

Cleansing in the Court

#0563

Study given by W.D. Frazee

I have been reminded of an old story of two knights in the Middle Ages who fell into a battle over the question of whether a certain shield was silver or gold. They battled furiously.

Taking a few moments to catch their breath, one of the knights observed that the shield was silver on one side and gold on the other. They were both right.

God requires perfection. He always has required it. He always will require it. He couldn't require anything else. Not only that, it is the purpose of the plan of salvation to produce a perfected people who demonstrate the fullness of the divine perfection.

Never in this world will we see ourselves perfect. In looking at ourselves we will never say, "Well, I guess I have arrived. I guess I am perfect. I guess I am sinless." Much less will we say, "I know I have arrived. I know I am perfect. I know I am sinless."

How could both of these be true? If one is true the other is not true? No. They are both true.

Leviticus 16 is devoted to the great Day of Atonement. Throughout the year the sacrifices had been slain in the court, and blood had been carried into the holy place, representing the transfer of sin from the repentant sinner to the sanctuary, and representing the covering of that sin, its forgiveness and pardon. But on the Day of Atonement the high priest, taking an offering and slaying it, presented its blood on the mercy seat in full and final atonement.

"And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you: For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD" Leviticus 16:29-30.

The work of the Day of Atonement was to produce a clean people. Clean from sin. How much sin? All sin.

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

“And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” 1 John 1:7.

We have clearly presented to us that the people were to experience a cleansing on that day. But notice that it was the priest that made the atonement. The people did not make it. The priest went into the sanctuary. The priest made the atonement. The atonement is bringing God and man together—the reconciliation of man to God so there is no longer anything in between. If there is anything between then we are not at one, therefore the atonement is not completed.

The work of the Day of Atonement was to present a people at one with God—a people who are cleansed that they may be clean from all their sins.

What was done in type in the ancient service is to be done in reality. So down here today we must expect that Jesus, in finishing His work in the heavenly sanctuary, will present a people who are at one with Him.

Notice the other side of this. “Ye shall afflict your soul.” I would think this ought to be a happy day, a joyous day. If this is the day when the priest makes an atonement for us to cleanse us that we may be clean from all our sins, what place does the affliction of the soul have in this experience?

These are not unrelated facts. They are two sides of the same coin. They are the gold and silver sides of the shield that the knights were fighting about. It is the same shield. It is only as we afflict our souls that the atonement can be accomplished by the priest. And it is by looking at the price of the atonement that we afflict our souls; that we come to feel afflicted.

What does it mean to afflict our soul? It means to sorrow over sin. It means to repent of our transgression. It means to be sorry over our weakness and degeneration of soul. It means to weep over our transgression of the law of God and over the sinful disposition that caused it.

It is the priest’s part to make the atonement for us. It is our part as we gather in the court to enter into sorrow over our sins.

There are those who are willing to do this for a brief moment. I suppose they take for granted that ought to be enough. But remember that the people who gathered on the Day of Atonement to afflict their souls were the same people who had brought the sin offering to cover their transgressions. This indicates that the sorrow for sin does not stop when we confess the sin. I don’t mean that God wants us to go around with a feeling of guiltiness. I mean that the feeling of sorrow over sin must deepen.

Consider the experience of Peter. Jesus warned him concerning certain weaknesses in his life, and urged him to watch and pray lest he enter into temptation. But Peter, assured of his own steadfastness, went right into temptation and danger, and fell. Then he experienced real repentance. Moved by the sorrowing look of Jesus, by a sense of his own failure, he ran out into the darkness

to Gethsemane, and where Jesus had wept Peter fell upon his face and cried his heart away. He had a real conversion.

We are told that although Jesus freely forgave Peter, Peter never forgave himself. This is interesting. It doesn't mean that Peter was so dejected that he would never do anything for God after that. On the contrary, we see him with holy boldness witnessing before the Sanhedrin.

But the sense of Peter's failure kept him humble. It kept him where he ought to be with the sense of the fact that in himself he had no righteousness; that he was a poor weak man.

Peter never denied his Lord after that. He never cursed and swore after that. Not once. And his life demonstrated that Jesus was living in him the righteousness of the law. And not once did he make boastful claims. He never forgave himself. He was afflicting his soul. And it was the sorrow for sin that Jesus used to keep Peter from going back to it.

