

PRAISE COMELY TO THE UPRIGHT

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“Praise is comely for the upright.”
Psalm 33:1

THE Psalmist was full of praise and, therefore, felt that he could not fully express the glory of God, but desired to enlist others in the sacred service. You hear him often calling upon sea and land, upon earth and heaven, upon mountain and valley, upon plants and creeping things, upon living creatures, upon the heavens and the heavens that are above the heavens, to assist him in magnifying the name of the Infinite JEHOVAH, whose praise still exceeds all the honor that can be given to Him by all His creatures.

Praise has a blessed contagion in it. It is like fire—if it burns its way in one place, it will be spreading itself if it can. A man cannot praise God alone. There will always be within him a high ambition to teach others to take up the strain. He will always be longing and desiring to lead others in the same sweet employ. Now let us seem to hear across these ages the voices of those who are with their God as they cry to us, “Rejoice in the LORD, you righteous, for praise is comely to the upright.”

I have taken for a text that one sentence—and I will speak of it under four short words which may serve as headings—four words of question. The first is—

I. WHAT?

What is it which is so comely, so comely to the upright? It is praise, the praise of God. And this praise of God, though it is always the same thing, the same spiritual thing produced by the Spirit of God, yet takes different forms, and in each form it is still comely to the upright. It is so in *that delightful form of music in which we express with accord, hearts and voices keeping tune together, in the great congregation our sense of united adoration.*

I do think there is nothing more comely than the sweet songs of the sanctuary, and what our friends of the Society of Friends do without singing I scarcely know. I think they will have to recant that one thing at least when they enter heaven, for surely they cannot be silent there, where all shall join in songs like unto great thunder, and like the mighty rolling of the sea in praise of the infinite majesty of Him who was slain, but who ever lives.

I think we could not, anyhow, give up our song. We would feel as if the Sabbath were shorn of its bloom, as if you had plucked the flowers out of the garden of the soul. Our soul must sing, yea, she will sing praises unto the Lord. So natural does it seem to the renewed heart to join in praise with others, that even when lying in the dungeon, after having been beaten sore with stripes, and with their feet fast in the stocks, Paul and Silas did not only pray, but they sang praises unto God, and praise was comely there.

It has been comely in many a prison where no one has heard the sound but God. It has been comely among the glens of Scotland, when the Covenanters lifted up the psalm. It has been comely in nooks and corners of England when Puritans, in fear of their lives, nevertheless magnified the name of the Lord. It has been comely at the stakes at Smithfield. Comely from Anne Askew’s lips, when she was on the rack, stretched to the utmost. It has been comely anywhere when the voice has poured out itself with musical rhythm in the praise of the Most High.

But there is a second form of vocal praise which is equally comely to the upright—*the spoken praise of God.* I allude to those praises which consist of commendation of the name, and person, and service,

and goodness of the Lord by private Christians to their fellow men. Think not that all praise is gathered up in singing.

It is the praise of God when the mother tells her child of the goodness of Him who made the stars and who spread the world with flowers. It is praise when the young convert tells of the joy of his heart to his companion and bids him fly to the fountain where he has washed and been made clean. It is praise, praise of a high order, too, when the advanced believer in his old age tells of the faithfulness of God, and how not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord God has promised.

And while praise seems to sit in such a comely manner upon the young convert, so that it seems to be the most natural thing in all the world for him to praise, it is equally comely in the aged Christian, for he seems to feel that if such a man as he, preserved so long, did not praise God, the very stones in the street would cry out against him.

That praise which consists in living, loving, personal testimony to the goodness and faithfulness of the Lord is always comely to the upright. I wish that some Christians would recollect that murmuring is not comely. That envying others, that finding fault, that ambition, that desiring greater things—that all these are not comely, but the speaking well of His name, the testimony to His faithfulness in providence and to His goodness in grace—this is comely to the upright.

But the truest praise, perhaps, *is that which is not expressed in language, because it could not be—meditative praise.* I fear there is but little of this in London. I am not sure that there is any more of it in the country, though there ought to be a great deal more of it in both. I mean such praise as this—when, like David, we sit before the Lord and think of His exceeding bounty and then say, “What am I, and what is my Father’s house that thou hast brought me hitherto?” I mean the praise that makes the tear unbidden come to the eyes—not the tear of sorrow, but the tear of overwhelming gratitude for the goodness of God, so that the soul, without making use of words, seems to say—

*“When all Thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I’m lost
In wonder, love, and praise.”*

When thoughts become too heavy for words to carry them—when they break the backs of words, as it were. When “expressive silence,” as the poet calls it, has to come to the rescue and the man is compelled rather to fall prostrate before the infinite majesty and goodness than to venture on a sonnet that would fall flat in the presence of such emotions.

