

Filth and Blood Purged by the Spirit Judgment and the Spirit of Burning

by J.C. Philpot

J.C. Philpot's sermon emphasizes the necessity of spiritual cleansing through the work of the Holy Spirit in addressing pride, guilt, and neglect within the church and individual believers.

Scripture: Exodus 13:21, Psalm 51:14, Psalm 119:105, John 17:17, 2 Corinthians 7:11, Hebrews 12:15, 2 Peter 1:19

Topics: "Spiritual Cleansing", "Gods Presence"

Description

J.C. Philpot preaches about the cleansing work of the Lord in purging the filth of the daughters of Zion and the blood of Jerusalem through the spirit of judgment and burning. He emphasizes the need for individuals and churches to repent, confess, and forsake sin to experience God's presence and glory. The sermon delves into the spiritual significance of the cloud and smoke by day, representing God's presence and the soul's aspirations, and the shining of a flaming fire by night, symbolizing clearer manifestations in dark seasons. Philpot highlights how God's presence serves as a defense against error, evil, temptations, and enemies, safeguarding His people and preserving them blameless.

Transcript

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"When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning. And the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night- for upon all the glory shall be a defense." Isaiah 4:4, 5

First, direct your attention to the washing away of the filth of the daughters of Zion; and to the purging of the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.

Secondly, what will be the effect and result of that work of the Lord, both individually and collectively that he will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night.

Thirdly, how the Lord will guard and defend his own gracious work, so that "upon all the glory shall be a defense."

I. The washing away of the filth of the daughters of Zion; and to the purging of the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.

A. Whom, then, are we to understand by "the daughters of Zion?" Spiritually viewed, we may understand by the expression, first, godly women; at least, all who profess to have come to that Mount Zion, the city of the living God, of which the literal Zion was a type and figure, by which act of faith they become, at least in profession, citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem and daughters of the spiritual Zion. The reason why the Lord speaks so specifically of "the daughters of Zion" in our text, seems to be because in the preceding chapter he had so sharply reproofed and also given a long and graphic description of the pride, luxury, love of dress and admiration which characterized those daughters; for having denounced their haughtiness, wantonness, and mincing gestures, the prophet goes on to describe their specific articles of dress, such as their "changeable suits of apparel," their "mantles, and wimples, and crisping pins, their glasses and fine linen, their hoods and veils." Is it not remarkable that the Lord the Spirit should have given us such a catalogue of the wardrobe of these Hebrew women, such a specific description of the dress and personal ornaments of the daughters of Zion of old? Had the Spirit no mind or meaning in this minute and graphic description beyond rebuking the then daughters of Zion, and warning them of that awful change which would come upon them thus denounced? "Instead of smelling of sweet perfume, there will be a stench. They will wear ropes for sashes, and their well-set hair will fall out. They will wear rough sackcloth instead of rich robes. Their beauty will be gone. Only shame will be left to them." (Isa. 3:24.)

Does it not show what notice the Lord takes of the daughters of Zion, even as regards their outward apparel? For bear in mind, that though we have no reason to believe that "the daughters of Zion," thus rebuked and forewarned by the prophet, were themselves personally partakers of faith and holiness, yet they stand in the word of God as typical representatives of women professing godliness; for as daughters of the literal Zion, they figuratively represent to each successive age the daughters of the spiritual Zion. If it be not so, the word of God does not speak to us now, and is become a dead letter as to any present or personal reproof, admonition, or instruction.

But let us take heed lest if we make the rebukes and reproofs of God in the prophetic word of old a dead letter now, we do not make the promises in the same prophetic word a dead letter also now. I would, then, have all women who profess godliness to bear in mind that the Lord takes special notice of their apparel, yes even of their "well-set hair," now so conspicuous in the fashion of the day, when woman's most becoming and modest natural covering (I Cor. 11:15) is made so much the occasion of open-faced display, vanity, and pride. Referring, then, to what he had thus spoken of the daughters of Zion in describing their apparel and the change that would come upon them, when, either from famine in the siege of Jerusalem, or from their fair locks being shorn off as captive slaves, "instead of well-set hair there would be baldness," and the scarcity of men, as being cut off by war, should be so great that, over-stepping the modesty of their sex, seven women should contend for the possession of one man, even if they provided their own food and clothing- having thus described, I say, both the pride and the downfall of the daughters of Zion, the Lord declares in our text that a day will come when he will wash away the filth of these daughters.