If we are sorry enough about something we will not go back to it, will we? Why, no. We won't do it again.

There is many a man who falls under the temptation to indulge in alcohol. After he has gotten drunk and made a fool of himself, he feels so cheap. He vows to God and man that he will never touch it again. Sometimes those around him feel so sorry for him, and try to comfort him. But unless he receives unusual help from the Spirit of God, those human resolutions last until the next temptation. Then he takes the bottle again. Why? Because the sorrow did not go deep enough.

If sin causes us sufficient pain we won't touch it again. But merely waking up the morning after and feeling bad over getting drunk is never in itself enough sorrow to keep a man from going back to it. That is true of all sin. There is not in sin itself that which hurts us enough to lead us to quit it. But when we see what sin did to Jesus. When we behold the Lamb of God bearing our sins. When we behold the Lamb of God led away to Calvary there suffering the just for the unjust. When we begin to get some idea of the fearful cost of transgression as it breaks the heart of the Son of God, we cry out, Oh Lord, is this the nature of sin? If it is, I don't want anything more to do with it.

Mark it, no matter how deep our repentance is when we give up sin, we must have a further work of repentance, ever deepening day by day, and this must continue as long as time shall last.

On the last day of the sanctuary year, the Day of Atonement, there came a great climax of repentance as the people afflicted their souls. They were not going around on that day saying, Look how holy I am. They were not coming with a report card with a lot of good marks saying, We are all right, or at least we are pretty close to it. On that day they wore sackcloth and ashes in token of humiliation. They fasted in sorrow for sin. They reached the bottom, as it were, in deep sorrow for transgression. That was going on while the priest was in the most holy place making the atonement.

Where is our High Priest? He is in the most holy place. What is He doing? He is making the atonement. Where are we? In the court. What are we doing? I trust we are doing just what we are supposed to be doing—afflicting our souls. That means we don't look good to ourselves. We look bad to ourselves.

Someone says, "But how can that be if we must be perfect when Jesus comes?"

We shall have to leave that part of the work to the One whose work it is to perfect us. That is Jesus. He says He is going to get it done. He says that one of the important means in accomplishing that perfection is that you and I shall afflict our souls and see how weak and unworthy we are.

We had better get used to it. We had better not mean that we are off the tract. That is the straight road to glory—feeling weak, unworthy, unrighteous in ourselves. This is the path that the saints of God have trod these 6,000 years. And this is the path the remnant tread.

But with that sense of weakness must go the realization of His strength. With that sense of our sinfulness must go the realization of His righteousness. With that sense of our failure must go the realization of His victory, and claiming it as our own.

"For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.
And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all
principality and power" Colossians 2:10.

Complete is another word for perfect. I want to read a wonderful comment from an article by the Lord's Messenger:

"Jesus is the pledge of our acceptance with God. We stand in favor before God, not because of any merit in ourselves, but because of our faith in 'the Lord, our Righteousness.' Jesus stands in the holy of holies now to appear in the presence of God for us. There He ceases not to present His people moment by moment complete in Himself. But because we are thus represented before the Father we are not to imagine that we are to presume upon His mercy, and become careless, indifferent, and self-indulgent. Christ is not the minister of sin. We are complete in Him, accepted in the beloved, only as we abide in Him by faith. Perfection through our own good works we can never attain. The soul who sees Jesus by faith repudiates his own righteousness. He sees himself as incomplete, his repentance insufficient, his strongest faith but feebleness, his most costly sacrifice as meager, and he sinks in humility at the foot of the cross. But a voice speaks to him from the oracles of God's word. In amazement he hears the message, 'Ye are complete in Him.'" *Signs of the Times*, July 4, 1892.

We see ourselves as incomplete. Is that the way you look to yourself? Well, you are. You were yesterday, you are today, and you will be tomorrow.

“Ye are complete in him.” Who hears that? The man who sinks at the foot of the cross, recognizing that his righteousness is not enough, his repentance is not deep enough, his faith is not strong enough.

Why do we have a Priest in the sanctuary? Why indeed? We need Him. He is appearing for us in the presence of God.

