

FAITH PURIFYING THE HEART

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A SERMON
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“Purifying their hearts by faith.”
Acts 15:9

THE Jewish or Pharisaic party violently opposed the Gospel from without. Wherever the apostles went, the Jews who believed not, being moved with envy, stirred up the people against them. They could not endure to hear of the salvation of the Gentiles by grace through faith. It grated on their ear, for they thought that this doctrine was contrary to the law of Moses in which they boasted.

They were children of the bondwoman, under the old covenant of works, and they could not endure that the children of the promise should come to the inheritance. They struggled and rebelled against the Gospel of salvation by grace, for it went against their natural pride, and their national exclusiveness.

Yes, and even when any of them, as blessed be the grace of God was the case, became converted, the old man was still within them, and the spirit of bondage was still apt to assert itself. Those who had been of the sect of the Pharisees brought a good share of Pharisaic tendencies with them into the church, and these were dangerous to the young kingdom of Christ.

I scarcely know whether legal principles were not able to do more mischief inside the church by perverting pure doctrine than they could do outside the church by exciting persecution. One can hardly imagine how the Gospel could have escaped being overlaid and smothered by Judaism, like a babe by its mother, had it not been for the preserving grace of God, and the indwelling Spirit within the church of God.

You know, brethren, how we mourn at this day that certain who claim to be Christians are laboring most zealously to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear. They invent pompous ceremonies, observe days and months, and are bound by rules and regulations, all of which are an idle and needless servitude to outward forms.

Certain others would bind us with creeds and ordinances not plainly taught in the Word of God, nor agreeable thereto, of which Peter and John knew nothing whatever, having no force but that which comes of human authority. The old Pharisaic spirit is a great forger of bonds and builder of prisons. It would subject us to ordinances of, “Touch not, taste not, handle not,” and fetter us with rules of many sorts—for it cannot understand the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.

It teaches this and it teaches that, whereof the apostles would have said, “We gave no such commandment.” We must contend against this spirit as much now as ever. Still must we refuse to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Christ is all. We are complete in Him, and we will not permit a single letter to be added to His perfect law of liberty.

Peter, at the great Jerusalem council, was enabled through his experience to answer those who said that unless a man was circumcised he could not be saved. Depend upon it, brothers and sisters, there is nothing like practical work for Christ to teach us Christ's truth. For the most part, the heretics of the present day are a clique of literary men, adept at the pen, but quite unable to speak. It may be that their failure in this direction sours them, and sets them upon opposing the Gospel ministry.

At any rate, they are a set of theorizers who know nothing of practical service for the Lord, and so they make up all manner of nonsense according to their own fancies. They sit in their studies and do nothing, and then criticize those who are doing hard service and are successful in it.

They are so busy with nibbling their quills and polishing their periods that they care nothing about saving souls. And they are so intent upon making discoveries which shall manifest their own gigantic intellects that they cannot soil their hands with practical work among the poor and ignorant. Having nothing upon their hearts, their whole nature runs to their head, and the head being unbalanced by a busy heart takes to spinning cobweb theories and novelties of heresy.

Fiercely liberal, the spirit which they manifest against the orthodox is grandly bigoted—in this they are earnest, but in little else except in engendering grievous errors, which are ravaging the churches and ruining souls.

Among the do-nothings all mischief begins. Give a man practical work for Jesus, and keep him at it, and he will, like Peter, learn as he goes on, and like a river, filter as he flows. Peter could not continue to believe in restricting the Gospel to the Jews after the Lord had bidden Cornelius send for him from Joppa, that he might teach him the Gospel—his actual service refined his theory.

If those who ruled botanical science never saw a flower, would you wonder if they ran into gross heterodoxies of belief? A naturalist who never saw a living animal would not be likely to be very sound in zoology. And even so, those who never deal with the souls of men, who never see penitents under conviction, nor hear the songs of new-born believers in Christ, nor see men rejoice in affliction and triumph in death, are sure to blunder when they set up for teachers.

They lean back in their study chairs and blow bubbles, and vent doubts, to the subverting of the faith of many godly but feeble souls, and all for the want of something better to do. I prescribe as medicine for them, and I heartily wish they would take it, to do something for Christ and the good of fallen men. Peter got out of what would otherwise have been his natural condition of bigotry by being exercised in the service of his Master.

