

# Heart Purity

by Duncan Campbell

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*Duncan Campbell's sermon emphasizes the necessity and attainability of heart purity through divine cleansing and the work of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 24:3-5, Psalm 51:10, Ezekiel 36:25, Matthew 5:8, John 13:10, Romans 6:5-7, 1 Corinthians 2:14, 2 Corinthians 7:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, 1 Peter 2:24

**Topics:** "Heart Purity", "Cleansing Power of Christ"

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## Description

Duncan Campbell emphasizes the significance of heart purity in the Christian life, drawing from Revelation 4:1-5 to illustrate the importance of being 'clothed in white raiment' and wearing 'crowns of gold' as symbols of purity and power. He argues that heart purity is not merely an aspiration but an attainable experience through the cleansing power of Christ's blood, as supported by biblical testimonies and the teachings of figures like David and Charles Wesley. Campbell warns against the misconception that purity is synonymous with maturity, asserting that true holiness is a crisis experience of cleansing rather than a gradual process. He encourages believers to seek this purity actively, as it is essential for a life that honors God and reflects His righteousness. The sermon concludes with a call to continuous cleansing and a sensitive relationship with God to maintain this purity.

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## Transcript

"I looked... behold, a door was opened in heaven. ... and, behold a throne... and... I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment... and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God" (Revelation 4.1-5).

The language of the text is figurative, but the truth suggested comes into the practical experience of the Christian life. The words "clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold" are suggestive and speak of HEART PURITY. It is unfortunate that the term 'heart purity' in relation to Christian experience has largely ceased as a term expressive of a very blessed and gracious work of grace. This is surprising when we think of the place and emphasis it has in the Word of God and in the countless testimonies of men and women who honored God and gave Him full credit for the excellency of His work in redemption, in providing a Saviour who could save from sin.

We have sometimes erred in thinking that this is an experience we can only aspire to but never hope to reach until faith is lost in sight. It was the Lord Jesus Christ who said: "Blessed are the pure in heart" (Matt. 5.8). This surely is the experience that David prayed for, when conscious of his great need he cried:

"Create in me a clean heart" (Psa. 51.10). Charles Wesley, in one of his great hymns expresses the same longing:

"Oh for a heart to praise my God,  
A heart from sin set free,  
A heart that always feels the blood  
So freely shed for me."

If words mean anything, David and Wesley are referring to an experience that is actual and blessedly real. John in his vision sees "white raiment" and "crowns of gold"; "white" suggestive of purity and "crowns" speaking of power made possible through purity.

There is a certain school of thought that stresses suppression. Another finds the answer to the sin problem in counteraction. Personally, I much prefer the New Testament word 'cleansing'. Thank God, He has made provision by which we can become the possessors of a life of purity and power. There are, of course, those who tell us that no mere man since the Fall can attain to such a life. Charles Wesley has the answer to such:

"Saviour from sin, I wait to prove  
That Jesus is Thy healing name;  
To lose, when perfected in love,  
Whate'er I have, or can, or am:  
I stay me on Thy faithful word--  
The servant shall be as His Lord!  
"Answer that gracious end in me,  
For which Thy precious life was given;  
Redeem from all iniquity;  
Restore and make me meet for Heaven:  
Unless Thou purge my every stain,  
Thy suffering and my faith are vain.

There is a sense, of course, in which it is true that 'no mere man' can reach this standard of holiness. But this is not a question of a 'mere man'. It seems to me that this is where we see how easy it is for human reasoning to err in the sphere of Divine realities. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2.14.) So Paul, exhorting the Corinthian believers to purity of life, writes: "... let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7.1). So we ask: "Is it possible to relate truth to duty and revelation to experience?" If it is, then we can wear the

'white raiment' and the 'crown of gold'.

What was the secret of the pre-eminent piety of Paul and the primitive Christians? Was it not in the fact that they gave God full credit for the excellency of His work in redemption? Their faith saw the perfect humanity of Jesus and what His death made possible in redemption, and that vision created unrest and they cried for the 'white raiment' and the 'crown of gold'.

Here I would stress that purity of heart is not maturity of Christian experience. For instance, the acorn is perfect as an acorn, but the perfection of the acorn is not the perfection of the oak. There is a perfection in the rudimentary element and Nature sees nothing to censure, but there is room for growth. Brengle, in his book *The Way of Holiness*, referring to the subject "What is Holiness?" writes: "Holiness, then, for you and for me, is not maturity, but purity: a clean heart in which the Holy Spirit dwells, filling it with pure, tender, and constant love to God and man." He adds: "There is a plant in South America called the 'pitcher plant', on the stalk of which, below each leaf, is a little cup-like formation which is always full of water. When it is very small it is full; as it grows larger it is still full. All that God asks is that the heart should be cleansed from sin, full of love, whether it be the tender heart of a little child, with feeble powers of loving, or of the full-grown man." Now it seems to me that this illustrates Holiness.