“Now all is at rest in his soul. No longer must he strive to find some worthiness in himself, some meritorious deed by which to gain the favor of God. Beholding the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world he finds the peace of Christ, for pardon is written against his name, and he accepts the word of God, ‘Ye are complete in Him.’” *Ibid.*

We are not to look around to see if we can find something good to encourage us.

“I am weakness, full of weakness,
At Thy sacred feet I bow;
Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling.”

That is not simply the way we begin the Christian life. That is the way we keep on. And as long as we are in this world we will need to be hanging our helpless souls on Jesus. Let's get used to it. What do you say?

But I don't look complete. I can't say that I am. Jesus doesn't say, Well, pat yourself up a bit and maybe you will pass. Oh, no. “Ye are complete in Him.” That is the way we start. That is the way we carry on. And Jesus is not only the author but the finisher of our faith.

Lest someone should misunderstand, does that mean that as long as we are in this world we are going to keep on breaking the law over and over again? No, my friends, by no means does it mean that. We need to distinguish in our thinking between sin and sins. Each sin we commit is a transgression of the law. But the thing that is back of the act we do is our sinful natures. If we confess our sins, what does God do with them? He forgives them.

But remember Peter's experience. Although he had confessed his sins and knew that God forgave his thrice repeated denial of the Savior, Peter knew that deep in his heart the same weakness was still there. Therefore he couldn't go confidently down the street saying, I don't need to worry now. I know I will never curse and swear again. I am finished with that?

Was Peter finished with it? Yes, as far as his choice was concerned. But he knew that his only hope of keeping the way he wanted to be was to keep looking away from himself to where? To Jesus. Do you see?

So in what we are studying I do not mean to suggest that we can just go on breaking the law and feeling that Jesus will forgive us, and keep it up until we see the cloud coming. Oh, no. I don't mean that at all. On this day the Priest in the sanctuary is to make an atonement for us that we may be clean from all our sins before the Lord. But while He is doing it, you and I are to afflict our souls. We are to be sorry. Those two things go together. They are not separate.

Day by day we shall experience a deeper sorrow for sin, a greater dissatisfaction with ourselves. That expresses the thought that I want to get before us.

But if we linger on that all the while, it will utterly discourage us. Therefore our hope is looking to our great High Priest in the sanctuary. That is why our text says we are complete in Him.

“How hard it is for humanity long accustomed to cherished doubts to grasp this great truth, but what peace it brings to the soul. What vital life. In looking to ourselves for righteousness by which to find acceptance with God we look to the wrong place, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. We are to look to Jesus, ‘for we all with open face, beholding in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory.’ You are to find your completeness by beholding the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” *Ibid*.

In order that we might catch the impact of this great truth I want to take you forward past the sanctuary service through the time of trouble. We see that little cloud in the distance. At first it is dark. As it draws nearer the earth it is all glorious. We discern Jesus. What are we going to say? In the first vision the Lord gave His messenger back in 1844 we have the picture. She writes:

“We all in solemn silence gazed on the cloud as it drew nearer and became lighter, glorious, and still more glorious, till it was a great white cloud. ... Then all faces gathered paleness, and those that God had rejected gathered blackness. Then we all cried out, ‘Who shall be able to stand? Is my robe spotless?’” *Early Writings*, pages 15-16.

Someone might say, Why do we talk that way? Wasn't our sins all blotted out in the most holy place? Hasn't God helped us to stand through the time of trouble without a mediator? Haven't we been delivered from the mobs, and been glorified so we all have glorified bodies? Yet you stand here and say, Who shall be able to stand, and with trembling cry, Is my robe spotless? Of course it is spotless. Why do you say that?

That is exactly what you and I are going to say if we are fortunate enough to be in that wonderful group. And it is no stage play. It is a sense of the weakness and incompleteness of humanity. And if the remnant who have been sealed and witnessed for God in the time of Jacob's trouble and have been glorified talk that way,

then surely something similar by the way of humiliation would be appropriate for you and me today. All claims to be sinless and holy reveal a woeful lack of perception.

The cloud draws near. Jesus lets us stand there in trembling. Even if it is only moments, it will seem like ages. But we need that or He wouldn't let us have it. We need that final sense of weakness and humiliation and sorrow of soul over our own human inadequacy.