Peter tells us how he came to see that circumcision was not needful. At the divine bidding, he went in and preached to Cornelius and his household, and while he was preaching they believed. He had not finished his sermon before they had all become believers and he adds, “God the heart-knower bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he gave unto us.”

They believed and he knew that their faith had purged their hearts, for the Lord sent the Holy Ghost upon them there and then. The Holy Ghost dwells not in unclean hearts, but when the temple of the heart has been purified, there He comes. Though these men had never been circumcised, yet they were purified in heart, for the Spirit of God rested upon them.

It was evidently the same Spirit which had descended upon the circumcised ones at Jerusalem, since it produced the same results, “For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.” Now, if the Spirit put no difference between the circumcised and the uncircumcised, why should the church do so? Peter therefore said, “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?”

He therefore commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord, and thus affirmed his belief that faith had purified them. He saw that the Lord had given the choicest of Gospel blessings to uncircumcised believers, even the power of the Holy Ghost, and therefore he felt that they were to be received into the church without circumcision.

Peter’s argument is eminently clear and convincing. You and I cannot be impartial, because we, being Gentiles, are naturally pleased with an argument which includes us in the blessing. But if we were sitting as judges to listen to the pleading of the apostle, I feel sure we would say—Whether it blesses us or curses us, the reasoning is unanswerable—if God would not give the Spirit except the heart had been purified, then these men’s hearts were purified, and it is evident that they were purified by faith alone, seeing that they were uncircumcised and altogether outside the Jewish law.

Seeing, then, that they are pure in heart, what need can there be of further purification? What need to lay upon them the outward and visible sign, the putting away of the filth of the flesh, when it is proved by the divine witness that they are pure in heart already? It is well-argued, Peter, and we rejoice in the conclusion.

Now let us consider the point upon which the argument depends, the statement which made to a great extent the hinge of Peter's reasoning—namely, that by faith the hearts of the Gentile believers had been purified.

First, consider *the agent of this purifying*, “by faith.” Secondly, *the secret of its power*—it was God that purified them by faith. Thirdly, *the seat of its action*, “purifying their hearts.” And fourthly, (what is not in the text, but which we gather from our own experience), *the mode of its operation*, or how faith purifies our hearts.

I. First, then, dear friends, let us speak of THE AGENT OF HEART PURIFICATION—*faith*.

There was nothing but faith in the case of Cornelius, nothing but ordinary faith such as you and I possess—faith born of hearing and resting alone on Jesus. *Faith alone did it*. Read Peter's sermon to Cornelius, and you will perceive that his faith was not created by Peter's eloquence, and did not stand in the wisdom of man.

Peter told a very simple story about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth—just such a story as a converted lad from our Sunday schools might relate, in fact, “the old, old story.” And while he was telling it, I hope not so hoarsely as I am compelled to do this morning, the power of God was present, and the centurion and his family believed the testimony.

The innate power of the story itself, by God's blessing, wrought faith in the hearts of his hearers, and they were straightway purified by that faith. If I were to talk of Jesus Christ and His matchless death this morning, and some of you hearing the story were to trust Him, you would be purified just as these Caesarean believers were. Their faith came by hearing, just as yours would, and they heard the very same Gospel of the grace of God which I would preach to you. By such faith hearts are purified.

Their faith purified them directly. They were not purified by month after month of contemplation. Faith purified their hearts immediately, for, to the astonishment of the circumcised believers who were looking on, the Holy Spirit fell upon them there and then—the evidence from heaven that their faith had made them meet for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

What matchless energy is this which purifies hearts stained with original sin, and defiled by actual transgressions, and cleanses them at once! The sacred power which requires not even a single day for its marvelous operations, but achieves its purpose in a moment, is worthy of our highest admiration. How speedy is the work!

The hearing ear, the believing heart, the purified heart—these three follow each other in rapid succession, without long pauses of dread conviction or dreary doubt. Delays may occur in some cases, but they are not necessary to the work, neither are they of the Lord.

Here the operations of mercy followed upon the heels of one another—hearing, believing, purification, the gift of the Spirit, the public avowal of the same by baptism into the sacred name, came in rapid succession, and herein you see the wondrous power of faith, whereby the soul is purified at once.

The agent of the purification was faith *alone*, and it is clear from the narrative that *water baptism did not aid therein*. It is supposed by those who deal with suppositions only, for they certainly can have no facts to support their theory, that there is something purging in baptism. Do they not say that by it they are made members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven?