Now, assume for a moment that the Lord will one day in the literal Zion wash away the filth of its daughters, must not, according to this view, an interval of hundreds, if not of two or three thousand years,

separate the two chapters? This however need be no objection, as many similar instances occur in the prophetic page. But assume again that these daughters of Zion are typical representatives of women professing godliness in all ages- then both chapters alike speak to them, the one to reprove and rebuke all inconsistencies in dress and demeanor, and the other to declare how the Lord will wash away and purge their filth contracted thereby. For this filth is inward filth. There is no reference to anything seen by the eye of man either as regards the person or the dress. The literal daughters of Zion were not defective in outward cleanliness. Their "changeable suits of apparel" were ever fresh and new, and their "fine linen" was doubtless as clean as it was fine. But the Lord looked at their hearts, and the motives of their gaudy attire. There he saw pride, luxury, love of dress and admiration- woman's chief besetting sins; and all this was in his eyes so much filth. Is it not so sometimes in yours? Perhaps you come out some Sunday morning in a new dress of which you feel vain and proud. But as you step along, admiring yourself and your new dress, you see on the other side of the way one of those degraded beings of your own sex that infest our streets, flaunting along in her new finery, proud and defiant, and you view her and her finery with disgust and contempt. Why? Because under all this finery you see the filth of her filthy profession; and the finer she is, the filthier she is. Thus you see that even in your eyes finery may be filth. And how do you differ from her except in outward conduct? Do you not see then, how, in God's pure and holy eyes, all your finery may be filth?

But as I do not wish to be too hard upon the women, I may say, that we of the other sex have our hidden filth to as great or worse degree than they. In us there are many secret and powerful lusts, much hypocrisy, self-righteousness, pride, and various other sinful and sensual abominations, of which every heart is conscious into which the true light has shined, and by which they are made manifest and reproved, according to those words of the apostle- "But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light- for whatever does make manifest is light." (Eph. 5:13.)

B. But we read also in our text of "the blood of Jerusalem," which is to be purged as well as the filth of the daughters of Zion, which is to be washed away. I shall consider this point presently; but viewing Jerusalem in a spiritual sense as the heavenly Jerusalem, which is above, and the mother of us all, we may interpret these daughters of Zion as indicating gospel churches, which are, as it were, the spiritual offspring of our heavenly mother. Now gospel churches often contract filth from sheer neglect, and for lack of what I may call a thorough good washing and cleansing. We find from the book of Chronicles, that during the reign of king Ahaz, the house of the Lord was shut up; and as that reign lasted sixteen years, so long probably was the sanctuary closed. Now the sanctuary being deserted and neglected, and its doors closed during that long period of time, it necessarily contracted a great deal of filth. If you were to shut up a house for sixteen years, or even one room in it, and were to go back at the end of the sixteen years, you would find that house or room, full of dust, dirt, and filth. If we leave our bodies unwashed, they contract filth, leave our streets uncleansed, they contract filth.

The first work, therefore, of Hezekiah, when he succeeded to the throne of Ahaz his father, was to open and repair the doors of the temple, and the next to cleanse the filth. "In the very first month of the first year of his reign, Hezekiah reopened the doors of the Temple of the Lord and repaired them. He summoned the priests and Levites to meet him at the courtyard east of the Temple. He said to them, 'Listen to me, you Levites! Purify yourselves, and purify the Temple of the Lord, the God of your ancestors. Remove all the filthiness out of the holy place.' " (2 Chron. 29:3-5.) This command was faithfully obeyed- "And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the Lord, to cleanse it, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the Lord into the court of the house of the Lord. And the Levites took it, to

carry it out abroad into the brook Kidron." (2 Chron. 29:16.)

Now as it was with the temple of old when neglected, so it is with the soul individually, and so with the churches, the daughters of Zion collectively. Neglect produces filth. As the house or room neglected gathers filth, so the soul uncleansed, unpurged, gathers filth; so a church, as a daughter of Zion, neglected, uncleansed, gathers filth. The apostle, therefore, gives a solemn warning to the churches on this head- "See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son." (Heb. 12:15, 16.)

But apart from these more glaring cases, there may be in a church a party spirit; there may be secret jealousies, surmises, and heart-burnings; there may be unkind thoughts, or unkind words, and various divisions- all which in the sight of God is so much filth. The apostle feared he might find this state of strife and division at Corinth, when he would come again to see them. "For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as you would not; lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults." (2 Cor. 12:20.)

We read of "filthiness of the spirit" as well as "of the flesh," the one being of the mind, and the other of the body; and we have to be cleansed from both, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (2 Cor. 7:1.) Now just as a cleanly person views filth with detestation, and is never satisfied except that filth is removed, whether from his person or from his house; so in a spiritual sense all sin in the sight of God is filth; and as the cleanly person cannot bear the presence of filth, either on his person, his furniture, or his house; so a holy God cannot bear to see filth springing from neglect in the souls of his people individually, or the filth that gathers in churches from not being properly cleansed away and purged.

