

## New Covenant Priesthood (Part Two)

### Defilement and Cleanliness

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There is very much in the Old Testament especially designed to impart first understanding, and then after that wisdom, in order that we might be able to help ourselves towards meeting the twin responsibilities of making sacrifices acceptable to God and showing forth His praises. Some of these are rituals and others are not. But regardless of which they are, they impart a sense of being different, and thus give us a constant stream of confirmation of our uniqueness—that is, of our separation from the world.

One that I mentioned in a previous sermon is the law differentiating clean and unclean foods. You will recall the vision given to Peter (in Acts 10), in which a large sheet-like material was let down from heaven containing a wide variety of animals. Peter immediately rejected the command to eat on the basis of their being unclean. He obviously understood that there were differences between animals in their terms of acceptability for food.

He later understood that the clean animals symbolized men, and those that God cleansed were no longer to be considered "unclean"—regardless of whether they were Israelites or Gentiles. Thus God also showed, in that case, that there are differences among men as well. Some are "unclean" until they are cleansed. And those cleansed are distinct by means of a spiritual cleansing, and separated from among men. Eating only "clean" things is, therefore, a constant witness that we are to be clean.

This very clearly makes us comprehend that we are different. When others come into contact with us and know this (that is, know that we do not eat the unclean things), this also makes a witness to them—that we are different.

In the previous sermon, I mentioned a couple of times that the church—like Israel—is intended by God to be **unique!** There is nothing like it in the world. In order to get this across to us, the Bible uses terms like: We are *a chosen generation*, or *kindred*, or even *race*. That we are *a royal priesthood*,

*a holy nation, a peculiar people*—to focus our attention and our understanding toward the church's unique characteristics and purpose.

In an overall sense, the church is distinctive in that its work is (1) to make sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ and (2) to show forth God's praises. But **our distinctiveness** does not end there. Like Israel, it too is intended to give witness to the world and to ourselves as well—in order that we are helped to do our job.

We are going to continue laying the groundwork for this sermon by turning to Exodus 31. Those of you familiar with this portion of the Bible know that this is the Sabbath Covenant.

**Exodus 31:12-17** And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, "Speak you also unto the children of Israel, saying, 'Verily My sabbaths you shall keep: for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations; that you may know that I am the LORD that does sanctify you. [Or, consecrate you. Or, separate you. Or, set you apart. Or, make you unique.] You shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you. Everyone that defiles it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever does any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. [Pretty serious stuff!] Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whosoever does any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed.

Verse 16 says that we are to observe the Sabbath "throughout their generations." That is, the generations of Israel. Does Israel continue to exist? Yes, it does. Therefore the generations of Israel are continuing. Therefore the covenant continues to go right on.

We have to first understand that the Sabbath is **not** a ceremonial ritual. The world designates it as such, and tosses it aside—saying that the principle of

the Sabbath can be applied to any day. That is an argument that sounds good to the carnal mind, which is ever-ready to make adjustments to what God says to things that it (the carnal mind) finds to be 'more appropriate' to it. But as we can clearly see, it is not what God commands. God clearly commands that the Sabbath be kept throughout all the generations of Israel. Israel continues to this day, and the church is clearly designated (in Galatians 6:16) as *the Israel of God*. It belongs to God! He possesses it.

No other day of the week is tied directly both to worship and to the Creator God. On no other day did God rest from His work, thus setting an example—right in the creation week—for all to follow. Jesus differentiated between ritual and commandment in that no record exists of Him making an animal sacrifice, but there is a clear record of Him keeping the Sabbath. The ceremonial ritual [of sacrifice] is therefore not necessary for us to observe, but the Sabbath commandment is—if we are going to walk in His steps, that is. It is clear that the apostle Paul also kept the Sabbath.

The Sabbath is not a ritual, but a commandment—one of the big Ten. It is a foundational law intended to provide instinctive guidance for the entirety of humanity's social life. It was made for man, and is just as much a part of God's character as the other nine commandments. It is one of the ten laws that define love toward God and fellow man. It is one of ten basic laws that regulate all relationships.