*“Words are but air, and tongues but clay,
But Thy compassions are divine.”*

Where, then, shall it be found possible for words and for tongues to worthily express Your praise? I am sure it would be a very refreshing thing to us all—acceptable to God and very blessed to ourselves—if we had more of this quiet praise, if we could get to some of those cool retreats, those silent shades, that do with prayer and praise agree, and seem, by God’s kind bounty made, for those who would worship Him. Such praise is comely to the upright.

I like to think of George Herbert walking through the Parsonage Garden, and up and down by the banks of the brook, singing within himself of their God, and of those other holy men who led meditative lives. It seems to fit them as a beautiful vest that is comely upon their shoulders when they are engaged in the meditative praise of God.

But one more remark. Sometimes praise does not even fall into the form of meditation, much less of conversation or of song. It becomes—what shall I call it?—*habitual praise—the spirit of praise.* I will indicate one or two brothers and sisters in this congregation who, if it were the depth of winter, would

create a smile in my vestry if they would but enter it—who, whenever I meet them, their eyes sparkle like stars, their lips drop pearls, they never seem to be unhappy, never doubting, never distrustful.

They are sure to speak every Sabbath morning, “We shall have a good day today. There has been much prayer about it and God always answers prayer. You will be graciously helped through it. Be of good courage.” And on Sunday night it is, “This has been a good Sunday.” In fact, they say they never have anything but good Sabbaths. They always seem to be fed and they are always rejoicing, and if you talk to them, they are not the youngest people in the congregation, perhaps—they may not be the richest, they may not be in the best circumstances, but they are always the most cheerful, always the most happy and they can say—

*“We would not change our blest estate
For all the world calls good and great.”*

Now, believe me, I think this is most comely to the upright when men or women shall get into the spirit of praise so that they shall always be blessing God. Why, it is such a beautiful dress to wear that they shine in the family, they shine in business, they shine in the church, they shine in the eyes of angels who think that they must be angels, too, they have got into such an angelic frame of mind.

Such a man was Bernard Gilpin, who always said “It was all for the best.” If it was fair, it was all for the best. Or if there had been any rain, it was all for the best. Were it hot or were it cold, it was all for the best. Bernard was arrested by the Queen’s order to be brought to London to be burned, but he said it was all for the best.

The soldiers, knowing of this expression of his, jeered him all along the journey with blasphemies, and when his horse fell and he broke his leg, they laughed, but he said it was all for the best. He was laid upon the road for a surgeon to set his bones, but he said it was all for the best, and so it proved to be, for this delayed them, and when they got just within sight of London they could hear the bells ringing, and on inquiry, they learned that Queen Mary was dead and Queen Elizabeth had succeeded—so that Mr. Bernard Gilpin had arrived in London just three days too late to be burned—and he was quite correct in saying that it was all for the best.

But I have no doubt that if he had gone to the stake he would have said it was all for the best, and certainly his emancipated spirit, as it left its charred ashes behind, would have sung, “Yes, it is all for the best.”

Now that state of heart, not the act of praise, but the spirit of praise, in which the soul seems to swim in praise, as the fish swims in the river, and to bathe and perfume itself with thanksgiving, as Esther perfumed herself in Ahasuerus’s palace—such a state of heart as this is extremely comely to the upright. That is the answer to the question—What?

The next question is—

II. WHY?

Why is praise so befitting and becoming to the upright? We answer that it is so, and you will soon see it, *from the nature of things*. Wings are most becoming to an angel. You would not think of drawing one of those spirits that are like flames of fire without giving it wings. What for? Why, to mount with, to make him ethereal, to quicken his motions.

Well, and the Christian without praise would be without his wings. What is he to mount with? He does not wish to grovel here below, fond of these earthly toys, but how is he to mount? Prayer gives him one wing, but praise must give him the other, and when he gets prayer and praise, oh! how he seems to leave sublunary things behind and away he flies, borne by the strong help of the eternal Spirit up to—

*“Where eternal ages roll,
Where solid pleasures never die,
And fruits immortal feast the soul.”*

Take away the Christian's power of praising God and you make him a poor earthworm, bound here with doubts, and fears, and cares. But let him but kindle in his soul the flame that burns in heaven of seraphic love to God and away he mounts.

