

Holiness And The Sanctification Of The Body

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The Prophet Isaiah says that God inhabits eternity (Isaiah lvii. 15); and Solomon says, 'The heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee.' (I Kings viii. 27.) But, wonder of wonders! Paul says that we are a habitation of God. 'What!' says he, 'know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?' (I Cor. vi. 19.) And again, 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?' (I Cor. iii. 16.)

This is a very solemn truth; but it ought to be a joy-giving one. It certainly adds dignity and honor to us beyond anything that earthly rulers could possibly bestow, and it lifts our bodies from their kinship to the beasts into a sacred fellowship with the Lord. This fact makes the sanctification of the body both a glorious privilege and an important duty.

Many people think that sanctification, or holiness, has to do only with the soul. But the truth is, that it has to do with every part of our nature, and every article of our possession. The body is to be sanctified as well as the soul. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians as follows: 'The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.' (1 Thess. v. 23.) By this he means that the body is to be set apart and kept as a holy thing for the Lord.

We are to make a present of our bodies to the Lord. Paul says, 'I beseech you therefore, brethren,..... that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.' (Rom. xii. 1.) Just as the soldier surrenders his personal liberty, and gives his body to his country, for hard campaigns, for toilsome marches, for weary sieges, and, if need be, for death, so we are to present our bodies, to the Lord. Jesus gave His body for us, and we are to give our bodies to Him.

Not only are we to present our bodies as a whole to the Lord, but each member as well; the eyes, the ears, the hands, the feet, the tongue, each and all are to be given to Him. (See Rom. vi. 13.)

The eyes are to be turned away from the things that would wean the soul from God. The General tells of a holy man he knew, who, when he walked the streets, kept his eyes straight before him, not looking into the shop windows, lest his communion with God should be hindered, and his mind be filled with worldly, foolish, and covetous, thoughts.

Some years ago, silver bracelets were very fashionable, and a girl who had plenty of money went to buy a pair. But before she found any pretty and dainty enough to suit her she got saved, and then she knew she had no right to spend her money foolishly, or to wear such things even if she had them. But her eyes had got into the habit of searching shop windows in every city where she went, for those bracelets, and she found that the habit was very bad for her soul. It made her care less to pray, and hindered her thinking about Jesus when she was out walking, and actually lessened her desire to get souls saved. So she had to give her eyes to God, to be kept from leading her away from Jesus; and for years afterwards, she said she never went through a shopping street without praying David's prayer, 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.'

It was a longing look toward the fertile plains of Sodom and Gomorrah that led to all the sorrows and losses of Lot. It was a covetous look at the Babylonish garment and wedge of gold that led to the utter ruin of Achan. It was a lustful look that led to the sad downfall and shame of David.

There are some things that a Christian should not look at, and if by chance his eyes should fall upon them, they should be turned away quickly lest sin should get into his heart through Eye-gate. Everyone who wishes to be holy will say with Job, 'I have made a covenant with mine eyes.'

Again, the ears are to be sanctified, The holy man will guard himself lest sin enter into his heart through Ear-gate. 'Take heed what ye hear,' said Jesus; and again, 'Take heed how ye hear.' Just so surely as the body can be poisoned or flourished and strengthened by the things we eat, according to whether they be good or bad so surely can the soul be poisoned or nourished by the things we hear. No pure-minded man or woman, boy or girl, will listen to an impure story, an obscene song, or unclean talk.

Some time ago, two Salvation Army Officers were traveling by train. The railway carriage was crowded, and they were separated. One of them sat down by an elderly man, and in a short time, they were in conversation with a gentleman in front of them. Soon the elderly man looked about and said, 'There are no women near, who can hear, are there? I want to tell a story.' The Officer was at once on guard, and said, 'I am a Salvationist, sir. I

do not wish to hear a story that would be unfit for ladies to hear.' The old man looked ashamed, the gentleman in front looked a look of wonder, and the nasty story was not told, and the Salvationist, no doubt, escaped a great temptation.

But while we should not listen to evil, neither should we speak it. Sometimes it is impossible to avoid hearing wicked and filthy things, however much we may wish to do so, for we cannot control the tongues of others. That was one of the sorrows of Lot in Sodom. His soul was 'vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked.' While we cannot control the tongues of others, we must control our own, and while we may not be always able to avoid hearing wicked and evil and unclean things, we can avoid saying them.

If we would be holy, and enjoy God's smile, we must sanctify our tongues, and keep our lips pure. 'Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good for the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.' (Eph. iv. 20.) We must not forget, however, that the heart is the fountain from which flows all our talk, and if that be clean the conversation will be pure. Jesus said, 'Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.' Therefore, 'keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.'

Take my voice, and let me sing Always, only for my King; Take my lips, and let them be Filled with messages from Thee.

Let the feet also be given to the Lord, no longer to walk in the ways of sin, but to walk patiently and gladly in the path of duty, and to run on errands of mercy.

Take my feet, and let them be Swift and beautiful for Thee

The hands are to be used for holy service, and no longer to smite and pilfer.

Take my hands and let them move At the impulse of Thy love.

Thus the whole body is to be given to the Lord, and kept and used for Him. Since Jesus ascended to Heaven, He has no body upon earth. So, will you prove your love to Him, my Comrade, by letting Him have yours? If so, no sexual impurity is to be allowed, no unclean habit is to be indulged, no appetite is to be permitted to gain the mastery, but the whole body is to be kept under, and made the servant of the soul.

Athletes, football and cricket players, and prizefighters when in training, are exceedingly careful about their health. They select their food with care, and eat nothing that would disagree with them, omitting heavy suppers; they abstain from strong drink and tobacco; they bathe their bodies daily; they go to bed and get up at regular hours; they sleep with open windows, and, of course, they have plenty of fresh air and systematic exercise. This they do for months, and sometimes for years, simply that they may beat some other fellows in contests of strength and skill. Now they do it, says Paul, 'to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.' And then he adds, 'I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.' (I Cor. ix. 25-27.)

I know a man who noticed that when he ate too much he became irritable, and was subject to various temptations from which a careful diet freed him. He had to control his appetite in order to keep a clean heart.

Young people are likely to squander their health in all sorts of useless and careless ways, and are tempted to laugh and sneer at their elders when they lift a warning voice. But they will some day find that advance in holiness, progress toward Heaven, and happiness and usefulness, are more dependent on the right care of the body than they supposed.

'Beloved. I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health even as thy soul prospereth.' (3 John 2.)

Let my hands perform His bidding,

Let my feet run in His ways,

Let mine eyes see Jesus only,

Let my lips speak forth His praise.

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All for Jesus.

Let my lips speak forth His praise.