Now, no babe has ever yet given any evidence that such a thing took place. How could it? The little creature is unconscious at the time, and as he grows up he does not show any superiority to others who have not undergone the aqueous regeneration. We find our unbaptized sons and daughters converted by grace in quite as large a proportion as those little members of Christ and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.

These “children of God by sprinkling” show evidently that they need converting, for they grow up to be heirs of wrath, even as others. The regeneration seems to be only skin deep if we may judge by the character of ninety-nine out of every hundred of those who are thus regenerated.

But in this case there was no mistaking the meaning of baptism, for Cornelius and his household were not baptized till after they had received the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost was the sign that their hearts were already purified.

Now, my brethren, the Lord will not permit us to mix up even His own ordinances with the work of His blessed Spirit in purifying the heart by faith alone, and God forbid we ever should fall into such an error. No, soul-purification is of faith. It is not of baptism. It is not by any outward rite even of God's own ordaining, nor by the will of man, nor by blood, nor by birth, but by the work of the Holy Spirit through the agency of faith and that alone.

If it should, however, occur to some brother that peradventure the case of Cornelius may have been somewhat special, because he had been a devout man and an alms-giver even before he knew the Gospel, I reply that Peter in his narrative and argument said not a word upon that point, but he held forth the centurion's case simply as that of an uncircumcised person who had believed, and had been purified in heart.

It seems to me clear enough that if Cornelius, instead of having been a devout man, had been called by God out of the utmost profligacy, he would have been purified in heart in precisely the same manner. If not, Peter was unfair in quoting as a typical instance what would have been an palpable exception to the rule.

But he speaks of the centurion and his family as being specimens of what God was doing for Gentile believers, so that he saw nothing at all exceptional about them. Saw, indeed, nothing but that they were believers and were purified in heart by their faith. The fact is that the instrument by which hearts are truly purified is faith which comes by the hearing of the Gospel, and this is all.

And so I say to you upon this point, even to you who know not the Lord as yet, *do not be looking for pure hearts within yourselves before you come to Christ by faith*. Do not look for the fruits before you have the roots, but look by faith to the great purifier, however impure you feel your heart to be. There is a blessing for the pure in heart, but you cannot claim it at present, and therefore be it yours to believe as sinners in whom is no good thing whatever.

Though you mourn the deep depravity of your nature, do not vainly endeavor to alter it before you believe, but sinner as you are, condemned by the verdict of your conscience, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ that you may be completely renewed. I beseech you seek purity of heart by faith alone, for you will be disappointed if you search for it in any other way.

Do not think that anything else can touch the matter, for it cannot. No washing and cleansing can make the Ethiopian white—only the Redeemer's divine power can do it. Read your Bibles by all means, and pray by all means, and hear sermons by all means, but none of these things can avail to change the radical impurity of your inward nature.

Faith must behold the bleeding Lamb, and know the virtue of the water and the blood which flowed from His pierced side—and until then the soul must remain in the impurity of the fall. All the efforts of unbelieving nature do but plunge us deeper in the mire and increase our defilement. Faith is that branch of hyssop which, being dipped in the blood of Jesus, makes the heart clean from sin—and nothing else will do this.

Look you, then, poor soul, away from yourself that you may have yourself renewed. Look to your black, disordered, and loathsome self, and mourn, but look not there for cure—that were to seek for riches amid bankruptcy, and death amid life, to search for hell in heaven, and for God among demons. Look you to Jesus, whom God has set forth to save His people from their sins, and as you look to Him, faith will purify your soul.

II. How is faith strong enough to do this? What is THE SECRET OF ITS POWER?

Believing other things does not purify the soul—why does believing the Gospel? Trusting is a very simple act—how does it come to pass that trusting Christ becomes the means of cleansing to the heart? I answer, because *God works by it*.

Let us read our text with the preceding verse. “God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.” Who was it that was purifying their hearts? The answer is clear. It was the omniscient God.

Ah, brethren, you must not look alone to the instrument which the Lord uses, but you must have regard to His own power which He puts forth in connection therewith. Faith alone would be nothing, but when God works by faith, wonders are accomplished.