Praise is comely to the upright, in the next place, *from the office of the believer*. When Aaron put on his breast-plate, his girdle, his ephod, and his bells, everyone said that the garment was comely to Aaron. It would not have been comely to us, because we would have no right to wear it, but the office of Aaron made it comely to him.

You would not think it comely if I were to come here to preach to you tonight with a red coat on. You would have said, "No, that red coat is exceedingly comely to the soldier—it suits him—but it does not suit the minister." Now the Christian is a priest and praise is a part of the garment of a priest that he must wear. Praise is the employment of a priest.

Inasmuch as we are kings and priests unto God, it becomes us that we should swing that golden censor that is full of thanksgiving, and that we should stand before the golden altar, and continually offer sacrifice and praise acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. It suits our nature and suits our office, and therefore, it is comely to the upright.

Praise is comely to the upright *as flowers and fruits are comely to a plant*. There never was a plant but what the fruit it bore suited it, and the greatest comeliness to the apple tree in the garden is to see it loaded with its wondrous blossoms, the most beautiful things in all the world, and then afterwards to see the boughs hanging down with luscious fruit. The comeliness of a plant lies in its coming to perfection and bearing its fruit.

So with Christians. The barren Christian has no comeliness, but the comeliness of the Christian, his spiritual comeliness, lies in his bringing forth fruit unto God—and what is this but praise? "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me," says the Lord. Man is made on purpose to glorify God. It is his chief end. Then his chief end is comely to him. If he answers his end, he is comely to Him who made him, and inasmuch as our chief end is to glorify God, praise becomes comely to the upright.

Once again, praise is comely to the upright *as a crown is comely to a king*. It is his highest honor, his chief dignity. It is one of our highest honors to praise God—praise Him that we are His elected, His begotten—that we are His redeemed, His sanctified, His preserved people. When we get to this, we occupy as high a stand as we well can do short of heaven.

And in heaven I know not if we shall ever seem more comely than when we are, with all the hosts of angels, praising and magnifying the name of the Lord. When we praise God, we do, as it were, put on our crowns, as when they before the throne praise God they also come with their crowns, but make it part of their praise to take them off again, with, "Not unto us, not unto us, O LORD, but unto thy name be glory!"

Now, Christian, just treasure up this thought, that praise is comely to the upright. There are a great many people in the world who think a great deal of their personal appearance. How they will look in that glass! How they will turn that hair again! How they arrange that dress! There must not be a pin awry. What matters it?

After you have dressed yourselves as best you may, flies, bees, and insects of all kinds excel you still. When you have glorified yourselves to the pitch of Solomon, yet you cannot match the lilies—they still excel you. But that idea of comeliness ought to be turned into a better channel. If I want to make myself comely, why should I not desire to be comely in the esteem of those whose opinion is worth the having, and comely in the eyes of God?

How can this be, then? Well, if I have, first of all, been covered with the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, which are the true beauty of the Christian, then the next thing to make me comely is to praise God, to keep His praises continually on my lips. If I begin complaining and mourning when I am hardly dealt by, I am, as it were, but scratching my own face. It is not comely to me—I am putting on rags. I am soiling my garments. I am pulling off my gold rings. I am stripping myself of my ornaments.

But if I praise God, then I am acting according to my better nature, according to my office—I am acting in the most honorable capacity possible and I am answering the end for which God made me. Do, therefore, you who want to be thought comely, be continually praising God.

And now, in the third place, another little word to help your memories, and that shall be—

III. WHEN?

“Praise is comely to the upright.” But when? Now-a-days that which is comely one day is not comely the next, for the fashions change so continually. But let me tell you that the spiritual fashions never alter, and that which God declares to be comely today will be comely next year and comely forever.

Praise is never out of fashion, never out of season, never out of date. You may praise God and utter even the same sentiments as came from the lips of Enoch and there shall be nothing stale therein—still it shall be comely.

When is it comely for Christians to praise God? My answer is *always*. I must comprehend all seasons and all places. It is never uncomely to praise God. When the congregation has met and the service has commenced, it is the time to lift up the voice unanimously. Oh! it is then comely to the believer to praise the Most High God.