This series of verses shows that the keeping of it gives evidence to God, to ourselves, and to the world as to where *God's sanctified ones* are. The world may not understand or agree with it, but they are aware of it. It sets off our distinctiveness, and it thus provides a measure of witness showing forth the praises of God. However, we must thoroughly understand that it is not merely that we observe it—because there are others who also observe it. All that a Christian needs to do is to act as a Christian should, and, at the very least, he becomes an irritant to non-Christians—and to "Christians" who are fellowshiping with the church, but who are not doing things right. But regardless to which it goes—the witness is made. Jesus did everything right and it irritated the leadership of the Jews into killing Him, thus witnessing against them.

The world out there, to which we are **not** to be conformed, is simply not geared to keeping the Sabbath. And it is this circumstance that creates conflict between our responsibilities to God (in properly observing it) and what the world perceives as its needs. And very often sacrifices must be made to observe it as God commands.

This same principle of the matter and the way the laws of God are to be kept is true in regard to keeping any of the other nine. Under certain circumstances, the keeping of them—in their fullness of God's intent—may require a considerable degree of sacrifice. Please remember that it is *in the making of the sacrifice*, in doing things properly, that the distinctiveness is shown, that we are reminded, and that the witness is made.

There are many that acknowledge the keeping of the Sabbath as being required, and so they do. But in the keeping of it, the only difference between the Sabbath and every other day is that they attend services. Then after that duty is fulfilled, they do pretty much whatever 'busyness' they please. And then there are others who have made virtually an idol of the day, so that they do not do so much as turn on a light switch—but they will hire another person to turn it on for them. In both extremes, the sense of understanding that "the day was made for man" is lost. In neither extreme are the praises of God shown forth.

What this shows us is that it is not merely that we observe the Sabbath—but the way, the manner, and the understanding with which we keep it, and the fruit that is produced by keeping it properly. That is where the real witness is made! And of course, it reminds us of who we are. So it meets its purpose, then, for us as well.

Sometimes we tend to forget things like this. And I think that, if I have any understanding or insight as to some of the things that are going on within the church of God (I am talking about the whole church of God, not just the Church of the Great God), many have forgotten this very principle. It is **HOW** it is kept that makes the difference. It is how it is kept that actually provides the witness.

**Deuteronomy 8:11-14** Beware that you forget not the LORD your God, in not keeping His commandments, and His judgments, and His statutes, which I command you this day: Lest when you have eaten and are full, and have built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

**Deuteronomy 8:19** And it shall be, if you do at all forget the LORD your God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish.

I think that there is a very distinct possibility that what we read of in this chapter is one of the things that led to what happened to the Worldwide Church of God, and why we stand *scattered* all over the place. *We forgot* very much about the requirements of obedience that God has for us. This theme of forgetting—or, not forgetting—runs through the book of Deuteronomy especially.

Virtually every family of people on earth considers themselves in some way as being the recipients of God's favor. They usually designate themselves by a title to indicate this, especially to themselves. The Germans called themselves "Herrenvolk." The Japanese called themselves "sons of heaven." China calls itself "the good earth." And Americans, "God's country."

Now, Israel's favor was that they were the recipients of the knowledge of God's purpose, and then given a land in which to prosper and to use that knowledge within. I want you to think of this in terms of the church—because whatever Israel received, by comparison to what the church was given, it was minuscule by comparison.

Are you aware that Israel forgot? Yes, they did. They did forget. And what happened to Israel? They were scattered all over the place. Is it possible,

then, that the church forgot what it was given? That it became less and less aware that it had, too, been given the knowledge of God and the knowledge of His purpose, the knowledge for mankind, the knowledge of what was being worked out in our lives. And what did we call ourselves? "***God's church!***"

However, there is a common byproduct of prosperity. Did you notice what God says here? "Lest when you have eaten and are full, and have built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; then your heart be lifted up, **and you forget...**"

Was the Worldwide Church of God prospered when it had a \$200,000,000 a year income? I got an email this week in which somebody calculated that since 1995 (I believe it was) the Worldwide Church of God has suffered a loss of one billion dollars in lost income. Is that a pile of money, or what? This is something that we have lived through. And even the very loss of that one billion dollars is an indication of how God had prospered us. Is it possible that *we forgot* even how to keep His Sabbath? Therefore, we began to forget who we were? And to forget the responsibility that we had of keeping God's Word in its *spirit*, in the fullness of its intent? Possibly we were just going through the motions?