C. But our text speaks also of the "blood of Jerusalem," which has to be purged away, as well as the filth of the daughters of Zion to be washed out. The "blood of Jerusalem" seems to indicate guilt of conscience. "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness," cried David, "O God of my salvation." (Psalm. 51:14.) Jerusalem was stained with the blood of the prophets, and especially with the blood of our gracious Lord, who there suffered, dying in the city which God had selected for his own special habitation. We know from what we sometimes read or hear, that the guilt of having shed man's blood, has lain with such weight on the conscience as to compel murderers, under its agonizing pressure, to come and surrender themselves into the hands of justice.

But it is not necessary to have shed man's blood to bring the conscience under a sense of blood-guiltiness. There are murderous thoughts and killing words as well as murderous actions; a slaying of men's characters without touching their persons; a dealing harshly and cruelly in thought, if not in action, with those who offend us, all which things produce great guilt, what we may call "blood-guiltiness," when laid upon the conscience.

Having thus given you a general idea of what seems to be indicated by the filth of the daughters of Zion and the blood of Jerusalem, I shall now go on to show how it is washed away and purged; and I shall show first, how it is "purged."

D. It is PURGED "by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning." The word "purged" meant in our language, when the Bible was translated, more than 200 years ago, to purify or cleanse. The word is not used in that sense now, and we have, therefore, lost somewhat of its peculiar meaning according to the mind of our excellent translators. Thus, when we read what our Lord says of the vine, that the Father

"purges it," he means that he cleanses it, as we read in the next verse, "Now you are clean," that is already cleansed, "through the word which I have spoken unto you." But it is also a remarkable circumstance that the word in the original translated "purged" in our text, occurs only three or four times in the Hebrew, and, except in one place, is always applied to the washing or cleansing of the burnt offering. It occurs, for instance, in the description of the lavers which Solomon built in the Temple- "He made also ten lavers, and put five on the right hand, and five on the left, to wash in them such things as they offered for the burnt offerings they washed in them; but the sea was for the priests to wash in." (2 Chron. 4:6.) In this passage the word "washed," as used of the offering, is different from that which is used to signify the washing of the persons of the priests. There is something significant in this as showing that the washing and the purging have a connection with sacrifice and the burnt offering. We may gather, also, from it that there must be a washing and a purging before the burnt offering can be accepted.

But let me now apply this in a spiritual and experimental sense. When God is pleased to begin a work of grace upon a sinner's soul, he sets up a throne of judgment in the conscience. This is "laying judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet," (Isa. 28:17.) This is the light of God enlightening the mind, and the voice of God whereby he speaks to the soul through the power of his word, which thus becomes "a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Now, no sooner does the light of life visit the soul, and the word of truth brings conviction to the heart, than there comes with it the spirit of judgment; for the Holy Spirit is now at work in the heart and conscience and, as the Spirit of judgment, he sits in judgment upon everything that comes before him, so as to pass a sentence of condemnation, as God's viceregent, upon every sin that is thus detected and brought to light.

Now this spirit of judgment is very unmerciful in its detection of all evil, very implacable in its judgment upon it, for, being armed with the sentence of a fiery law, as I shall presently show, it spares no sin, brings all its hidden filth and guilt to light, and passes sentence of condemnation upon it. But this spirit of judgment does not cleanse the conscience from the guilt of the sins and transgressions which it brings to light, discovers, and judges. I shall presently show how that is done. But it purges the filth by passing a sentence of condemnation upon it. Take the figure of a cleanly person changing his abode and coming to dwell in a dirty, filthy house. The former inhabitant was so used to its filthy condition that he did not even see it, much less hate it or make any attempt to get rid of it. But the newcomer sees in a moment the filth of the house, and the spirit of cleanliness in him, if I may use such an expression, at once condemns it and cannot rest until it is got rid of.

Similarly, the spirit of judgment, set up in the heart of one quickened into divine life, sees and detects the horrid filth that has been accumulated by innumerable sins and crimes, and passes at once a sentence of condemnation upon them all. It is in grace as in my figure, or as in the case of the leprous house. The priest went in to see the house. He was bidden to come and look, and by that searching look "he finds bright green or reddish streaks on the walls of the house and the contamination appears to go deeper than the wall's surface," was detected and judged before the house could be scraped and cleansed. So the spirit of judgment detects and condemns filth, and in this sense purges it before it is washed away.

