

## **“WITHOUT SPOT OR WRINKLE”**

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It is very helpful in preparing a talk if a brother will pause long enough to decide upon some special theme. Then he will have a definite goal in mind and will spare himself the tendency to wander into various by-paths of truth. And if it is helpful to a brother to select some special theme, it is also helpful to his audience to know what that theme is, so they may go along with him as he attempts to make clear what he has in mind.

The purpose of our talk therefore, at this time, is to stir up our pure minds on the importance of being alert to the dangers of evil in all its forms, and that we are exhorted to put up a stiff resistance against it. And we have another purpose too, and this is to stir up our pure minds to the wonderful future that is promised to those who DO use the Lord's strength in vanquishing evil. We will use one particular Scripture as a text to begin with, as it will raise our minds to a level of holiness that the Lord intends. It is found in Eph. 5:25-27, “Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing by the word that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

This text, when carefully read, gives us an intimate glimpse of one of the sacred purposes that Jesus was pursuing in his treatment of his disciples while he was on earth, and also all down through the Gospel Age. Little did the disciples realize what Jesus was doing, and it was only after Pentecost that the inner workings of the purposes of God were made clear, for then the disciples experienced spirit begetting and could begin to comprehend the mysteries of God. Just before his ascension Jesus said, “I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot hear them now.” The sense of these words is unmistakable—that Jesus is working to the end of having a class of individuals associated with him that, in heart are devoted to God's holy purposes and are implacable opponents of sin and impurities of all kinds.

When the church is presented, it will, in character, be faultless and spotless. This will be beyond the veil when we shall have our perfect bodies and will at last be freed of our bodies of flesh which are bundles of imperfections. Doubtless these matters are revealed to us for the very purpose of making us acquainted with the purposes of God that we might intelligently cooperate. And more, may not these revelations be given, not only to educate us and guide us, but may they not also be intended to shock us and startle us with their high elevation of ideals that we may contrast these ideals with our natural fallen state and turn away from it as much as we can and loathe all evil and unrighteousness and selfishness. Our Redeemer gave his life for us to set us apart and he wants us to be wide awake to the cleansing processes of the water of the Word. And he wants us to be wide

awake to the glorious end in view, of being presented to him in faultless character at the end of the way—beyond the veil.

There is another text that is somewhat startling, and intentionally so I am sure. It intimates that if one is submissive to sin or acts in harmony with sin, HE IS IN BONDAGE TO SIN. Let us note this text, 2 Pet. 2:19, “for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage.”

Another text comes to mind which teaches us that instead of being over-come by and in bondage to sin and evil, we should recognize that we have been purchased and that in accepting the grace of God, which is ours in Christ Jesus, we also accept the proposition that we belong to the one who purchased us and he by right is our Head and the Director of the way we should take. It is a sobering thought and a deeply moving one, that we are a purchased possession. This text is found in 1 Cor. 6:19, 20, “Ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

A little reflection on the facts of the case impresses this wholesome lesson upon us. Our first parents were created perfect and placed in the Garden of Eden. We say CREATED BEINGS—the work of a Master Craftsman. Man was not the controller nor the sustainer of his own environment, but was a creature dependent upon how much his Maker was concerned for him and cared for him. It is true that little man was given a will and great freedom to act within the bounds of his own capacities and his surroundings. But how feeble man turned out to be! The disobedience brought upon him the sentence of death and he was reduced to the dust from which he was created!

But our Maker had respect for the work of his hands and provided a Lamb to die for his created being who had disobeyed His law. The little Gospel expresses the thought—John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” It is literally true that if it were not for God’s gracious concern for his human creation, there would have been no future existence for man. So then, we look upon the work of Jesus as an actual rescue from extinction. Jesus, by God’s design and by the sacrifice of his human life became the purchaser of the race, and is the legal owner thereof. Incidentally, with our knowledge of the philosophy of the ransom we know Jesus has not yet taken over his purchase, as he is dealing with a small number of the race, viz., the church.