But let it be understood, the blessing of a clean heart does not come by growth. It implies a crisis. Just as we obtain pardon by simple faith, so we must obtain purity. Thomas Cook, in his book *New Testament Holiness*, points out that "Sin is not a thing to be grown out of, but something to be cleansed away." This desire for heart purity is a creation of the Holy Spirit at work in the heart.

We speak of the crisis of conversion as a conviction of guilt, but the crisis of sanctification as a conviction of want. It speaks of a hunger. When gripped by this longing the hungry soul will live no longer under a self-created delusion about life, whether in its immediate or ultimate aspect. What the Scripture says must be the determining factor in what one believes. Passages such as Psalm 24 at once come to mind: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation"; or I John 1.9: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

The preacher who will proclaim this glorious truth and magnify the cleansing power of the blood of Christ will find that his message of full deliverance touches life at every point. He is doing a disservice to his hearers and is dishonoring his God if he substitutes any other theme.

No reader of Paul's letters can be in any doubt as to the strength of his emphasis upon the ethical interests of human life. He himself did "works of righteousness" (Titus 3.5), and he could say that "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Phil. 3.6). But his own experience under the law convinced him that without a good heart -- a clean heart -- he could never be the man God wanted him to be. However, there came an hour in his experience when he could write: "And 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. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it" (I Thess. 5.23-24). Surely we must believe that Paul is writing of an experience he himself knew, and in that experience he found the secret of holiness.

Here we have a prayer from the heart of one who longed for heart rest. He found it in the 'God of peace' who can 'sanctify wholly'. Incidentally, we have here a prayer for perfect and perpetual holiness, dictated

by the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Who can believe that the Holy Spirit would dictate a prayer that is not in accordance with the will of God?

Dr. Asa Mahan, in his book *Christian Perfection*, points out that in the words "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it," we have a positive declaration by God Himself regarding His willingness to sanctify wholly.

There is a very significant passage in 2 Kings 2:19 referring to the healing of the bitter waters: "The men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant... but the water is naught, and the ground barren." Labor as they would, the ground would not yield, so they go to the prophet and he at once suggests a cure. He asks for a cruse into which salt has been put. The prophet then proceeded to put the salt water into the springs and immediately the "waters were healed." The salt could not work any healing virtue on the stream until it came into contact with the fountain. Here the salt water represents the cleansing, healing power of God. This, surely, is our need. When sin exerts itself and we know its power and by its power we are held in bondage, surely our dire need is for God to deal with the cause, a sinful heart.

Peter, referring to the completeness of Christ's redemption, writes: "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Peter 2:24). To be 'dead to sin and 'alive unto righteousness' implies a state of heart in which the cleansing power of the blood is made real and the 'white raiment' of godliness is made visible. But let it be clearly understood that in sanctification, as in regeneration, God must speak the word: "I will, be thou clean." "The word on paper needs to be imparted into our consciousness and to effect this, the word must be spoken into us by the power of the Holy Spirit. No true soul will be satisfied with a dead, legal imputation of holiness. Nothing less than God Himself pouring His assurance into our spirit will answer our need." Nothing is clearer than the promises of God on this point. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you " (Ezek. 36:25). When all filthiness is removed, nothing remains. When all the idols are taken away, none are left. We speak of the sins of the flesh and sins of the spirit. Here is a power that can deal effectively with both. "... from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit" (2 Cor. 7:1) is how God puts it.

The Bible positively affirms that provision is made in the gospel for full deliverance. Surely it was to this end that Christ died and rose again. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, affirms this truth: "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin" (Rom. 6:5-7), If Christ should justify only, and not to the same extent sanctify His people, He would save them in and not from their sins.

Here I would sound a note of warning. Nowhere does the Word of God promise a once-for-all cleansing. We are to walk in the light if we are to know continuous cleansing. Let this be clearly understood and then we shall not fall into the error of trying to live today on the cleansing of yesterday. We must guard against any deliberate choice of things unclean and ever cultivate the attitude of entire surrender to the known will of God. If we are to be clothed in white garments and wear the crown of gold we must cultivate the most sensitive relationship with Him, whose habitation is light, and in whom is no darkness at all.

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