Yes, there is a very common byproduct of prosperity that could destroy the gift of knowledge of God's purpose for mankind, and it is **forgetfulness!** Prosperity has a tendency to produce forgetfulness. Pride in one's prosperity can gradually persuade one that he did it himself. But the fact is that *what he was given* is the real reason for the prosperity.

There are a number of reasons for the Old Covenant rituals, but undoubtedly—like the proper keeping of the Sabbath, and many other laws—one of them is to remind the sanctified ones who they are, and what they are to do with their lives. They are a separated people, called to make right use of their gifts and to glorify God in the use of them.

Being aware of our separation is supremely important to us, because it is one of the few ways that gives sense as to why God requires certain things. The

laws of clean and unclean meats should be a constant reminder of this separation. So should the removing of leaven from our homes in the spring. And it is clear from the Old Testament rituals that *cleanliness*—spiritual, moral, and physical cleanliness—and *purity* are the realities that differentiate us from the world and make us distinctive from others.

This is something, though, that is so easy to forget or to overlook, and that is why God gives this warning here in Deuteronomy 8. Being undefiled, uncontaminated, is a responsibility because it is in maintaining the cleanliness that a *visible* witness is made—one that can be seen and evaluated by the world. And if we allow ourselves to run amok in the muck along with the rest of the world, then we share the world's contamination, and no witness is made. Who can see the difference? There is no difference, or so little difference that it makes no difference. It is in the efforts to be made clean and to maintain cleanliness that many of the sacrificial aspects of priesthood are most clearly seen.

**Isaiah 52:10-11** The LORD has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. Depart you, depart you, go you out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go you out of the midst of her; be you clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD.

If you would look at this in its context, you would see that it is speaking first of the exodus that the Jews made, from their captivity in Babylon, when they were to be released from their captivity. But it is also a prophecy—speaking of a future exodus, from a future captivity, from the Babylon that is now forming in this present age. So it is very timely for us.

While the Jews were in their seventy years of captivity in ancient Babylon, there was not the freedom of opportunity to maintain either ritual or spiritual cleanliness, as they would have had in their own homeland. About 300 years later in Jewish history, the celebration of Hannukah—meaning "dedication"—arose from the Jews' attempts to cleanse the worship of God following Antiochus Epiphanes' and the Greek army's defilement of the temple during warfare.

These verses are an urgent command, reminding them of their responsibility to cast off personal defilement of any paganism (or, as we would say today, any worldliness) picked up during their captivity. This had to be done in order to restore the true worship of the true God when they returned to Jerusalem.

The paraphrase translates this verse in this way, and it is very clear:

**Isaiah 52:11** (TLB) Go now, leave your bonds and slavery. Put Babylon and all it represents far behind you [I like that especially. "Put Babylon and all it represents far behind you."]—it is unclean to you. You are the holy people of the LORD; purify yourselves, all you who carry home the vessels of the LORD.

That is very clear, of the responsibility. Who would be carrying the holy vessels? The priests! (Nobody else. The priests.) And I think we need to pick up the inference to this since the whole church is **a priesthood**, and so designated in I Peter. So let us go back to Leviticus 22. Here we are in the very midst of the book to the priesthood—"the book of holiness." And so it says:

**Leviticus 22:1-2** And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, "Speak unto Aaron and to his sons, that they separate themselves from the holy things of the children of Israel, and that they profane not My holy name in those things which they hallow unto Me: I am the LORD ."

That word "separate" could better be translated that they *consecrate* themselves—meaning *dedicate* themselves.