You know the old story of the sword of Scanderbeg with which he used to cleave men in two from the crown of the head downwards? As one looked at it he declared that he saw nothing about the sword to make it so fatal a weapon. But another replied, “You should have seen the arm which was wont to wield it.”

Now faith looked at of itself appears to be contemptible, but oh, the arm that wields it! Who shall resist that everlasting arm? Jacob may be but a worm, but God can thresh the mountains with him. Faith may be but a poor besom, but when Jesus comes to purge the temple of the heart, He sweeps out all the accumulated filth by this feeble means. This greater than Hercules cares little for the weakness of the instrument, but behold, He cleanses the Augean stable of our nature with no other agency than childlike faith. God works through faith, and so faith does marvels.

Ah, beloved, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ your inbred sins have another champion to meet them beside yourself. God Himself is with you for your Captain, and He will use your faith to be the ram’s horn to lay low the walls of Jericho, or to be as the pitchers and the trumpets, by whose means the Midianite myriads were overthrown.

Your iniquities shall bow before His grace. Only do you trust, and your poor child-like trust shall be in God’s hand the sacred scourge of small cords which shall free your soul from all the thieves who now make it their den.

Besides, the text suggests that *God is at work in the heart by His Holy Spirit*. Now, where the Holy Spirit comes, He burns as a heavenly fire, and consumes sin. He comes also as a flowing stream and cleanses away evil, and as a rushing mighty wind to chase away all that is foul and polluted which has gathered in the stagnant air of the soul.

The Holy Spirit is the spirit of holiness, and as He always dwells with faith, being its author, its strengthener, and guardian, you may be sure that where faith comes, the heart will speedily be purified.

The fact is, brethren, faith sees sin, loathes it, and flings itself into the eternal arms to be delivered from it. Faith feels sin like a huge mountain pressing on its bosom and crushing down its heart, and faith cries, “Eternal God, You have promised to deliver Your people from their sins. Lo, I invoke Your power, and challenge Your promise. I cast myself upon Your might to lift this load from off my bosom, and to let me breathe freely as being delivered from its terrible weight.”

All is well when such an appeal is believably made. When you bring God into your quarrel it is ended. When you lay hold on the divine strength, Goliath falls, though your weapon be but a sling and a stone. Here is the power of faith, that she wears the promise of her God as her girdle of strength. She has laid hold upon the omnipotence of Him that makes heaven and earth to stand. Well may she perform miracles, for God is at her beck and call. See, then, where the power of faith lies whereby she works the purification of the soul—it is God that works by her.

But you say, “How does God purify the heart? He cannot do it by physical force.” No. Who thought He could? He does it by His wisdom which was never baffled yet, bringing before the human mind arguments which suit the case, revealing His truths which convince the understanding, and plying the conscience with facts which gain its verdict.

If human wisdom wins men’s minds, what shall infallible wisdom do? Together with omnipotent wisdom, there is the most important element of irresistible love. Do you think there is no power anywhere but that which can be measured by pounds, and gauged as we compute the force of steam in the locomotive engine?

Ah, sirs, in the impulse of persuasion, in the force of conviction, in the plea of love, there are powers which never violate the human will, but yet rule it with sacred supremacy. What is stronger than the power of love—love which makes the most obdurate at length to yield? Love which compels the most malicious to love in spite of themselves? Love which surprises men into repentance and gratitude or ever they are aware of it?

God loves men until they must love Him. God loves them with such omnipotence that at last they hurl their weapons of rebellion down, and submit with eagerness. Nothing conquers like love. Now it is because faith trusts in this wisdom and this love, and these come to aid her in her war with sin, that the raging lusts and wayward passions of the heart are subdued, and grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.

So, then, I say, as we leave this point, brethren and sisters, remember humbly and hopefully that the battle is not yours after all. The Lord has undertaken the conflict, and He will gain the victory. The conquest of sin is to be achieved by the Almighty—you are to wrestle and contend, but God in you is the winner of the contest.

Since then God is with you, nothing is impossible. There is no constitutional fault which you cannot remedy. There is no strong passion which you cannot check. There is no inward desire, however fierce, which you cannot at last destroy. Have courage. High degrees of sanctity are possible to you now that God is with you.

Despair of nothing. Doubt not, for in all things you shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved you. Only let your faith continually fling herself upon the omnipotence of God, and you shall see that He will purify your hearts.

