

A Clean Church

by Seth Rees

Seth Rees emphasizes the necessity of spiritual purification through the Holy Ghost to achieve holiness within the church.

Scripture: Psalm 51:10, Proverbs 4:23, Malachi 3:2, Matthew 3:11, Matthew 5:8, Acts 15:9, 1 Corinthians 3:13, James 4:8, 1 Peter 1:22

Topics: "Holy Sanctification", "Pentecostal Fire"

Description

Seth Rees preaches on the purification of hearts by faith, emphasizing that holiness is a state achieved through the experience of entire sanctification by the Holy Ghost. This sanctifying process is symbolized by the baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire, cleansing the heart intrinsically. The Pentecostal fire is necessary to purify the soul from all impurities, doubts, and unbelief, bringing a bracing and invigorating spiritual atmosphere.

Transcript

"Purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts xv. 9). Holiness is a state; entire sanctification is an experience; the Holy Ghost is a person. We come into the state of holiness through the experience of entire sanctification, wrought by the omnipotent energies of the Holy Ghost. This is the "baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire" administered by Christ himself, as John the Baptist declares. He did not mean that there were two baptisms, one with the Spirit and another with fire, but one "baptism with the Holy Ghost " under the symbol of fire.

There are some things which the application of water will not cleanse. Water may cleanse the loose dirt on the outside, but fire alone can make inwardly, intrinsically clean. Metal ore is not refined by mere washing -- it must undergo the crushing and smelting processes. Again and again the base ore is subjected to the fiery ordeal, until every iota of the useless grit and undesirables and is destroyed and the metal is left free from alloy. So the water of regeneration will free the soul from external sin-commission, but the sanctifying process of the Spirit is requisite if the heart is to be holy and sinless.

Poisonous air may be driven from old wells and mine-shafts with fire. The deadly gases must yield before the flame. And the fire of the Spirit will rout all miasma and malaria from both pulpit and pew.

Nothing is more refreshing on a hot, sultry July afternoon than a thunderstorm. A few vivid flashes, a half-dozen dashes of blinding flame, and lo, the atmosphere has become bracing and invigorating. Of all

urgent needs, none is more truly evident than that the church ought to be struck with double-gear lightning from the upper skies. The jagged bolts should be allowed to play on both preacher and people. This celestial electricity would sweeten the spiritual atmosphere in our churches and in our own souls. It would burn away all the fog of uncertainty and unbelief and doubt, and give us convictions born of assurance.

Proud flesh requires the fire. Nothing rivals it in the dispatch and effectiveness with which it does its work. A Boston physician told me that, with all the modern discoveries of science, there had been nothing found that would do but fire. In the moral world there is nothing obtainable that will cure proud flesh in our natures and in our churches except Pentecostal fire. This alone will kill the "brag," the pomp, the gusto, the ungodly strut so evident in so many professors of religion today. Let us take down our lightning rods, all our preventatives, and fire, celestial fire, will leap over the battlements of heaven and fall upon us, slaying all our pride, destroying all our tin, dross, and reprobate silver, and giving us a joyous release from all chaff and from all that is lightweight.

Those who have received their Pentecost live pure, holy lives. They never practice unclean habits, whether secret or known. They do not have unclean thoughts, unchaste desires, or unholy passions. They do not use wine, beer, tobacco, snuff or opium. True, a man may have his name on a church-book and yet indulge in these things of which we speak; but he might just as well have it on a board fence, for it does not make him a member of the Pentecostal company. He may "belong to the meeting-house," but he is not one of this blessed fire-crowned throng. Men who are in unholy connection with this Godless world in lodges, fraternities and Christless institutions, or who will stoop to the commercial trickeries of this age, or who will lend their influence to abet a questionable business, have not been through the furnace of the upper room. Pentecostal Christians have "clean hands and pure hearts." "Hands" in the Bible refers to the outward, manifest, visible life. It refers to what man sees. The word has regard to conduct. The life must be clean. A man can not be in close contact with the world without being contaminated. Lot well nigh became a Sodomite by dwelling in Sodom and among Sodom's inhabitants; and intimate relationship with men of unrighteous lives always means demoralization for the Christian. "Clean hands" hold no bribes, they never deal unjustly, they do not give thirty-five inches for a yard nor fifteen ounces for a pound, they do not pay debts at forty cents on the dollar when they could do more.

The behavior of the tongue is included in the life. The conversation must be pure and chaste, never vulgar, never immodest. The jest with its indelicate association is never heard on the month of the Pentecostal saint.

The phrase "clean heart" relates to the inward, invisible, secret nature -- that which God alone sees. It describes a condition of things in which there is no pride, or anger, or jealousy, or envy, or strife, or selfishness, or worldly ambition, or any unholy temper. Desire for place or position in church or state is purged away. We who are of the Pentecostal Church see no one who has a place we would desire. We are not wire pulling to get a position. We are saved from political scheming in ecclesiastical circles, as well as elsewhere. In honor we prefer one another. There can be no anxiety, for God makes all our appointments for us.

When the heart is clean the Holy Ghost saves us from all peevishness, fretfulness, sensitiveness and touchiness. We hardly know when we are insulted and, therefore, never take offense. As Dr. Carradine says, we get so we "can live on cold shoulder and cold tongue." We are not looking out for slights. If any one pays any attention to us, it is that much more than we deserve, that much clear gain.

How plainly uncleanness of heart reveals itself in the actions, tempers and ambitions of the disciples previous to their Pentecost! They were selfish: they wanted the best places. Instance John and James bidding for chief seats. Notice the anger and indignation consequent upon the rest of the twelve hearing of the request of the two brothers. But, passing the upper room experience, we look in vain to find evidences of envy or self-seeking in these men. That Pentecostal electrocution forever put an end to the self-life.

How this fiery cleansing would relieve the church today! Office-seeking preachers would not buttonhole the bishops. This continual lobbying of which the presiding elder or superintendent is the unhappy subject would cease. Men would be more anxious to show their devotion to Christ and self-denial for his cause, than to obtain the best appointments. An unheard of thing might possibly be, viz., a vacancy on the official board, and no one sitting up nights concocting a scheme which would lift him to the place.

Would-be generals are abundant nowadays. There are plenty of men who would gladly boss God's army. They want to be bell-sheep. They must tinkle the bell, and no one else. If they can't be bell-sheep, they won't be sheep at all, but turn goats. Certainly we need the holy flame to extirpate unholy ambitions. Before Pentecost, the disciples were sectarian. One poor fellow was having a glorious time casting out devils. "Does he follow us?" "NO." "Forbid him. Stop the revival; complain to the authorities! Schism! Tendency to divide! Come-out-ism!" There are thousands of people who have no sympathy with a work, however praiseworthy, without the movers in that work are in full unison with them on all points.

A revengeful spirit crops out in the pre-Pentecostal disciples. "Opposition?" "Down with fire!" "Do not like to hear us preach?" "Rain brimstone!" This is the un-Christlike spirit of even some so called Holiness preachers. "We can't punish you, but God can. We will get the Lord to revenge us." How different is the meekness, the heart-lowliness of the Son of God. "Despised" and "rejected" yet he opened not his mouth. "Vengeance and retaliation are burned out of us when we are sanctified, and unholy resentment thereafter finds in the soul no place.

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