If there are but two or three who are met together in some lowly schoolroom, or a shed, or a barn, or under the forest trees—or half a dozen on the deck of a vessel, or down in the cabin or the fore-castle—it matters not where, let us pitch our tent and sing one of the songs of Zion. Praise is comely to the upright from half a dozen in some back-wood settlement, or out in the bush at a settler’s log hut. Sweet everywhere, it is unacceptable nowhere. Praise is in all such places when the saints come together comely.

And brethren, praise is comely from the Christian *at any season*. If he wakes in the morning, he sings—

*“Awake! Lift up thyself, my heart,
And with the angels bear thy part,
Who all night long unwearied sing
High praises to the Eternal King.”*

His morning praise, glistening with dew, is comely. And if in the night watches he tosses restlessly on his bed, why, praise at night again is sweet, and so will it be from the believer if he can sing the praises of the Lord then.

When you are cracking your whip, you that drive a cart in the streets, why, you can sing one of the songs of Zion there. There is many a light and frothy song sung there—why should not ours be sung too? It will be comely to the upright. When you are in the field digging, plowing, hay making, harvesting, when you good girls are at work at the needle, or the sewing machine, or book folding, or whatever it is, you mothers, rocking your cradles, or whatever it may be—praise will not seem out of place if you are upright in heart. Praise will be comely to you on all occasions then.

But there are *certain occasions when praise has a peculiar beauty*. For instance, praise is comely to the upright when you are in poverty. It is easy to praise God when you have all you want. Who would not? A dog will follow you when you feed him. But to praise God when He takes away those gifts that you prize the most—oh! this is comely praise indeed. To say, with Job, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; shall we receive good from the hand of the LORD, and shall we not receive evil?”—that is praise.

Let me just say that when we lie upon the bed and pain shoots through us, some of us men, who are a great deal more impatient than women are, do not find it very easy to praise God then, and yet oh! it is blessed when we can tighten the heartstrings at last and get them right, and bless the Lord that lives, who will yet bring us up from languishing and restore us from the gates of the grave. Praise in the midst of bodily pain—headache, heartache, or any form of disease, is very comely to the upright.

And to praise God when some beloved one on whom your heart is set is sickening—that is hard, but it is very comely. To see him on whom all your earthly dependence is fixed, sickening and pining, and yet to say, “The Lord’s will be done, and blessed be His name,” oh! ’tis so comely that I do not know that the angels in heaven have any of them such a piece of praise, so rich and rare as that of the song of resignation when beloved ones are going.

And when the earth rattles on the coffin lid of a dear child, or a friend, or a wife beloved, then to be able to say, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord”—such praise as that is very comely to the upright. And when these things meet—deaths, and sicknesses, and poverty, come like many seas meeting at one place—let me tell you that the harder it is to sing, the more comely it is to do it.

There is no music, perhaps, that we relish so much as the song of the nightingale, and that is because it sings in the night, and there is no praise more acceptable to God than the songs of His people in the night when they can praise Him under distress. I have read a saying by an old writer that God’s birds sing best in cages, and so they do when the cages have in them some affliction and trial. Then do they pour out their notes sweetly, magnifying the name of the Lord. If I am asked, then, when should the believer praise God, I say, especially in the time of trial.

I may say yet again, that we never praise God, I think, so acceptably as when *others are blaspheming and profaning His name*. For the believer then to venture his testimony in the teeth of all defiance, to thrust himself in the way of jeers and sneers for Christ’s sake, to bless God when others curse Him—this is very comely to a cross-bearer, to a servant of Him who laid down His life for His Father’s glory.

And in times when you come to be slandered and your name is evilly spoken of, and your religion is said to be rant, and your actions misrepresented, and your motives misconstrued—it is a grand thing, then to praise God, and say—

*“If on my face, for Thy dear name,
Shame and reproach shall be;
I’ll hail reproach and welcome shame,
If Thou remember me.”*

At such times, again, praise is sweet.

But beloved, there is an hour coming when praise will be comeliest of all—I mean *when this mortal frame shall dissolve* and our spirits shall be entering upon an unseen world. It is not every believer that dies singing. It is not necessary to his safety that he should do so, but oh! it is so comely if he can do it. As music is said to sound very sweetly over the water, so certainly over the billows of death the song of the triumphant Christian comes with special sweetness.

I shall always remember with great delight one verse of a hymn which I heard from a dying Christian, who had become blind just before his death, and which has always since been invested in my recollections with a melody I never heard in it before—

*“And when ye see my eyestrings break,
How sweet my minutes roll;
Mortal paleness on my cheek,
But glory in my soul.”*

Ah! it is comely to the upright to be praising God when heart and flesh are failing.