III. Thirdly, let us consider that THE SEAT OF FAITH'S ACTION is primarily the heart, "purifying *their hearts*." I will not speak upon this topic more than to outline what I would have said had I been able to utter my words with greater rapidity. Infirmities of voice are a sad hindrance to ministers—pray that they may be removed, for in my case at least the brain is slow when the speech is hampered.

Faith changes the current of our love, and alters the motive which sways us—this is what is meant by purifying the heart. It makes us love that which is good and right, and moves us with motives free from self and sin—this is a great work indeed.

Hence the change which faith produces is very *radical and deep*. It is a small matter to wash the outside of the cup and of the platter—the inside of the cup must be first and chiefly attended to. If the heart is changed, the conversion is *thorough and complete*—not a mere superficial affair, but a through and through renewal.

"Rend your hearts and not your garments," was God's command to His people—and faith acts in this spirit—it does not begin with the garments, nor frame regulations for the external actions, but it begins with the inner man. Faith lays the axe at the root. It heals the stream at the fountain head, and what is done is therefore done thoroughly, effectually, and honestly done.

But the heart being purified, the purification becomes *operative* throughout the whole life. A diseased heart means a sickly man all over—you cannot get your heart wrong but what every organ is in its measure wrong—the whole life is disarranged. Neither can you have the heart right without its telling upon the entire nature and affecting for the better all that is within you, and all that comes forth of you—of thought, and word, and deed.

There is nothing like beginning at the heart out of which are the issues of life. All else is poor patchwork, but to have the heart made new is to be renewed indeed. Hence such a change is *permanent*. Restrain appetites which still remain, and the dog returns to his vomit. Purify externals and leave the nature untouched, and the sow that was washed goes back to her wallowing in the mire.

Transform the dog to a sheep, change the swine to a child, and you shall not see the old habits return—but without this, all human goodness is as a fading flower. Such a purification is *acceptable*

with God, who searches the heart. Man judges according to the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart, and so faith, in purifying the heart, produces a purification which is well-pleasing before God.

The sum of this is, brothers and sisters, do not begin seeking after the purification of your hearts, and then seek after faith in Christ as a second thing. No, let all things be done in order. Emotions are good if they be good, but they are not the source of purity nor antecedent to faith. Faith is the parent of right emotions. Never confound the mother with the children.

If you would have men purified, aim by the blessing of God to produce faith in them. The preaching which only stirs the passions is of small value. We have heard a good deal about crowds weeping, but we had rather see one individual believing. We count it far better to lead a man to believe with his heart than to cry with his eyes. And therefore I aim rather at preaching Christ crucified, so as to beget faith, than to paint pathetic pictures of deathbeds and dying mothers, which things work on the emotions but have small tendency to lead to faith.

If, first of all, we believe that Jesus is the Christ and come to rest in Him, the emotions will be brought right enough in due time—the heart will be changed where once faith assumes the sway. But if you have a faith which never touches your heart—a faith which never causes you to rejoice or mourn, a faith which neither makes you hate sin nor love the Lord Jesus, I charge you, shake off your faith as Paul shook the viper from his hand—for it is a deadly faith.

And if instead thereof you should feel an aching heart, and a deep sense of alienation from God, the change will appear terrible to you, but it will be conducive to your highest good. Only the living faith which works upon the heart, and influences the desires and the affections, can be the faith of God's elect.

A moonlight faith, which has light but no warmth, is a thing of the night, and is not the faith of the children of the day. Faith which lives in the cold attic of the brain, and never descends into the parlor and banqueting room of the heart, will starve with cold, and it is not the life which the Holy Spirit works in man.

Judge you what I say, but if you forget all, still remember that faith stands first, and then the heart's purification follows as a consequence. Never put the cart before the horse, nor the effect before the cause. Do not expect the fruit of holiness without the root of faith, nor try to increase purity, which is a result, without first strengthening the faith which is its original.

IV. Lastly, let us consider THE MODE OF FAITH'S OPERATION—how does faith go to work to purify the heart?

Observe, dear friends, first, that faith believes in sin as sin, and sees the horror of it as an offense against a holy and gracious God, in whom faith devoutly believes. Faith believes in hell, and sees the "smoke of its torments going up for ever and ever." Faith believes in the "worm that dieth not, and the fire that never can be quenched."

