Likewise, the founding fathers of the nation were also flawed men; that is, they too were sinners who needed forgiveness. By "sinners" we do not mean rebels. They acknowledged the authority of the LORD and in following Him sometimes failed. In floundering, they sought to be reconciled to God and found Him faithful to forgive even though they were often the object of severe chastisement.

If they found forgiveness, so can we! The difference being that we know that forgiveness is based on the fact that Christ was punished for our sins and that He paid the redemption price with His own blood.

Psalm 86:5 For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.

Ephesians 1:7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

9 Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the LORD our God is holy.

"Exalt" and "worship" is the fourth and fifth command in this psalm -- a repetition of the second and third command -- an act of obedience required by the certainty, "The LORD reigneth."

"Exalt" and "worship" have the same meaning here as they do in verse five and for the same reason -- His holiness; lift Him up while you lower yourself; exalt Him while you humble yourself like a knave in the palace of his king.

The Polel imperative "exalt" means "to rise up" as if one was in church or going to court. It is a command for the people to stand up in His presence in a manner worthy of monarchs; to lift up His name with high honor so it stands out like a flag on a towering pole.

The word "worship" is a Hithpael imperative meaning "cause yourself to bow down" before His footstool; that is, humble yourself, kneel, bow, and prostrate yourself before His Majesty in your spirit.

The word "holy hill" refers to Zion -- a metonym for the authority and supremacy of the LORD God as Creator of Heaven and Earth.

"Holy" is used a third time. "God is holy" refers to the fact that the LORD God is not one among many, but that He is the One True God, the Master of the Universe, the Lord to whom all men are accountable -- a death blow to the spirit of omnism in the world. All other deities are pretenders. He is the real God; therefore, let all men acknowledge His authority and surrender their precious all to His law and His care.

"All hail the pow'r of Jesus' name!

Let angels prostrate fall;

Bring forth the royal diadem,"Ye chosen seed of Israel's race,
Ye ransomed from the fall,
Hail Him who saves you by His grace,
And crown Him, crown Him, crown Him,
Crown Him Lord of all!"

Ye chosen seed of Israel's race,
Ye ransomed from the fall,
Hail Him who saves you by His grace,
And crown Him, crown Him, crown Him,
Crown Him Lord of all!"

20. Warning: Strange Fire in the Church

Leviticus 10:1-2



◆ And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

Nadab and Abihu, newly ordained priests from the family of Aaron, offered strange fire to the Lord.

Stunningly, they were immediately executed by God. That the surviving family of priests were not permitted to mourn their deaths ought to be of tremendous interest to the seeker of truth because the man of God must always identify with the disposition of the Lord.

Nadab and Abihu were not pretenders or false men. They were legitimate, properly sanctioned priests . . . yet, the LORD executed them for offering something He had not sanctioned.

What did they do wrong? What was their sin?

Apparently, the two men put fire and unauthorized incense in their censer, went into the Holy Place to trim the candlestick, and to service the ordination of burning incense on the golden altar.

(1) They each took their own censer instead of the sacred tabernacle utensil designated and consecrated for this purpose (Exodus 40:9).

- (2) Instead of using coals from off the brazen altar to burn incense, they used coals from another source to burn incense.
- (3) They presumed to go into the Holy Place together. The duties to service the tabernacle inside the Holy Place were to be done by one priest only. Never two priests.
- (4) Servicing the inner tabernacle was not their job; that is, it was the duty of the High Priest (Aaron), and not the subsidiary priests to service the rituals inside the tabernacle proper (Exodus 30:7).
- (5) They offered the incense in their own censers and went into the Holy Place at an unauthorized time; that is, the chores of servicing the candlestick and the provision for the golden altar were to be performed twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening.
- (6) Possibly the two men were slightly inebriated. In verse ten Moses instructed Aaron, after the fact, to not drink wine while on duty in the tabernacle.

Two men offered strange fire, and two men died by fire.

There are at least three lessons for us in this passage:

First, those who serve God must regard Him as holy.

Leviticus 10:3 Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.

To sanctify God means to treat Him as the highest authority in all matters -- to honor him with obedience, dignity, reverence, and our most excellent service. Where God is obeyed, God is glorified. Where men follow His Word instead of their own feelings, He is honored. When men are more concerned about obedience to God's law than the laws of the State, they sanctify God as holy.

This passage ought to give us pause to consider how Christians can offend the holiness of God by offering strange fire . . . things not commanded . . . in the worship of the church today.

- Do not Christians offer strange fire to the Lord when unqualified men lead the congregation in prayer ([1 Timothy 2:8](#)).
- Do not Christians offer strange fire to the Lord when women preach or lead the congregation in prayer (1 Timothy 2:9ff)?
- Do not Christians offer strange fire to the Lord when its ministers and Sunday School teachers perform the duties of the church absent the power of the Spirit of God (Ephesians 5:18-20)?
- Do not Christians offer strange fire to the Lord when speaking in pseudo tongues, performing acts of “holy laughter,” and doing all kinds of undignified gyrations, jerking, and gymnastics in theatrical performances on stage in a Pentecostal church?
- Do not Christians offer strange fire before the Lord when young musicians “rock out” the church in some “rap” or “jam” session in the sanctuary? Do not hear what is not being said. There is a place for dignified, God-honoring compositions using electric guitars and drums.
- Do not Christians offer strange fire before the Lord when men pray to God with a hat on their head and women pray in church with their [head uncovered](#) (1 Corinthians 11:1-16)?
- Do not Christians offer strange fire before the Lord when they drink coffee and eat donuts in a “worship” service?
- Do not Christians offer strange fire before the Lord when they offer prayers to God in the name of Mary or some saint?
- Do not Christians offer strange fire before the Lord by incorporating with the IRS and subjecting His holy church to the rules / statutes of

the State? A church that permits godless, pagan IRS agents to inspect its tabernacle records is not only blasphemy but strange fire in the Holy Place.