**Leviticus 22:3** Say unto them, "Whosoever he be of all your seed [your descendants; this related family] among your generations, that goes unto the holy things, which the children of Israel hallow unto the LORD, having his uncleanness upon him, that soul shall be cut off from My presence: I am the LORD."

This verse is not talking about the people who bring the offering (that which is devoted to God), but those who are going to receive the offering—meaning the priesthood. And they are not allowed to be unclean. That is, those who receive the devoted things.

**Leviticus 22:4** What man soever of the seed of Aaron is a leper, or has a running issue; he shall not eat of the holy things, until he be clean. ...

The priesthood received a portion of some of the offerings, some of the devoted things that Israel brought to be offered to God; but they were only allowed to eat it if they themselves were clean.

**Leviticus 22:4-9** ... And whoso touches any thing that is unclean by the dead, or a man whose seed goes from him; or whosoever touches any creeping thing, whereby he may be made unclean, or a man of whom he may take uncleanness, whatsoever uncleanness he has; the soul which has touched any such shall be unclean until even, and shall not eat of the holy things, unless he wash his flesh with water. And when the sun is down, he shall be clean, and shall afterward eat of the holy things; because it is his food. That which dies of itself, or is torn with beasts, he shall not eat to defile himself therewith: I am the LORD. They shall therefore keep Mine ordinance, lest they bear sin for it, and die therefore, if they profane it: I the LORD do sanctify them.

I think that, for our purposes, it is important for us to understand that *the defiling thing* (that which makes a person unclean) may not, of itself, be sin—or that the person has necessarily sinned by coming into contact with it. It is what they represent, or symbolize, that is important to us here. We are dealing here with a ritual. The defiling thing represents, it symbolizes, it typifies *sin* and *its effects*. This is not to say, though, that coming into contact with some of these things might not be potentially physically harmful—because disease may very well be communicated by coming into contact with a corpse, for example. Nonetheless, the possibility of *defilement by sin* is taught in every case in which God declares a person unclean and therefore unsuited to serve Him until the defilement is taken away through the washing ceremonies prescribed by Him.

Now, you might ask, "Why is God so insistent about avoiding contamination?" The answer is found in Haggai's question to the priests. I know that you are familiar with this, but I want to look at it again anyway. This is a very important principle to us.

**Haggai 2:10-14** In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, "Thus said the LORD of hosts; 'Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying, "If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy?'" And the priests answered and said, "No." [Which was the correct answer.] Then said Haggai, "If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean?" And the priests answered and said, "It shall be unclean." [Which was the correct answer.] Then answered Haggai, and said, "'So is this people, and so is this nation before Me,' saith the Lord; 'and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean.'"

The answer to the question I posed about why God is so insistent about avoiding contamination is because it is so easy for that which is contaminating and defiling to our character to be transferred to us. Human nature is like a magnet attracting defilement. Above all people in Israel, the priests had to be clean. This principle applies to us. Theirs was above all a physical cleanliness, but moral, spiritual, and ethical cleanliness is certainly implied. By contrast, ours is above all a spiritual, moral, and ethical cleanliness with the physical implied. (Just the reverse.)

These Old Covenant laws are to serve as reminders and guides to us about how serious God is—and, therefore, we should be—about not being contaminated by the world. We are going to take a look at some of the more striking and serious stipulations that God made on the Israelites about *being separate* .

**Deuteronomy 7:1-6** When the LORD your God shall bring you into the land whither you go to possess it, and has cast out many nations

before you, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you; and when the LORD your God shall deliver them before you; you shall smite them, and utterly destroy them; you shall make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them. Neither shall you make marriages with them; your daughter you shall not give unto his son, nor his daughter shall you take unto your son. For they will turn away your son from following Me, that they may serve other gods. So will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy you suddenly. But thus shall you deal with them; you shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. For [Here comes the reason] you are an holy people unto the LORD your God: the LORD your God has chose you to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.

I want us to see how strong this concept of separation from what is impure is. The Canaanites, and all of the other nations that are mentioned there, were to be **exterminated**. Is that clear? **Annihilated!** In more common terms, **wiped out!** Every man, woman, and child. And it is especially noted in terms of a religious ground. This is because religion has such a powerful influence on conduct.