But, as far as we are concerned, we know the facts of the case and we acknowledge that we are a purchased possession. It is a bit difficult for us to fully realize that we live by the grace of God and belong to the Redeemer. The reason for this is that we have wills of our own and can exercise them and it gives us a feeling of freedom and power. But how feeble man is, is painfully manifest when we realize that a very minor convulsion of

nature, or a disease of some kind can snuff out the life of little man, and his freedom and power come to an abrupt end! This is expressed strikingly by Psalm 103:15, 16, “As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.” How awfully true this is that as for man, his days are as grass; he flourisheth for a time, and then he is gone forever, and life for him again is dependent upon his Maker’s grace and favor.

If then, dear brethren, we recognize and accept the great proposition that we belong to Jesus, and if we understand that he is preparing the church to be with him, and further, if we appreciate the character qualities that are required if we are to be his companions in his future glory and work, then there are three things we can do about it. First, make a careful study of what it means to be “without spot, or wrinkle or any such thing”; second, make and maintain a solemn vow that our thoughts, words and deeds will be controlled, regulated and inspired by what our Master is doing; third, hourly and daily put our vows into practice in the affairs of life under all circumstances.

When our text speaks of Jesus presenting the church to himself “without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing,” the thought is the church collectively, beyond the veil, and that there will be no evil of any kind in any of the members of this glorified company. It is of great interest to us then, to understand what evils are meant so that we may be submissive and cooperative in the sanctifying work and the washing of water by the Word.

We will start out with a Scripture that uses the word “evil.” It is found in Rom. 12:21, “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” The context gives us a clue to what the Apostle is talking about—the 19th and 20th verses, “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.” Incidentally this is a quotation from Prov. 25:21 and 22. The 22nd verse ends, “and the Lord shall reward thee. Fenton translates Rom. 12:20 as follows, “If your enemy hungers, feed him; if he thirsts, give him drink; for so doing you cast burn ashes on his head.” Moffatt renders it still differently, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him, if he is thirsty, give him drink; for in this way you will make him feel a burning sense of shame.”

So then, we see the Apostle is talking about the overcoming of a desire for revenge on those who hurt us with an evil of some kind. Paul quotes from Deut. 32:35 which reminded the Israelites that God is the one who will avenge all evil. We are relieved of a heavy load of revengeful feelings when we accept the proposition that God will repay for all evil that is done. And when we stop to reflect on the matter we know that God, in his perfection, could repay evil in a way that would do the most good for all concerned, and in the meantime we can calm down and leave the outworking of these matters in his hands.

According to this Scripture therefore, we are not to attempt to exact justice or to try to get even for evil done us. Rather we are to concentrate on the idea of doing good in return for evil, and as Moffatt says, this will have the effect of shaming those who have done us evil. This is called OVERCOMING—overcoming evil with good. And doubtless this would mean that we are overcoming feelings of wrath and anger in our hearts. Also we can see how this would lead us to overcome evil speaking too; for if we are overcoming evil with good, and leaving the matter of strict justice in God’s hands then we are going to avoid speaking to others about the evil that has been done to us in any manner.

Let us read Rom. 12:19 again and see what may be for us further, “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay saith the Lord.” Reasoning on the matter may we not include everything evil done to us that we might rightfully feel was unjust or unkind to us or thoughtless and heedless of our wishes or happiness, or slighting us in some manner? In the ordinary affairs of life there are many little evils that cross our path. In business affairs we may find attempts to drive sharp bargains or shift off something upon us that is of an inferior quality. We are to recognize such evils and protect ourselves from them; but we are to overcome the disposition to get even by a sharp bargain in return or to give inferior goods to make up for what we lost.