But this spirit of judgment is attended with and followed by "the spirit of burning." This spirit of burning is the anger of God manifested in a holy law, for in that, as a revelation of his holiness, "God is a consuming fire;" and it is therefore said that "from his right hand went a fiery law for them." As, then, the spirit of judgment sitting upon the seat of conscience, arraigns before it all our secret sins, and passes sentence of condemnation upon them, the fiery law, as a spirit of burning, follows upon it, so as to burn up all our strength, wisdom, and righteousness. Thus, what the spirit of judgment condemns, the spirit of burning

sets on fire, and in that sense consumes the filth, for it is not able to stand before its devouring flame.

But "the spirit of judgment" is not confined to the work of the law upon the conscience, nor to the way in which God acts in bringing his people in guilty before him in his first dealings upon the soul. There is "the spirit of judgment" in the gospel in a spiritual conscience as there is the spirit of judgment in the law in a legal conscience. And as there is "the spirit of burning" that follows up the spirit of judgment in a fiery law, so there is the spirit of burning in a holy indignation kindled by the fire of the gospel. Be not surprised at this, for wherever the Spirit of truth in a living conscience, as a spirit of judgment, meets with and detects sin, he condemns it and flames forth against it. We have seen how it does so under the law; now see how it does so under the gospel. When the apostle speaks of the effect of godly sorrow, he says- "See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter." (2 Cor. 7:11.) This earnestness, eagerness, indignation, alarm, longing, and concern, were all produced by the flaming forth of the spirit of judgment under the gospel as attending godly sorrow for sin.

Now, if you watch the movements of the blessed Spirit upon your heart, which I hope you do- for if he is not operating upon your mind with some degree of divine power, you are gathering filth; all kind of dirt is lying undetected in your carnal mind- but if you are watching the movements of the Spirit of God upon your soul as the spirit of judgment, you will see that he brings to light and passes sentence of disapprobation and condemnation on everything which is manifested to you as sinful. Your pride, your hypocrisy, your self-righteousness, your vanity, your conceit, your self-esteem, your love of the world and the spirit of it, with every evil which is detected and brought to light the spirit of judgment sits upon it and passes in your conscience a sentence of condemnation upon it. And if the sins which you thus see and feel are brought to light, and are condemned by the Spirit of truth in you as a Spirit of judgment, it will be followed up by the spirit of burning, so that you will feel a holy indignation against yourself on account of your sins. This is that indignation, that zeal, that revenge, of which I have just spoken; and mingled with them, will be that "jealousy" of which we read that "the coals thereof are coals of fire which has a most vehement flame." (Song 8:6.) This flame of holy jealousy kindled as a fire from off God's altar, as a spirit of burning, will at times rise so high that you will feel as if you would gladly have all your sins and corruptions wholly reduced to ashes, and the power and strength of sin so burnt up and destroyed, as if by a holy flame, as never to revive again.

E. But now let me show how this applies, not only to the daughters of Zion viewed individually, but to them also as viewed collectively. You will recollect that I spoke of the filth of the daughters of Zion as applicable to churches, and that this filth consisted, not only in inconsistent conduct and matters which bring outward reproach both upon the individual and the cause of truth, but also in party-spirit, jealousies, surmises, suspicions, divisions, discords, and various other things whereby churches become inwardly filthy before God. Now this filth has to be purged, as our Lord spoke of the branches of the vine. Usually speaking, it is by his servants that the great Husbandman purges the fruitful branches; for I have already shown you that it is by his word the purging and cleansing are effected, of which word his servants are the ministers. To them, therefore, is given "the spirit of judgment," according to those words- "In that day the Lord Almighty will himself be Israel's crowning glory. He will be the pride and joy of the remnant of his people. He will give a longing for justice to their judges. He will give great courage to their warriors who stand at the gates." (Isa. 28:5, 6.)

Observe the connection of those words with our text. "In that day the Lord Almighty will himself be Israel's crowning glory. He will be the pride and joy of the remnant of his people." Is that not almost the same as "In that day shall the Branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious for them that are escaped of Israel?" But it is in that same day that he is to be "a Spirit of judgment to him that sits in judgment." It is the Lord's servant who sits in judgment with the word of God in his heart and mouth, whereby he tries both the conduct and the spirit of the church of which the Holy Spirit has made him the overseer. And thus instrumentally, as the Lord gives him a spirit of judgment, and speaks in and by him, he purges the filth of the church by the power of the word in his mouth.