We know that Israel never did this, and the Canaanites were a constant thorn in their side, through their false gods. And through Israel's social and business intercourse with them, they were persuaded to follow the Canaanites' gods' practices—even to the extent of sacrificing their children in the fire.

In order to properly understand this command to exterminate, it must be understood that, though God was their Ruler, Israel was a nation of this world. This iniquity of the Amorites was full. And Israel was put into the place of God's avenging angels—His agents—to take vengeance upon those nations. But the key is that Israel was a nation of this world, and that is something that the church is not. When Jesus was before Pilate, giving His testimony there:

**John 18:36** Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence."

We are *in* this world, but we are not *of* this world. But if the same circumstances existed today that existed when Israel was coming into the Promised Land, we too would fight and kill (as they were required to do). And when Christ returns, we are going to do just that. Then the Kingdom of God will be **of** this world, and we will claim our inheritance by exterminating those who have taken it away from the Israelitish people. So do not think that this was so harsh.

But the lesson for us is that we are to be, as it were, this *harsh with ourselves*—to get rid of the sin that is within us. "Pluck out your eye. Cut off your hand." We know that God does not mean this literally! It is the spiritual principle that is involved. To pluck out your eye, or to cut off your hand would be quite **a sacrifice**. And He was saying that we have to be willing to go to that extent—to fight 'tooth and toenail' the contamination of sin that so easily besets us, and can so easily be picked up from contact with this world.

So the spiritual lesson for us today is that God is equally vociferous toward us—that we do not allow this world to influence us in any way that will contaminate our *holiness*, given as a result of Christ's sacrifice. Israel did not follow through, and soon no difference could be seen between them and the Canaanites. So we get back to the point of this sermon. These commands to be different make the witness and provide the means (the area, the environment) for sacrifice.

In order to keep from being contaminated by the world, there has to be in us a pretty strong measure of religious intolerance, or you will find yourself compromising. What we call "human nature," and what the Bible calls "carnality," produced this world. It loves this world, and is easily attracted to its practices and its attitudes.

There is a historical example that most of us are aware of, at the very least; and some of us have lived through some of this. It is pretty clear that there

was a time when Protestantism was much *purier* in its understanding of God, and the conduct of its adherents in the world was close to what we might expect of ourselves. But much of Protestantism today is quite secular. This is because human nature will seek out anything from this world that might be anywhere near in common with God's truth and then syncretize it within one's personal beliefs and conduct. But the process produces compromise and contaminates the purity of the truth that Protestantism once had. We have seen it happen.

Let us go to Deuteronomy 23, and we will continue seeing regulations, stipulations, that God made regarding things that we can do or things that cannot be done.

**Deuteronomy 23:1-11** He that is wounded in the stones, or has his privy member cut off, shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD. [To many, that would seem to be unfair.] A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the LORD. An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD forever: because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when you came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you. Nevertheless the LORD your God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing unto you; because the LORD your God loved you. You shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days forever. You shall not abhor an Edomite; for he is your brother. You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were a stranger in his land. The children that are begotten of them shall enter into the congregation of the LORD in their third generation. When the host [during warfare] goes forth against your enemies, then keep you from every wicked thing. [Brethren, even in warfare the Israelite was to remember that he was different.] If there be among you any man, that is not clean by reason of uncleanness that chanceth him by night, then shall he go abroad out of the camp, he shall not come

into the camp again. But it shall be, when evening comes on, he shall wash himself with water: and when the sun is down, he shall come into the camp again.

Do we have any idea how dirty warfare is? Even then, God required cleanliness amongst His people. As I have said before, I do not know the reason why God gave every regulation. But I do understand the overall principle involved here. There is no doubt that religion draws those devoted to it together. But there is also inevitably *a line* that is drawn between the faithful and the unfaithful. And under the Old Covenant, the lines were shown in physical terms.