“Jesus spoke: ‘Those who have clean hands and pure hearts shall be able to stand: My grace is sufficient for you.’ At this our faces lighted up, and joy filled every heart” *Ibid*.

Then we will be caught up into the cloud with Jesus, and never again will we have those feelings of inadequacy.

Oh, I long for that glorious hour, don't you? But until then let's settle down to the fact that repentance and humiliation of the soul is part of the program.

But let us never forget that it is not all the program. The deeper our repentance the higher our trust must reach. We must be united to Jesus. And the deeper our sense of humiliation, and the further we see ourselves beneath the standard, the higher our trust must reach to lay hold of the fact that we are accepted in the Beloved and counted complete in Him. Never go to a season of prayer without coming forth from your closet knowing that you are accepted in the Beloved, knowing that you are complete in Him.

The trouble of the Pharisee that prayed in the temple was that he was reciting his own good deeds. And however accurate his count of outward performances was, he had no idea at all of the weakness and unworthiness and sinfulness of his own heart.

But the publican coming to the temple sensed his great need and cried out, God be merciful to me, a sinner. Jesus said that publican went down to his house justified. He went back home accepted. He went back home counted righteous.

Oh, I trust that as you go from this sanctuary today that every one of you will go like the publican, justified, accepted, knowing you are righteous.

But I tell you, if you go like him you must first come like him. If you come recognizing your unworthiness, afflicting your soul, then on that day shall the Priest make an atonement for you with His precious blood, to cleanse you that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord.

“Nothing can for sin atone,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
Nothing good that I have done,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.”

And the truth is that the more good we do the less good we will see in ourselves. That is a paradox, but it is the truth, and never forget it. The nearer we get to Jesus the less we will see in ourselves.

Rest weary soul, the penalty if born, the ransom paid,
For all thy sins full satisfaction made;
Strive not to do thyself what Christ has done,
Claim the free gift and make the joy thine own;
No more by pangs of guilt and fear distressed,
Rest, sweetly rest.

Even in our earnest endeavors to be like Jesus, and we should, there is danger that we get our minds too much on forming habits and doing things, and hoping thereby to climb up. We need to simply rest in the love of Jesus.

I am sure there are many things that I must yet learn, both in fact and habits. But my hope is not in my ability to get through the list. My hope is in a Lamb who died for me and a Priest who lives for me. I know He has begun a work in my heart, and I am confident in this very thing that He which has begun a good work in me will perform and finish it until the day of Jesus Christ.

“As we have clearer views of Christ’s spotless and infinite purity we shall feel as did Daniel when he beheld the glory of the Lord, and said, ‘My comeliness was turned in me into corruption.’ We cannot say, ‘I am sinless,’ till this vile body is changed and fashioned like unto His glorious body. But if we constantly seek to follow Jesus, the blessed hope is ours of standing before the throne of God without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; complete in Christ, robed in His righteousness and perfection” *Signs of the Times*, March 23, 1888.

Will the remnant ever say? We are sinless.

“Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus”
Revelation 14:12.

I would rather have God testify about that than my testifying about it. And it isn’t that I say, Well, I know that down inside I know I am good, but I mustn’t say anything about it because it would be proud.

Oh, no. Nothing like that. I actually see myself as weak, inadequate, and incomplete. But when I listen to what Jesus said, and when I see Him dying for me and pleading for me, I have to accept what He says instead of what I see. I have to accept His statement that I am accepted instead of my feeling that I am not.

That is faith. That is righteousness by faith. And I also accept by faith what seems impossible, and it is that He is going to make me like Him.

If I should look back over the years that have passed and see what I have accomplished, or what has been accomplished in me by His grace, and project that into the future, I would say, A hundred years would not be long enough to get me ready.

Then what makes me think I am going to be ready? Jesus says so. I will never get any courage by looking at myself and charting my progress. Oh, no.

“We cannot say we are sinless until this vile body is changed and fashioned like unto His glorious body. But if we constantly seek to follow Jesus, the blessed hope is ours of standing before the throne of God without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, complete in Christ, robbed in His righteousness and perfection” *Signs of the Times*, March 23, 1888.

“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 well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” Hebrews 13:20-21.

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