The voice of the true servant of God will always meet with an echo in the heart of God's people. They listen to his word as the word of God, for he is mouth for God to them as his minister and messenger. "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth- for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." (Mal. 2:7.) He is therefore endowed, among other things, with a spirit of judgment, that he may purge the churches from their filth; for as he will not flatter nor fawn, so he will not speak either rashly or harshly, but with judgment and wisdom. Now, as the word of admonition, instruction, or reproof comes with power from his mouth into their heart, the spirit of judgment accompanies the word, and carries on this purging work in the real children of God- for these are the branches that bear fruit, and they only are purged, for the unfruitful branches are not purged but taken away. "Every branch in me that bears no fruit, he takes away- and every branch that bears fruit, he purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now you are clean through the word." Thus, by the word of the Lord, the soul is cleansed; for with the word of the Lord goes forth the spirit of judgment. But with that spirit of judgment, and following close upon it, is the spirit of burning in a holy indignation and fiery zeal against that filth which is thus discovered.

Now if an individual, through slothful neglect, or if a church stores up all this filth, harbors all this sin, shuts up rooms to rot and fester with all the dirt and filth accumulated in them undisturbed, there is no manifested presence of God. The Branch of the Lord is not beautiful and glorious, the fruit of the earth is not excellent and lovely, nor does the Lord create upon such a dwelling-place in Mount Zion the cloud and smoke by day, or the shining of a flaming fire by night. Take the case which I read this morning of the sanctuary which had been left to its filth for sixteen years. The first thing to be done before the Lord came back to that sanctuary, before any sacrifice was offered, before any part of the temple worship could be performed, was to purge the filth. The Levites and the priests set to work, and they purged it and carried it to the brook Kidron- sweet figure how our guilt and filth are washed away by the blood of the Lamb. But if individuals harbor filth, and if churches, instead of judging themselves and having a holy indignation and zeal against everything contrary to God and godliness, nurture and indulge a spirit of strife and division, as this filth is not purged, so it is not washed away.

F. But this leads me to "the washing away of the filth of the daughters of Zion." I quoted just now a passage from the Chronicles in which a distinction was made between washing the body of the priests and the washing of such things as they offered for the burnt offering; and I remarked that there was a difference in the original between the two words rendered "wash." We have a similar difference in our text, in which two similar things are spoken of, that is, washing and purging. If you will turn to Lev. 1 you will see that the priest was directed to wash the inner parts and the legs of the burnt offering with water. (Lev. 1:9.) Now, this was typical of the washing of regeneration, which washes, by its sanctifying influence, those inward parts in which God desires truth, and the life, conduct, and conversation represented by washing the legs.

But there is a washing distinct from this washing of water by the word, that is, that washing of which the church sings in that glorious anthem- "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood." (Rev. 1:5.) This is, also, the washing of which the Apostle speaks- "And such were some of you- but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. 6:11.) You may observe there how the Apostle brings together the washing and the purging. "You are washed," that is, in atoning Blood; "you are sanctified," that is, by the Spirit of judgment and the Spirit of burning; "you are justified," that is, by the glorious righteousness of the Son of God.

II. But I must now pass on to my second point, which was to show the EFFECT and RESULT of this washing away of the filth, and this purging of the blood, by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning.

"And the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night."

Here the Lord speaks of what he will do when he has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning.

A. The first thing that the Lord will do, will be to create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion a cloud and smoke by day. This cloud represents the presence of God in the midst of his people. It was first given when the Lord took his people out of Egypt- "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night- he took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before his people." (Exodus 13:21, 22.) When the tabernacle was set up in the wilderness, this cloudy pillar descended and rested upon it, and according as it moved so did the children of Israel, as we read- "Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." (Exodus 40:34.) And again, "For the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys." (Exodus 40:38.)

So when Solomon dedicated the house of the Lord which he had built, this same cloudy pillar entered into and filled the house; for at the voice of song and praise the house was filled with the cloud- "So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud- for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God." (2 Chron. 5:14.) From these testimonies we gather that the cloud of old represented two things, which ever go together- the glory and presence of the Lord. There is a peculiar significancy in this cloud, as representing to us that 'God can only be seen as in a cloud'. No man can see him and live. His uncreated glory, the eyes of flesh could not bear to look upon. In this he resembles that glorious orb of day which he himself has set in the sky. The eye of man cannot bear to look upon the sun in the full blaze of its meridian splendor; but we can look upon it as veiled by a cloud.

The cloud also represents, as it did in the tabernacle of old, the presence of God, and that he dwells in the heart of the contrite as of old he dwelt between the Cherubim.