Now, to many this might smack of a narrow exclusiveness, but there is a fundamental truth contained within these regulations. ***Religion makes a difference!*** And God demands—for our good and for the outworking of His purpose—that there be absolute loyalty in the people that He has cleansed through the blood of Jesus Christ. The loyalty is not merely in how one feels *inwardly* about certain things but also *outwardly* in one's behavior—in how we relate to one another. And a Christian must **never** step out of character. He must not step out of what he agreed to in making the covenant with God.

Every time we baptize somebody, we make sure that we go through Luke 14 (beginning in verse 25)—where Christ says, essentially, "Do I have your loyalty? Am I going to be before your father, your mother, your sister, your brother, your wife, your husband? Are you willing to forsake all that you have for Me?" And I might add, "Are you willing to keep yourself uncontaminated and undefiled from contact with this world?"—because that is the subject of this **responsibility of priests** sermon.

This book of Deuteronomy shows that God's purpose can be worked out only if there is a pretty fair degree of separation from the world around us. And it is this separation that greatly aids in keeping one clean and unspotted. Brethren, there are NOT "many ways" to God. All of this earth is NOT worshipping the same God in different guises and with different names. The universalism of the Catholic Church has no part in God's plan. There is only

one way. If there were many ways, each way would produce something different. God's way—**His one way**—reproduces Himself. Anybody who has a false god is not going to reproduce in himself the God of Creation.

**II Corinthians 6:14-18** Be you not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what concord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has he that believes with an infidel? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God; as God has said, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be you separate," saith the LORD, "and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters," saith the Lord Almighty.

**II Corinthians 7:1** Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Spiritually, brethren, this is every bit as stringent as Deuteronomy 7:1-5, and the reasons are the same. It is because we are holy. And our holiness has to be *protected* from contamination, and to be *perfected* through the relationship with God (not with this world), and to be *growing* in God's way of life. This is a pretty **stern warning** not to get close to the world. I want you to consider what the Worldwide Church of God did. They cozied up to the world through their universities, and went right back into the evil, sin-filled, materialism-oriented, overflowing with violence and sexual perversions, systems that this "religion" (their religion) created.

I do not know whether you are aware of it, but Paul asked five rhetorical questions through that series of verses—in order to show that God's way has nothing in common with the world. Nothing! In verse 17, Paul quotes Isaiah 52:11, clearly showing that our acceptance by God depends upon **obedience** (loyalty to Him). And Paul's statement regarding cleansing ourselves shows **a continuous action**. It is not written in the Greek as it appears to be written

here in the English. If it would have been translated the way that Paul wrote it, it would show then that *cleansing ourselves* is a responsibility that must be carried out every day!

There are two of God's festivals that are devoted to reminding us of this responsibility—one in the spring, and one in the fall. Passover, in the spring, where our feet are washed—showing that we are to have our walk cleaned up, as it were, once a year because we are dirty. We get our feet "dirty" as it were, symbolically, as we go through life. We are not always walking as we should, and so we have to be cleansed. How long do you think it would take for us to begin forgetting these things if we no longer kept Passover along with the ritual of washing one another's feet?

And every fall, before we keep the Feast of Tabernacles, there has to be a cleansing on the Day of Atonement. And so we go through the internal cleansing of *a fast*. That is what a fast does to our bodies physically. It begins to dump its garbage through the bowels and the urinary tract. Every cell in your body begins to go in reverse and cast off the garbage that is within them.

But it is interesting that in Passover the symbol is external, but in Atonement the symbol is internal. Is keeping ourselves clean important to God, when He gives us reminders twice a year? He wants us clean on the *outside*, and He wants us clean on the *inside*. He wants us *clean in what we believe*. He wants us *clean in the conduct* that takes place on the outside. The heart has to be cleansed and so does behavior.

And so II Corinthians 7:1 here indicates a daily cleansing—a daily repentance. Paul said, in another place, "I die daily." That is what he meant. But this is not the only place that Paul counseled withdrawing from fellowship. He says:

**I Corinthians 5:7** Purge out therefore the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, as you are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.

**I Corinthians 5:9-13** I wrote unto you as in an epistle not to company with fornicators. Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must you needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not you judge them that are within? But them that are without God judges. Therefore put away [cleanse yourself] from among yourselves that wicked person.