Faith, "the evidence of things not seen," places before the soul in dread array the pomp of that tremendous day when Christ with clouds shall come, so that the soul sees sin to be an exceedingly dreadful and damnable thing, and turns to God for deliverance from it—this is one element in the purification of the soul.

Next, faith delights to set Christ before the heart, and to make it gaze upon His bleeding wounds, and pierced side, and marred face. Faith makes Him no dream, but a reality. She causes the soul's ears to hear His groans and listen to His "Lama Sabachthani." The soul perceives that when sin was laid on Christ, it bruised Him sorely and crushed Him down, and therefore the heart hates the sin which slew its best friend—and here is another element which works towards its purification.

Faith delights much in the person of Christ, and therefore she sets before the soul His incomparable loveliness, as the well-beloved of saints. To faith, Christ is not an historic personage who flitted over the page of history even as a passer-by moves before a camera when an artist is taking a street photograph, and leaves a dim trace of his having passed across the scene while the picture was being fashioned.

Faith has learned to see Christ stand out as the most real man that ever lived, the fact of the ages, the focus of truth. Faith touches, handles, embraces, and feeds upon Christ. She has been so familiar with Him as to have been kissed with the kisses of His lips, and she has been filled with His love, which is better than wine, and therefore she feels His constraining power and follows Him.

Faith is Christ's familiar friend. Faith is as John, that lies even in His bosom, and there enjoys *His* love and pours forth *her own*. Faith, by revealing the love and loveliness of Christ to the soul, kindles in the heart a vehement flame of love to Him, and this fire of love becomes a powerful element of purification, for you cannot love Christ and love sin. You cannot feel gratitude for deliverance from evil, and then go and plunge into it again.

Further, faith has a wonderful art of realizing her gracious privileges. Faith says to the man, "Do you not know that you are God's elect? The eternal Father wrote Your name in His book of life before He lit up the lamps of heaven. How ought you to live? You are redeemed, the blood mark is on you. You are not your own, but bought with a price—what a holy life yours ought to be!

"You are precious to the heart of God. You are His Hephzibah, He delights in you. You are His child, no more a servant, but a son. You are Christ's bride, yes, you are a part of His mystical body, you are one with Him—how ought you to behave yourself?"

Brothers, Sisters, did you ever realize any one of these blessings without feeling that such privileges purge the soul? Did they not each one of them seem to say to you, "What manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness, since you are partakers of mercies like these?"

Faith has yet further a wondrous power of acting upon the telescopic principle, by bringing near to us the things to come. Has she not even opened to us the gates of pearl, and set the golden streets aglittering before our eyes? How near to faith's far-seeing eye, oh you blessed Jerusalem, your celestial splendors have appeared!

At such seasons, so far from thinking that we would indulge in sin because we felt our heaven secure, we have groaned after more purity, and begun to take our shoes from off our feet, for we have felt that even the suburbs of heaven, where we then stood, were holy ground.

Transported by faith's vision, we have commenced to put on the snow-white robes of the immaculate. Having this hope in us, we have purified ourselves, "even as he is pure." O you who are brothers to perfect spirits, co-heirs with the glorified of the crown of life that fades not away, with angels for your servitors, and Christ Himself for your elder brother, what should be the manner of our walk and conversation!

We feel that we shall never be perfectly contented till we are perfectly holy, and unblameable, and unprovable in His sight. What could more effectually purify the heart than the vision of heaven, which faith presents to us?

Suffer me now to crowd a number of matters together, to show you that faith does not merely give us motives, but that it really finds us power. I will tell you how faith does this, for I have tried it in fighting against sin.

Power is gained by faith through pleading the promises of God. Did you ever feel that you could not master a sin, and have you then gone and knelt down and cried, "Lord, You have said, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace,' Lord save me from the tyranny of sin, which it now seeks to exercise upon me."

Did you ever plead that other promise, "I will turn my hand upon thee, and surely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy sin"? Did you ever cry, "Lord, I will not let You go till you have taken away my bonds, and delivered me from the iniquities which prevail against me." Then I am sure you have obtained help of God.

Thus does faith, by pleading God's own Word, gain power to master sin. Try her sacred art. Believe without a doubt the faithful Promiser, and hold Him to His Word, a Word from which He never did draw back, and never will, for He is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent.