B. But now let us see the connection between this cloud and the washing away of the filth of the daughters of Zion, and the purging of the blood of Jerusalem by the spirit of judgment, and the spirit of burning. While the spirit of judgment is going on in a way of condemnation under a holy law, the presence of the Lord is not known or felt, for there is little else made manifest but guilt and filth. But when this work is done; when the filth is seen, acknowledged, repented of, mourned over, and confessed; and the filth is brought out and cast into the brook Kidron, then the cloud comes of the sensible presence of God upon the soul in the

manifestations of his mercy and love.

So it is also with the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, which I have spoken of as made known in the gospel. If we backslide, get entangled in the spirit and love of the world, fall into any evil, or in any way bring guilt upon our conscience, until sin is repented of, confessed, and forsaken, there is no sensible presence of the Lord. It is so in individuals, it is so in churches. In individuals, if there be indulged sin, filth accumulating, not seen, not confessed, not bewailed, not burnt up, not put away, there is no cloud of glory resting upon the soul. And so in churches. If filth is allowed to accumulate from lack of faithfulness in the minister to take forth the precious from the vile, and from his not being instant in season and out of season, rebuking, reproving, exhorting, with all long suffering and doctrine, and unless it is purged away by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, as following the words of his mouth, there will be no sensible approbation of God found in the ministry of the word, no visible manifestation of his presence in Zion's assemblies, or any marked blessings upon the word preached in his name. But when the spirit of judgment has gone before to condemn, and the spirit of burning has followed upon it, with a holy zeal and indignation against all filth, to consume it; then the Lord comes in a cloud to manifest his presence and give tokens and evidences of his sensible approbation.

It is hard work to have the filth burnt, and often takes a long time to effect, and that, perhaps, amid much opposition and rebellion against such humbling dealings. But we shall be made, sooner or later, to pine after the Lord's sensible presence both in our own soul and in our assemblies, and then we shall feel, that before we can realize it, privately or publicly, there must be a solemn repenting and honest confession of sin; and that we must fall down before God as poor guilty sinners, condemned in our own conscience by the spirit of judgment. We stand as long as we can upon our own legs; we rest as long as we can upon something in self. But all this self-dependence and self-righteousness, sooner or later, must come down, must give way, though it may take years to do it, with trial upon trial, affliction after affliction, and temptation after temptation. This, indeed, is the chief reason why the Lord acts so much as a Spirit of judgment and a Spirit of burning, that he may leave nothing in the soul to which we can look, and bring us to fall flat before him in the dust of self-abasement, having no hope but in him. But when he has purged away the filth of pride, self-righteousness, and creature strength, with all other evils, by this spirit of judgment and spirit of burning, and there is nothing left in the soul but the ashes of self, burnt by the fire of indignation, and we can fall flat before God, putting our mouth in the dust; then he will come, gently and sweetly come over all the hills and mountains of our sin and shame, and manifest his sensible presence to our souls. This is the cloud and smoke by day which he creates upon every dwelling-place upon Mount Zion.

And it will be in churches as in individuals. As long as a party-spirit is indulged; as long as divisions, jealousies, and surmises prevail unpurged by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, there will be no sensible presence of God in the midst of Zion's assemblies. For you will observe there is a two-fold promise, one as regards individuals, and the other as regards churches. The cloud resting by day upon "every dwelling-place upon Mount Zion," represents the presence and glory of God resting upon individuals; and the cloud resting upon her "assemblies," represents the presence and blessing of God upon the churches, as assembling themselves together in his name.

C. But observe this point, that where there is the cloud, there will be the smoke; for as the cloud represents the presence of God, so the smoke represents the aspirations, prayers, desires, sighs, cries, and petitions of the soul in which the Spirit of God dwells. And this, you will observe, is promised to be the case upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion. Thus, wherever there is a believing soul, in that dwelling

place of God in Zion, there will be both a cloud and a smoke; there will be the sensible presence of God in it, and there will be the aspirations which rise up before the Lord as so much incense perfumed by the incense of our great Mediator.

Now this is what I call a private religion, carried on between God and the soul, manifested by the presence of God in the cloud, and manifested also by the smoke that rises up out of a broken, contrite, and believing heart, that ascends into the nostrils of the Lord almighty. O what a mercy it would be for this town if in every dwelling-place there were a cloud and smoke by day. But this we cannot expect. It will be so, however, in every dwelling-place where there is a living soul.