And in social affairs, we might be slighted or snubbed by some man or woman who feels we are below their level or because of our religion. We are to overcome the disposition to bide our time until we can give a snub in return or impress others with our own importance. If we don’t overcome along this line, then we have a feeling of vengeance rankling in our hearts, and our character structure suffers accordingly. Rather than having vengeance in our hearts and not feeling satisfied until that vengeance is meted out, we are to cast out of our minds this corroding acid, and leave all repayment of evil to God. Our hearts should not be sour and bitter just waiting until we can get even for some evil done us. Rather our hearts should be occupied with higher purposes, viz., the Lord’s business, and the doing of good for evil where possible. As Christians we have a right to protect ourselves from evil as much as we can, but not to the extent of having our mental powers all absorbed in such matters to the exclusion of the more weighty matters pertaining to our eternal interests.

Then we know in the functioning of family associations, there are evils to be encountered, and here again we are to overcome the desire to return evil for evil. Sometimes our wishes may be ignored, and we are imposed upon and our opinions are ridiculed. And the same may be said for our experiences in the church. We have been told and have read of things that have happened that were evils, and here again there is the necessity to overcome evil with good. Great restraint and control must be exercised because in the church there is a high standard and we expect a great deal of one another.

Where there is a violation of the rules of righteousness in the church, we have to use an abundance of the oil of the Holy Spirit to keep our balance and use wisdom in dealing with such violations.

So then, the first form of evil which we have considered is a matter of feeling of vengeance. We are to overcome the natural desire for meting out justice for wrong done us by accepting the proposition that God is the proper one to administer vengeance, and it is better for our characters as Christians to cast out of our hearts all feelings of vengeance. The test of whether we are doing this or not, is whether we are willing to do good to an enemy or to one who has done us an evil. If we refrain from doing good when there is need, then we know we have vengeance rankling in our hearts. For instance, suppose there was a neighbor woman who had done us an evil of some kind, and supposing we found this woman stalled along the road with a flat tire—would we stop and render aid or would we drive right past her and pretend we didn't see her?

Or to take another illustration—we may feel annoyed by some people who do things that they shouldn't, and we have no way to change them for the better. We find ourselves acting grouchy toward such people and speaking sharply to them in the ordinary affairs of life. This is a very severe test indeed and requires a great deal of the Lord's spirit to overcome and to return good for evil. It is hard to be even civil to such people, and, as we say, it is a severe test indeed not to return rudeness for evil done us. So we see we can test ourselves all along the line. These are hard battles, but they must be fought. This is a part of the "good fight of faith."

Unconsciously, so to speak, we wish these things could be changed so we could be free of such annoyances; but these things may be the very means necessary to give us training in character development. In fact, we are sure there is no other way for us to become strong in character than through the process of overcoming of evil with good. This is the method the great Potter has chosen, and it is up to us to remain plastic in his hands.

It will be interesting at this point to touch upon the meaning of two Greek words that are translated "overcame," "overcome," "overcometh." One means "to subdue" (#3528), and is translated "conquer, prevail, get the victory." The other means "to make worse, i.e. vanquish" (#2274), and is translated "be inferior, overcome." The first one applies to action on OUR part to "get the victory" over evil. The second one is used to refer to those who allow themselves to be overcome BY evil. Such become "inferior," "vanquished by evil." It is up to us—shall we be victors in the "good fight of faith" and use the strength of the Lord to be victorious over evil, or will we allow evil to vanquish us?—are we to be "overcome of evil"?

If we think of evil as DANGER, and that there are many forms of danger, then we may be sure there are warning signs that we do well to take heed.

Man uses all kinds of signs to give warning of potential danger. For instance: “Danger—high voltage,” or “Danger—thin ice,” or “Danger—high explosives.” Then we are all familiar with the variety of warning signs along our highways—“Dangerous curve,” “Keep to the right,” “Do not enter,” “Keep to the left,” “Form a single line,” “Danger—Railroad crossing,” “School—go slow,” “Do not cross over double line in your lane,” etc., etc.