Faith daringly lays hold upon the power of God Himself. On the strength of the promise she grasps the divine hand. She has the sacred impudence, the consecrated impertinence, to thrust herself near the throne, and lay hold upon God, for she has heard Him say, "Let him lay hold upon my strength."

And oh, beloved, how she smites the Philistines then! How she lays iniquity low when once God, the irresistible slayer of sin, has come to her help. She constrains Him to come by laying hold upon Him, and then she routs all her adversaries.

Faith brings us real power to conquer sin by applying the blood of Christ. She does not merely talk of the atonement, but she delights in it as her own, and makes a medicine of it for the curing of sinful habits. The blood of Jesus is the life of faith and the death of sin. All the saints overcome through the blood of the Lamb.

We sprinkle it before us, and kings of armies flee apace. The atonement by blood, the literal substitution of our Lord, the smarting suretyship, the triumphant righteousness, and the representative glorification of the Lord Jesus are all great purifiers of the soul—sharp swords with which to smite sin.

Rest happily in Him who died for you and rose again, and you will be strong for virtue, sin shall lose all power over you. The blood of Jesus is the chief, and indeed, the only fountain for cleansing. It is the supreme source of holiness, the preparation for heaven. Faith gets us power, for she plunges us in the atoning blood which is our life.

Faith herself also gives us power against sin by mixing herself with all Gospel ordinances. We read of some, "that the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Faith is a necessary ingredient to be mixed with means and ordinances to give them savor and efficacy.

With hearing sermons, attending communions, private prayer, Bible study—mix faith. "Without prescribing how much," mix faith and the more the better. Faith will enable you to draw the nourishment and essence out of Gospel ordinances, and so it will make you vigorous in agonizing against sin.

Last of all, faith rouses the new man to intense resistance of sin. Faith, like a trumpet, wakes up the unsinning new nature to battle, and leads it into the thick of the fight. Did I startle you when I said the "unsinnewing new nature"? I said it advisedly, for it cannot sin because it is born of God. There is within the regenerate man a principle of divine birth, a seed which is incorruptible which will remain and abide in the renewed soul forever and ever.

This seed or principle faith excites into growth and energy. Faith arouses love, stirs up courage, girds patience with her girdle, and perseverance with her shoes, excites zeal and stirs up jealousy, bestirs desires after holiness, and quickens the diligence of devotion, and so it keeps the powers of evil in check and purifies the heart. This is a brief sketch of how faith purifies from day to day the soul of man.

I have done when I have said—see, then, to the simplicity and energy of your faith. Beloved, "as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk ye in him." As you believe in Him unto justification, believe in Him to sanctification.

If anybody tells you that you are to get justification in one way and sanctification in another way, believe him not. Jesus Christ is made of God unto us sanctification as well as redemption. Pharisees virtually teach us that we are to be sanctified by the law, though justified by faith, but we know better. These are twin covenant blessings and are not to be had apart.

Believe in Christ to conquer sin as well as to pardon sin. Believe that the only power which can subdue a base passion in you is the power which washed you from your iniquity of old. Trust Christ with the power of sin as well as the guilt of sin. You need not go through a round of performances in order to be purified in heart. You need not look for a higher life than Jesus gave you when you did look and live—there is no higher life, for He gave you His own.

What more do you want than the Holy Ghost which quickens you? What is higher than that? What more can you have than what faith has brought you, and will bring you? Jesus has given you Himself. Did you believe in half a Christ at the beginning? Did you receive from Him a lower and inferior life? Oh, shame on you to think so.

You did trust your soul wholly with Him, did you not, and did He not give His whole self to you? Do you mean to say that you trusted Him to save you from hell, and not from sin? Did you trust *Him* to blot out the past, and were you fool enough to trust to *yourself* for keeping in the future? If so, you did not believe in Him at all—your faith was faulty at the very core—for Christ must be everything or nothing.

And if hitherto you have been so foolish as to have half a Savior—and if even now you are looking for something which is not contained in Him—be foolish no longer. Go back to the very beginning and say, “Blessed Savior, just as I am I come to You. Behold, I take You to be all in all to me, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” Doing this you shall find all in Jesus, and by faith your heart shall be purified.

I had intended to appeal to sinners, but my voice refuses to be longer tried, and so I leave it with the prayerful desire that the whole subject may appeal to seekers and encourage them. God save you. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
ACTS 11:1-18 AND 15:1-31**

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—166, 639

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.