If you are the master of a family and know anything spiritually of the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, there will be in your dwelling-place a cloud and a smoke by day, for you will have at times the Lord's presence in the cloud, and the smoke of your desires, petitions, and aspirations will be going up before the Lord continually. If you are not the master or the mistress of a family, but a son, or a daughter, or a servant, there is still your bedroom, or your secret place of retirement, in which you may have a private religion carried on between God and your soul. And in that secret retirement, as you find, from time to time, an inward spirit of judgment condemn you for what is guilty, and a holy spirit of zeal against all sin, there will, from time to time, come over you something of the presence of the Lord in the cloud; and as this comes, there will rise up with it the smoke of desires, petitions, sighs, and cries to the God of all your mercies. Thus you will have in your own bosom and in your own room, your little bedroom to which you resort to get away from all intrusion- you will have that private religion which consists in the dealings of God with your soul, and the going up of your heart toward the Lord in secret acts of adoration, prayer, and thanksgiving.

And not only so- the same gracious promise is given to Zion's "assemblies," where the sons and daughters of Zion meet together, as now in this place, to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth, to hear his word, and to sing his praise. There, if there be in the ministry the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, the detection of the filth, the judging of it and the burning of it up, there will be, from time to time, the manifested presence of God as a cloud in the midst. And there will be also the smoke, as well as the cloud, in the prayers that will go up both from the minister and people, in the earnest petitions of the godly men who are called upon to pray in public, and from you too, who, on account of your sex or other reasons, are not called upon to pray publicly. As you sit in your seat, there will be the going up of inward desires to the Lord to come down in blessing upon your soul and the soul of the minister and people; there will be the inward confession, the inward supplication, the inward desire rising up, which the Lord alone can see and hear. And thus there will be the cloud and the smoke in the assemblies of Zion, as well as the cloud and the smoke in your private room, where, as favored by the Lord's presence, or strengthened and helped by the blessed Spirit as a Spirit of grace and supplications, your heart mounts upward in prayer and praise.

D. But there is also a gracious promise of the shining of a flaming fire by night. There is an allusion here to the cloudy pillar which rested upon the tabernacle. It was as a cloud by day, but as a pillar of fire by night. The reason of this is evident. By day, the cloud and the smoke were sufficiently visible; but not so in the night season. In the night, therefore, it was a pillar of fire, that the presence of the Lord might be distinctly seen. Spiritually viewed, this night may signify dark seasons in the soul; for there is night as well as day in the experience of God's saints. Now when they are in these dark seasons, they need clearer and brighter manifestations of the Lord's presence than when they are walking in the light of day. Thus this "shining of a flaming fire by night" may represent the shining in of the Lord's clearer, fuller, and more manifested

presence, the livelier and more powerful application of his word to the heart; the brighter evidences and clearer marks that he gives of his favor, which, compared with the cloud, are as the shining of a flaming fire. It is the same presence of God, and the same glory, as was the case with the cloudy pillar; but that presence and that glory are seen in a more conspicuous manner as giving light in seasons of darkness.

The shining of a flaming fire by night may also represent the shining light of the word of truth which is spoken of as "a light that shines in a dark place." (2 Pet. 1:19.) How often when the mind is dark, and evidences obscured, there is little else seen but the clear shining of the word of truth to which the soul turns its eyes as its only guiding light. "Your word," says David, "is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Psalm. 119:105.) We often get into spots where we have to look out of ourselves to the clear shining of truth in the word of God; for there is darkness everywhere else; and to that light we have to look and wait, and sometimes at a great distance and for a long season, until that word comes near and begins to shine into the heart. But with that shining light, as it draws near and gives forth its comforting rays and beams, comes in due time the presence and glory of God. So to fix our heart upon the word of promise, and wait for its fulfillment, is to walk by faith and not by sight. Thus to Abraham the word of promise was by day a cloud; but when "a horror of great darkness fell upon him," the same word of promise, as the word of a covenant God, was as a burning lamp that passed between the pieces of the offered sacrifices. (Gen. 15:17.)

III. But I must pass on to my third point, in which I said I would show how the Lord guards and defends his own gracious work- "Upon all the glory shall be a defense."

The glory of the Lord is his presence in the soul, for that we have seen is represented by the cloud, as it was when his glory filled the house of God, which Solomon built. Now this glory of the Lord in the cloud and smoke by day, and in the shining of a flaming fire by night, is to be a defense, both upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion and upon their assemblies. A defense against what? Chiefly against four things.

1. First, it is a defense against ERROR. No person can embrace error who knows anything of the presence and power of God in his soul, or has ever seen anything of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; for all error is opposed not only to God's truth, as revealed in the word, but to God's presence, as revealed in the heart. And this is true both as regards individuals and churches. God will never sanction error as held by either. He will never bless with his manifested presence any erroneous man, be he minister or private individual, for he never honors or blesses anything but his own truth, and those only who believe and hold it. "Those who honor me I will honor." This is a very important point, for you will often hear erroneous men speak as if they knew spiritual things by divine teaching and by divine testimony, and will often boast confidently of their comforts and enjoyments, as if they had got their views from God himself, though they turn the truth of God into a lie.