"Clean out the old yeast," Paul says. It is a call, in symbolic terms, to *purge oneself of evil*. Then he takes it one further step, and talks about putting the immoral person out of the congregation. This is because the person's immorality contradicts everything that the church teaches, and, if the person remains in the congregation, that congregation will become contaminated and no longer can consider itself as Christian—because of the spiritual contamination. They are a blot on the integrity of the church.

Turn with me to James 1:27 and we will see how consistent this teaching is—about keeping oneself *unspotted*.

**James 1:27** Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, [Do you see that? Pure religion and undefiled—uncontaminated!] To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

**James 4:8** Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands [that which does work], you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded. [Inside and outside!]

**I Peter 1:22** Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that you love one another with a pure heart fervently.

**I John 3:2-3** Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself, even as He is pure.

None of the stringency that we find in either Testament—Old or New—excuses us from being kind and full of caring (that is, caring concern) for those in the world. Let us go back to Matthew 3. This took place during the ministry of John the Baptist, and it says:

**Matthew 3:7-9** But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, "O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet [fit] for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, 'We have Abraham to our father:' for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."

The implication there is to coast along—because we are "in the church." Yes, we are in the church, but God does not want us to coast along because it is so easy to be contaminated simply because we have human nature and simply because we are "in the world" in the sense of being in contact with it all the time.

**Matthew 5:17-18** [Jesus is the speaker, and He says:] Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

And that is a true statement! People go around saying that the law is done away—including within that "rituals." No, it is not! Jesus said that those things are not done away. I hope you understand that, though we may not have to perform them physically, their principle (their intent) is still binding

upon us. Many laws have to do with physical cleanliness. Those same laws, in their intent, have to do with spiritual cleanliness. So their intent is still binding upon us.

We no longer have to make sacrifice at a physical brazen altar. No! Under the New Covenant, *we become the sacrifice!* We are the burnt offering. We become *a living sacrifice*. And the principles involved in being a burnt offering are extracted from the principles that appear in Leviticus, chapters 1 through 7. Not one jot or tittle has been done away from God's law.

**Matthew 5:19-20** Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

You will recall that the Pharisees were also mentioned in that section there in Matthew 3. Here we are in Matthew 5, and again the Pharisees are mentioned. The term "Pharisees" means "separatists." That is what we have been talking about—being separated from the world. The separatists, the Pharisees, seem to have arisen as a brotherhood, about 200 years before Christ, in a sincere desire to resist the secularism that Judaism had drifted into. But as the years went by, they *added* very much to God's written law and *rejected* counterbalancing commands also given in the Old Covenant—even such commands as those which appear in Leviticus 19. "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

They then compounded this rejection with a vain sense of *self-righteous superiority* that in many cases excluded any contact with people of another ethnicity, and even brought violence against their own Jewish people who disagreed—as the apostle Paul's pre-conversion conduct clearly shows. Paul was "a Pharisee of the Pharisees." And he went around throwing people into prison and, indeed, he may have even consented to the martyr death of Stephen.

It made those "separatists" very *unattractive witnesses*, and was in reality a rejection of God's intention of what a witness should be. Our witness does not have to bring about the conversion of others to be effective, because conversion is in God's hands anyway. But it still has to be right though, and being right is going to require personal sacrifices.

Being right—in addition to keeping the commands—means being humble, modest, kindhearted, concerned, sympathetic, empathetic, helpful, warmhearted, friendly, gracious, serving, giving, charitable, open, hospitable, cordial, thoughtful, considerate, sensitive, cooperative, and on and on. All of these things done, while knowing full well that there is *a line* across which we cannot allow ourselves to wander in our relationships with those as yet uncalled.

I know that meeting this is quite a plateful, but these are qualities that make God's way engaging and *an attractive witness*. God's involvement in our lives should give us the freedom and the security from our fears of being this way, and, when combined with the keeping of God's commandments, it will produce quite **a witness** and go a long way in addition toward keeping us clean—because we will be using God's Word as He intends.