

## **RESTITUTION, FAITH CURES, PRAYER CURES AND THE GIFT OF HEALING.**

– *(CONTINUED FROM OUR LAST.)* –

CONTINUING from our last the consideration of the necessity that our hearts be purified by faith and kept clean through the application of the Word, in order that we may progress in the divine life, let us consider the necessity for purity of heart and the purifying of the flesh in our approaches to God in prayer.

### **"HAVING OUR BODY WASHED WITH PURE WATER."**

"Let us therefore draw near, with a true heart, and with the confidence of faith, being sprinkled as to our hearts, and pure from an evil conscience, and our body being washed with pure water." – Heb. 10:22. *Syriac translation.*

Here the Apostle mentions five conditions, (1) Honesty of heart; (2) an undoubting faith; (3) a blood-sprinkled heart (Heb. 9:14), a heart or will that has been justified not merely through faith but also through the application of the blood, symbol of the merit of the ransom, given once for all by our Redeemer; (4) a clean conscience; (5) washed or purified bodies; *i.e.*, with the outward man in process of cleansing by the purifying of the word of truth and grace.

The purifying or cleansing of the heart *through faith* in the precious blood seems to be much better understood by Christian people than the purifying of their bodies, their flesh, *through obedience* in the application to themselves in daily life of the promises, precepts, warnings and illustrations of Scripture – as water or cleansing truths.

It is true that God accepts us into his family as soon as our hearts (wills) have been consecrated through the application of Christ's merit, even before we have had time to cleanse ourselves from much of the

filth of [R2022 : page 193] the flesh. But this merciful provision to meet the necessity of our case should not embolden us to expect to be continuously received at the throne in filthiness of the flesh not even attempted to be removed, yet for the gradual removal of much of which in the present life every preparation has been made.

On the contrary, realizing God's holiness and purity of motive and deed, we should realize that sin and [R2022 : page 194] sinners are very obnoxious to him; and, while accepting his favor in Christ's robe of justification granted to us, we should begin at once earnestly to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit [mind], *perfecting* holiness in the fear [reverence] of the Lord." (2 Cor. 7:1.) The Scriptures give us no ground to hope that when we shall have finished the race we shall be absolutely clean and that holiness in us shall be perfected. No, no; when we shall have done all that we can do we must still confess that we are not servants who have brought our Master profit; we must still confess that in our flesh is no perfection; that still God could accept us only in the Beloved, covered by his imputed righteousness; for of all the sons of Adam "there is none righteous; no, not one;" nor will any be perfected in holiness until our Redeemer shall give us new, pure and perfect bodies, through which our purified hearts (wills, intentions) can find exercise. But, just the same, our hearts (wills), if they are pure and subject to the Lord's instructions, will be constantly seeking to come as near as possible to absolute purity of the flesh and spirit and to perfect holiness.

And, as the cleansing process continues through the washing of the water of the Word, our appreciation of what purity is grows; so that what we would have thought almost spotless purity at first comes gradually, under our clearer spiritual sight, to appear quite sullied. At first, the only "filth of the flesh" which we noticed as such were the gross impurities of word and act; but after having progressed a while, these gross impurities become repulsive so that we hate them and have no sympathy with them; by that time another set of sins, less gross, that we did not see at first as sins, are demanding and having our efforts to

purge them out; and, as they go, other impurities, still more subtle, still more refined, still more deeply entrenched in our poor, fallen bodies, are discovered and being by God's grace purged out. The "filth of the flesh," as at first seen by many, consisted of murders, drunkenness, debauch, adulteries, filthy language, etc.: as seen later, it includes selfishness in its various developments, hatred, malice, envy, strife, vain-glory; but, as seen from the advanced standpoint of those who for some time have been striving by the Lord's help toward perfect holiness, it is seen to include every thing short of meekness, gentleness, patience, brotherly kindness, love. And it is well that we should see that, while such results are to be aimed at and to be attained as fully and as rapidly as possible, yet our Lord, as our High Priest, knows our circumstances and peculiarities, and not only is not expecting impossibilities but stands ready to assist us to the possibilities to which he calls us by his gospel and its exceeding great and precious promises. And surely, "he that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he [who called him] is pure." – 1 John 3:3.