Let us use a few of these warning signs and see if we can find parallels in spiritual things. Let us take the sign “DO NOT CROSS OVER THE DOUBLE LINE IN YOUR LANE.” We have all seen this sign along our highways. When there is a blind curve or a hill on a two lane highway we find a yellow line in our lane beside the single line in the center of the road. This is a warning to drivers to keep in their own lane until the curve is passed or the hill is passed over. The idea is that the right lane only belongs to you and the left lane belongs to the driver going in the opposite direction. It is very clearly an evil to pass over the double line into the left lane of traffic. We can think of a parallel in spiritual matters. What does Paul say in 1 Thess. 4:11? “Study to be quiet, and to do your own business. We have plenty to do, if we drive safely to stay in our own lane of traffic and not cross over the life line into the other fellow’s lane. There is need to watch carefully when rounding a curve or driving over the brow of a hill to see that we steer in our own lane. We are to mind our own business and not get into the other fellow’s way who is having all he can do to drive properly in his lane. If we get into the other fellow’s lane, then we are both in trouble and the other fellow is justified in feeling annoyed and angry. Life is so complicated that we have all we can do to run our own affairs. There are many ways we can do evil in this manner. We might try to tell other brethren how to raise their children; or how to spend their money in temporal affairs; or in the Lord’s service. Or we might step over the bounds of propriety and endeavor to regulate the diet of others in an officious manner. We might even attempt to advise others on how to use their vacation time, or whether they take a vacation at all or not. Then there is another way some have in minding the business of others and that is on the subject of marriage. Lots of advice is given freely and with much gusto. Instead of permitting others to work out their own lives with the aid of the truth and the Lord’s providences, some feel they must regulate the lives of others and guide them into channels of THEIR choosing. All this is evil and we should keep on our side of the double line, and follow the guideline of the Apostle Paul—“study to be quiet and do your own business.”

It is a common sight today on our modern highways, to spot a man down the road who is wearing a red hat and a red coat, and he will be holding up a warning sign “GO SLOW” or “STOP”, and we are required to obey the sign. Perhaps there is work being done on the highway itself, or surveyors may be doing some measuring, or the light company be putting in some new poles. What would the man think if we would park over to the side of the road and then attempt to tell him how to direct traffic, or possibly grab his “GO

SLOW” sign and take over his job of directing traffic? We would probably be looked upon as having something wrong with our heads and placed under arrest. Or if we would try to tell the road builders how to do their job; or tell the surveyors how to run their lines, and how to record their measurements; or jump in and help the light company men erect their poles—we would really make a scene of ourselves. What would this conduct be, Scripturally speaking? This would be busyboding in other people’s affairs. This would be meddlesome and officious, and attempting to oversee the affairs of others. Paul gives us a good road sign in 2 Thess. 3:11, “For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.” Paul gives another road sign in 1 Tim. 5:13, “And withal they learn. to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.” Peter too has nailed up a road sign for our guidance—1 Pet. 4:15, “But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters.”

There is another illustration that we can use in our spiritual building in our overcoming of evil. Haven’t we driven along at times and down the road we could see cars slowing down and being detoured around an accident of some kind? There is a wrecker on hand, and a traffic officer is attempting to get the details of the accident from the drivers and witnesses. At such a time there is plenty of confusion and everyone is annoyed, except the driver of the wrecker who is picking up some extra cash. Everyone realizes this is a momentary crisis in the lives of the drivers, and the thing to do is to leave all concerned alone and let the officers and the wrecker straighten out the tangle until order is restored. How inappropriate it would be for anyone to attempt to barge in and try to find out from the drivers just what happened so we could get into the act ourselves and tell them what they did that was wrong and what they should do now, and thus complicate the task of the traffic officers and the wrecker. This would be busyboding wouldn’t it? And we may be sure, too, the officers would see to it that we should suffer as busybodies—perhaps we would get a ticket and have to appear in court and be fined a few dollars or even be imprisoned.