- Do not pretender Christians offer strange fire before the Lord by smoking “weed” as a substitute for the elements of the Lord’s Supper in the “Church of Cannibis”?
- Do not pretender-Christians offer strange fire when they conduct services in the nude like the Whitetail Chapel apostate church in New Jersey?
- Do not pretender-churches offer strange fire when congregants are composed of practicing gays, homosexuals, transvestites, and lesbians dressed in rainbow colors (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)?
- Do not so called “Messianic churches” offer strange fire before the Lord by wearing Jewish prayer shawls, yarmulkes, tallits, and phylacteries in church?
- Do not pretender-churches offer strange fire when preaching all religions are a way to God . . . or there are many paths to God and not many paths to hell?
- Do not pretender-churches offer strange fire before the Lord when preaching psychological theories in substitute for or alongside the Word of God?
- Do not pretender-churches offer strange fire when preaching salvation without blood currency . . . or repentance . . . or the cross . . . or the Lordship of Christ?
- Do not pretender-Christians offer strange fire to the Lord when people handle rattlesnakes on the podium to demonstrate supernatural powers?

- Do not pretender-churches offer strange fire when preaching a gospel that encourages Christians to always obey the government and presumptions of Congressional law?
- Do not pretender-churches offer strange fire to the Lord by adopting the State's definition of marriage as a union between two people; two men; or two women?

Surely, such doctrines and practices grieve the Holy Spirit who has instructed us how to please Him: "And grieve not the Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30).

Second, the surviving priestly family was not permitted to mourn the death of Nadab and Abihu informing us that all Christian ministers must identify with, rejoice in, and side with the judgments (law) of God as presented in His Word.

The flower and hope of Aaron's family was suddenly destroyed by the terrifying justice of God. Yet, he was not permitted to yield to his natural emotions of sorrow, shock, and grief. He had to identify and uphold the righteous judgment of the LORD God of Israel. There is a place for human emotions and grief, but not while Aaron had the anointing oil upon him in the service of the LORD God.

God's Word, not human affections, is the only authority for faith and practice. We are not permitted to let natural desires determine the course of ministry or to adopt modern sympathies as standards for conduct in the Church of Jesus Christ.

Third, this page of history reminds us how sin taints everything man touches.

Oh, how the joy of the day turned to sorrow. Four times in Leviticus 9, it says Moses did as the LORD commanded in the ordination of the priests (9:5, 6, 7, 21), and then suddenly, without warning two priests offered

that which “He commanded them not” (10:1-2) to offend the holiness of God.

No sooner had the first couple been placed in the garden that they partook of the forbidden fruit of the poisonous tree (Genesis 3).

In the new world, Noah quickly corrupted himself with wine to the shame of his family (Genesis 8-9). No sooner had the tabernacle and the priests been consecrated, they followed the ways of their own heart and subjected themselves to the fires of God’s wrath (Leviticus 10).

During the first battle in the Land of Canaan, Achan took the forbidden Babylonian garment and hid it in his tent (Joshua 6-7).

As soon as Israel captured the land, they “forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth” (Judges 2:13).

Saul, Israel’s first king, quickly became corrupt (1 Samuel 14-15).

When Solomon achieved the pinnacle of power, he gave his heart to foreign women (1 Kings 11).

After the division (931 B.C.), Jeroboam set up two golden calves at Dan and Bethel in Israel (1 Kings 12).

In Ezra 10, many men in Israel brought foreign wives into the congregation.

In the first church, the people witnessed the judgment of Ananias and Sapphira for their deception (Acts 5). No sooner had the blessings of the gospel been preached around the Mediterranean than it became needful for the Holy Spirit to warn the new churches about “grievous wolves,” “apostasy,” and all manner of deception (Acts 20:29; 1 Timothy. 4:1-3; 2 Timothy. 3:1-5; 2 Peter 2; Jude). And, to crown all, we have the prophetic record of human apostasy from amid all the splendors of millennial glory (Revelation 20:7-10).

The passage in Leviticus 10 warns those in the priestly service of ministry not to be under the influence of wine in the service of the Lord. This would include being under the influence of drugs or under the influence of the madness of political correctness and the rewriting of history produced by universities and the media today.

Let's be careful to do "what the Lord commands," and to shun all "strange fire" (that which He has not commanded) in the service of the Lord. Otherwise, we mar the priesthood like graffiti on a white fence.

We highly recommend John MacArthur's Book on "Strange Fire" -- a perspective on the strange fire offered to God in the Charismatic Movement.

Publications

Books we have written:

1. Biblical Standards for Civil Rulers, Form #13.013
2. Should Christians Always Obey the State?, Form #13.014
3. The Crisis of Church Incorporation, Form #13.017
4. A Family Under God, Form #17.001
5. Origin of the Bible, Form #17.002
6. The Gospel of the Kingdom of God, Form #17.003
7. Five Pillars of the Gladiator Gospel, Form #17.004
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Works we have contributed to:

1. Laws of the Bible, Litigation Tool #09.001
2. Ten Commandments of Freedom Form #13.016
3. SEDM About Us Page, Section 9
4. Proof of Claim: Your Main Defense Against Government Greed and Corruption, Form #09.073. [Click Here](#) for the article this publication is based on from this site