But I must leave that, and I shall finish with another little word, and that is—

IV. WHOM?

Praise is comely—not to everybody—but to the upright. It is a very sad reflection that during this week some of the most glorious music that ever was composed to some of the noblest words that have

ever been written, has been sung—and I do not altogether disapprove of it—but sung, I fear, by some who have no part nor lot in what they are singing.

I refer to Handel's glorious music—the noblest sounds, I think, next to the songs of angels, and one of the highest and holiest enjoyments of earth to listen to. But there are singers there who know nothing of God, or of His praise. It is very sad to think of it, but then it is just the same here on Sundays—just the same.

You sing, but you do not sing. The sound is there, but not the heart in the song. As for your professional singing on Sabbath—I believe that that is earthly, sensual, devilish outright. We have heard say of our friends in America that in some of their churches the choir is so much esteemed and so highly esteemed by itself that if the congregation were to sing they would almost frown upon them to put them out of tune, and that there is very little sound of the congregation's singing heard compared with those half a dozen perhaps as wicked singers as the music halls could find, stuck up there to glorify God by insulting Him.

There has been a good deal of that done in England too. Some of our churches have gone and picked up people according to their sweet voices and have said, "Now you praise God at so much per week." But the thing won't do—every conscience is convinced that it is wrong and the text utterly condemns it, for praise is comely to the upright—it is not comely to anybody else.

The upright. Did you notice that word? It is a grand word, that word upright. It is not the man who goes out of his way hither and thither. It is not the crooked man. It is the upright man. Nobody praises God like the man that stands upright. God will have a straight musical instrument—He will not have it crooked. If we are to praise Him, we must be upright.

And mark, being upright consists in perfect independence of all, except God. The upright man does not lean on anything else, but stands right straight up. Now when a man says, "I should like to be a Christian, but—," you are not upright. "I would be honest, but—," you are not upright. "I would make a profession of religion, but—," you are not upright.

He who has two objects, two ends, who holds with the world and holds with God, is not upright and he cannot praise God. But when a man has been created anew in Christ Jesus, when he has been taught what the right path is, and has grace given him to follow it, and who says, "Now, come fair or come foul, my trust is in the living God. I would not lie, though it were to gain a world. Nor would I cheat, though it were to win heaven itself. I am independent of these things, seeing that God has promised that He will never leave me, nor forsake me"—when a man thus stands upright, he makes very blessed music and such us God's ears can accept.

But your crooked tradesmen, and your merchants who can cheat, and your sneaks, and your fraudulent bankrupts, and I know not what besides—God wants no music out of them. It is no credit to a man to be praised by a rogue, and it is no credit to God to be praised by a man who has no character. When a man has character and lives up to it as a Christian, then it becomes honorable to God to be praised by him.

If I heard a bad man speak well of God, I would say, "Ah! I do not like that. As a jewel of gold set in a swine's snout, so is a good word from such a man as that." I am sure, if I lived near any of you, and esteemed your character very highly, and I heard all the blacklegs in London say what a good soul you were, I would begin to ask if you had not done something amiss, if you had not done something wrong.

Said one of the philosophers when he was praised by a bad man, "What have I done wrong that I should deserve to be praised by such a man as this?" And when ungodly men praise God, we might almost say, "What has God done that such a one as this should praise Him?" Praise is not comely to such—it does not seem right at all. It is either a mere form without life, and consequently a dead thing that God cannot accept, or else it is hypocritical, and God will not accept that. Or else it is a downright insult and that is to be avoided above all things. Praise is comely to the upright.

Then, my dear friends, are you upright? Have you, first of all, been laid flat and brought to the horizontal? If so, then you will soon come to the perpendicular. A man must be brought to lie flat before

the throne of grace, confessing his own nothingness, and he must look up to the cross of Christ and rest there, or else he has not learned yet what it is to stand upright, for this alone can produce stability of principle—faith in the living God—and the believing man stands where all others fall.

Oh! to have this uprightness of heart. If you have it, then go and praise God. It is comely to you. Cease not from it, but say, in the words of our hymn—

*“I’ll praise Him in life, I’ll praise Him in death;
I’ll praise Him as long as He lends me breath;
And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow,
‘If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, ’tis now.’”*

Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 130; 1 JOHN 1:4-7

PSALM 130

Verse 1. *Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.*

The most eminent of God’s saints have been in the depths. Wherefore, then, should I murmur if I have to endure trials? What am I that I should be exempt from warfare? How can I expect to win the crown without first carrying the cross? David saw the depths—and so must you and I. But David learned to cry to God out of the depths.