What we have said with reference to heart purity, the most important, applies also to physical cleanliness. Get the heart (mind) started toward purity, and the literal water will be used as well as the symbolical, and the outward man will soon be clean.

### **PURIFICATION WITH FASTING AND PRAYER.**

Although not under the Law Covenant, we may with propriety look back to God's dealings with the ancient worthies and the typical arrangements of the past and draw therefrom some lessons of value. One lesson is in the fact that those who celebrated the Passover (typifying the Gospel Church which partakes of Christ, our Passover Lamb) were required to cleanse themselves and their houses and to put away all leaven (a symbol of sin) and generally to purify. See Exod. 12:19,20; 13:7; John 11:55.

On the great occasion of the giving to Israel of the Law Covenant, washings, purifying, etc., were strictly enjoined. (See Exod. 19:15.)

The antitype of that is the institution of the New Covenant of grace at the hands of the greater Mediator, Christ. The appropriateness of the still greater purifying of all who accept the New Covenant must be evident.

When Daniel the prophet sought the Lord in the special requests which God so specially answered, he "chastened" himself; that is, he sought by the practice of self-denial to bring himself into a special condition of heart and mind pleasing to God. (Dan. 10:2,3.) That his course was helpful to him and acceptable in God's sight is testified by the angel of the Lord – "O Daniel, a man greatly beloved [*margin* – "man of desires"], ...fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard." Verses 11,12. Compare also Chapter 9:3,4-18,20,21.

While the fastings, washings and purifyings of the Law Covenant represent conditions of self-denial and deadness to the world, which should be the attitude of all true believers at all times, yet we have good New Testament precedent for the observance of literal fasts, etc. Note the following: –

Our Lord fasted forty days at the beginning of his ministry, when specially seeking divine leading and instruction for the work; and we know not how often he fasted in secret. – Matt. 4:2.

"When ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance,...that they may appear unto men to fast....But thou, when thou fastest,...appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret,...and he shall reward thee openly." – Matt. 6:16-18; 9:15. **[R2022 : page 195]**

In the Church at Antioch were several of the brethren who served the Church, and prayed and fasted and sought to be and to do what would be most pleasing to God. It was from among these earnest seeking ones that God chose Paul and Barnabas for special service.

What a suggestion there is in this for all who are desirous of being used and useful in the service of the same Master. The Church at Antioch seemed to feel the importance of the matter, too, for when sending them forth at their expense, as their representatives and the Lord's, they fasted first and then prayed and laid their hands upon the missionaries (as recognizing them as their agents and representatives) and sent them forth. – Acts 13:2,3.

The Apostle mentions how he and his co-laborers approved themselves to the people of God, and among other items he mentions stripes, imprisonments and fastings. We are not to think of the Apostle as whipping and imprisoning himself, as do some of the monks and nuns, but as suffering these at the hands of unbelievers, on account of his faithfulness to the Lord, in declaring the good tidings of great joy – "Jesus and the resurrection" – of which he was not ashamed. So, likewise, some of his fastings may have been enforced fastings, because of his service of the truth; and, if so, no doubt they were all the more acceptable in God's sight. – 2 Cor. 6:5; 11:27.

To those who have written to us of their desire to abandon the use of tobacco, etc., or who find in themselves any weaknesses which they long to overcome, we advise not only the continual washing of their hearts with the truth and praying and watching unceasingly, but also additionally the frequent use of literal water in a physical bath and occasional fasting unto God as a sign to him of your earnestness of heart – as a proof to yourself, as well as to God, that your prayer is not merely a momentary fancy but a deep, earnest heart-desire.

**CONCLUDED IN OUR NEXT**