But be not deceived by these men or their false pretensions. They have only kindled a fire to compass themselves about with sparks, that they may walk in the light of their fire, and in the sparks which they have kindled. The spirit of truth guides into all truth, and cannot and will not countenance or bless error. The Lord's own prayer to his heavenly Father for his disciples was- "Sanctify them through your truth- your word is truth." (John 17:17.) The soul never was divinely sanctified by a lie, nor the heart truly comforted by error.

2. But this glory will also be a defense against all EVIL; for nothing makes sin so to be seen and abhorred as sin as the presence of the Lord. He is known and felt at such moments to be infinitely pure and holy, and a holy God must needs hate sin. If, then, his presence be felt in the soul as a cloud in which he manifests his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, it will be a defense against all the sins in which you might be entangled, when there is no such sensible presence to make you revere and adore his great and glorious Majesty.

3. It is, therefore, also a defense against all TEMPTATIONS, which would lead us into anything contrary to God and godliness. It is when the soul contracts and accumulates, through neglect, the filth of which I spoke in the beginning of my discourse, and when there is no spirit of judgment in lively exercise to detect and condemn it, or spirit of burning to consume it; or when there is no cloud of God's presence resting on the soul, and little or no smoke going up of prayer or praise, that temptation gets the better of us. Temptation comes in, almost without resistance, when we are at ease in Zion, or living carelessly and negligently, given up for a time to slothfulness and self-indulgence, and backsliding in heart from the living God. It is in these seasons that temptation gains strength; and every indulgence of the sin to which we are tempted adds to its power, until, but for the grace of God breaking the snare, giving us repentance, and restoring our soul, we might be swallowed up altogether in open evil, and disgrace both ourselves and the cause of God and truth.

4. It will be also a defense against all ENEMIES. You may have many enemies, both without and within; but all their attempts to injure you will be unsuccessful if you have the cloud of the Lord's presence in your soul, and his glory in your midst. No enemy can hurt you if the Lord is your defense. They may bring you into bondage and often cause great trouble of mind; but none can effectually hurt you, because the glory of the Lord in the cloud will be your defense against every tongue that may rise against you in judgment, and will bring you off more than conqueror through him who loved you. The Lord will take care of his own work upon the heart. He will not allow his people to be tempted more than they are able to bear, nor allow their adversaries to triumph in their downfall. He will watch very jealously over what he himself has communicated by his Spirit and grace to your heart, and his presence will be your best defense against every foe and against every fear.

Now do you do you think see in the light of life the connection of these things as brought before you this morning? and have you any personal experience of there? Do you see how by nature we harbor filth? Have you ever experimentally known how this filth is purged by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit burning? Have you any reason to hope or believe there has been a washing away of it in the blood of the Lamb, so as not only to purge you from its dominion and power by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, but to wash it away from the sight of God, and by a sweet testimony of his mercy and love, to have your conscience also cleansed from its guilt and filth? Have you a testimony in your own soul that all this work is more or less needful before there is any sweet enjoyment of the presence of the Lord in the cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of the flaming fire by night?

In all the Lord's work upon the soul, there is a certain connection of link with link in the spiritual chain. As, then, we are enabled by his Spirit and grace to trace out these marks of his secret teaching upon the soul in its various links, it strengthens our faith, confirms a good hope, and gives us to see more plainly and clearly our spiritual standing. But unless we can trace out in some measure the dealings of God with our soul in this way, we have little evidence to give, either to ourselves or others of being among the manifested people of God.

And see the consequence of not knowing or experiencing these things. Filth indulged within, will soon show itself in filth indulged without. If there is no daily purging by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, there will be a breaking forth of the leprosy- it may be in the face! And if sin is not continually judged, condemned, confessed, mourned over, and forsaken, it will break out in some open word or action, and perhaps disgrace the cause with which we are connected.

To prevent, therefore, his people from harboring all this secret filth, and getting entangled in the spirit of the world, and being guilty of things that might sadly wound conscience and disgrace the cause of God and truth, he sends mercifully into their heart the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning; he gives the cloud of his presence; he draws up the smoke of their desires and affections; and upon all this glory he gives a defense, so as to preserve them unto the end harmless and blameless in his dear Son, and eventually to present them before the throne of his glory having no spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jc-philpot/filth-and-blood-purged-by-the-spirit-judgment-and-the-spirit-of-burning/>

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