Learn hence that there is no place so deep but prayer can reach from the bottom of it up to God’s ear and then God’s long arm can reach to the bottom and bring us up out of the depth. “Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.” Do not say, “Out of the depths have I talked to my neighbors and sought consolation from my friends.”

*“Were half the breath thus vainly spent,
To heaven in supplication sent,
Your cheerful song would often be
Hear what the Lord has done for me.”*

2. *LORD, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.*

Now a main part of prayer must be occupied by confession and the Psalmist proceeds, therefore—

3. *If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O LORD, who shall stand?*

That is to say, apart from Christ, if God exercises His justice to its utmost severity, the best of men must fall, for the best of man, being men at the best, are sinners even at their best estate.

4. *But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.*

If there were no mercy, there would be no love in any human heart—and there would be an end to religion if there were an end to forgiveness. Here let us observe that the best of men dare not stand before an absolute God, that the holiest of God’s saints need to be accepted on the footing of a Mediator, and to receive forgiveness of sins.

5. *I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.*

There is a waiting of expectancy—we believe that He is about to give us the mercy, and hold out the hand for it. There is a waiting of resignation. We know not what God may do, nor when He may appear, but we wait. Aaron held his peace—’tis a great virtue to wait for God when we know not what He does, but to wait for His explanations and be content to go without explanations if He does not choose to give them.

6. *My soul waiteth for the LORD more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning.*

And many a mariner has watched for the morning with an awful anxiety, for he could not know where his vessel was until the day should break. Many a weary patient, tossed upon the bed of pain, has waited for the morning, saying, “Would God it were morning, for then, perhaps, I might find ease.” And you know that sometimes the watchers upon the castle top, who have to be guarding the ramparts against the adversary by night, watch for the morning.

So does David’s soul watch. Lord, if I may not have You, permit me to watch for You. Oh! there is some happiness even in waiting for an absent God. I recollect that Rutherford said, “I do not see how I can be unhappy, for if Christ will not love me, if He will but permit me to love Him, and I feel I cannot help doing that, the loving of Him will be heaven enough for me.” Waiting for God is sweet, inexpressibly delightful—

*“To those who call, how kind Thou art, how good to those who seek;
But what to those who find? Ah! this, nor tongue nor pen can show,
The love of Jesus, what it is, none but His loved ones know.”*

Happy are they who, having waited patiently, at last behold their God.

7-8. *Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.*

He shall do this in a double and perfect way—He shall redeem us from the effect of all our iniquities through the atoning sacrifice—and from the presence of all iniquity by His sanctifying Spirit. They are without fault before the throne of God. I will purge their blood that I have not cleansed, says the Lord that dwells in Zion. May my soul have a part and lot in this precious promise!

1 JOHN 1:4-7

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

Some Christians have joy, but there are only a few drops in the bottom of their cup. But the Scriptures were written, and more especially the doctrine of an Incarnate God is revealed to us that our joy may be full. Why, if you have nothing else to make you glad, the fact that Jesus has become a brother to you, arrayed in your flesh, should make your joy full.

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.*

Not a light, nor the light, though He is both, but that He is light. Scripture uses the term light for knowledge, for purity, for prosperity, for happiness, and for truth. God is light, and then in his usual style John, who not only tells you a truth, but always guards it, adds, “in whom is no darkness at all.”

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

Mark here, this does not mean walking in the darkness of sorrow, for there are many of God’s people that walk in the darkness of doubts and fears, and yet they have fellowship with God. Nay, they sometimes have fellowship with Christ all the better for the darkness of the path along which they walk. But the darkness here meant is the darkness of sin, the darkness of untruthfulness. If I walk in a lie, or walk in sin, and then profess to have fellowship with God, I have lied and do not the truth.

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

Not to the same degree, but in the same manner.

7. *We have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

So you see that when we walk the best—when we walk in the light as He is in the light, when our fellowship is of the highest order—yet still we want daily cleansing. It does not say—mark this, O my

soul—it does not say, “The blood of Jesus Christ *cleansed*,” but “*cleanseth*.” If guilt return, His power may be proved again and again. There is no fear that all my daily slips and shortcomings shall be graciously removed by this precious blood. But there are some who think they are perfectly sanctified and have no sin.

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