Can we learn a lesson from this of value to us as New Creatures? Yes, I think we can. As we travel along the Narrow Way, are there not times when we can see evidence of trouble, of a clash of some kind, either between brethren, or on the part of people of the world? Yes, we know we do see this occasionally. Unless we are called upon to help, or it is evident that we SHOULD reach out a helping hand, isn’t it the part of wisdom, and overcoming the evil of busyboding if we keep our natural curiosity under control and leave others alone when they are passing through a crisis of some kind? On the spiritual plane there are the officers, the Word of the Lord and the Truth and teachers to assist us over our difficult circumstances. Even though it might be a mild form of busyboding to attempt to get all the details we can when brethren are having difficulty of some kind, yet if we pry unnecessarily into the affairs of others, we only complicate matters and we

would probably get a one-sided view of a situation. The officer is the proper one to take charge—and what does the officer say?—“Go to him alone, and if he will hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother”—outsiders keep out! There are all kinds of situations in which it is necessary for us to restrain our natural curiosity. If we are asked, then it is different, but most of the time, we are better off to keep aloof and not allow our minds to be in a whirl over the private affairs of others.

There is another warning sign erected by Paul. It is found in Heb. 12:13, and it reads as follows: And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but let it rather be healed.” It might be asked, What has this to do with the overcoming of evil? We answer that we have very powerful propensities in us pertaining to the flesh, pertaining to self. Not only that, but we are “lame,”—under the fall. Actually these faculties in us are dangerous unless they are brought under the control of the Spirit of the Lord, and KEPT there. We have been much impressed with this fact over the years as we have witnessed the things that have been said and done by brethren as the conditions of their lives changed. These changes affect different elements of our characters that may never have been stimulated into action before. For instance some will say, “Well I never had an experience like that before!” and new experiences always mean different elements of our characters are stimulated and brought into play.

So when the Apostle Paul exhorts us to “make straight paths for our feet,” we are alerted to the fact that we have in us selfish propensities that must be brought under the control of the Spirit of the Lord. We are to beware of self-confidence, knowing that there are dangerous elements in us that can burst forth as mighty forces and cause a great deal of havoc in our own lives and in the lives of others. There is ENERGY in us, but it must be under strict control of the New Creature who takes his cues from the wisdom which is from above.

We must do as the engineers who use water power to produce electricity. A dam is built with firm anchorage in bedrock. The water is then held back and is under control and released in proper amounts through large pipes or tunnels and through the generators to produce electricity.

We are all aware of the disastrous effect of large bodies of water which cascade down canyons when there is a sudden storm. This must not be allowed in a well-ordered life of a New Creature. Our mental energies must be held within certain bounds and released through certain channels to do specific work that is useful and has the Lord’s blessing. The sooner we realize the dangerous possibilities of the energies which are within us the better it is for us. Paul said “I keep my body under,” and Paul was a very wise man from the Scriptural standpoint.

We can think of three signs that we could well use as warnings of the danger that are within us. DANGER—HIGH VOLTAGE. DANGER—HIGH EXPLOSIVES. DANGER—THIN ICE. Look at the condition of the world today! That is because powerful mental energies have not been under the control of the will of God. They have not been dammed up properly nor released through proper channels. DANGER—HIGH VOLTAGE—the world is trembling in agony as it is in touch with the HIGH VOLTAGE of unrestrained selfishness. DANGER—HIGH EXPLOSIVES—the world is expecting an explosion that will destroy everything! DANGER—THIN ICE—the world realizes that there is nothing solid underneath, but it is powerless to create a solid footing. With us, dear friends, we have instructions from on high so we will not be in trouble with the world—“make straight paths for your feet.” “Keep the body under!”

The word “overcome” is used by the Apostle John in 1 John 2:13, 14. John commended the young men because, he said, “ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the Wicked One.” There are three thoughts here that tie in together—being strong, the Word of God abiding in them, and overcoming the Wicked One. If we are to overcome the wiles of the Wicked One we must be “strong”, i.e. have moral courage, and, have the Word of God dwelling in us richly. Jesus was the perfect example. He was “strong” he loved righteousness and hated wickedness, iniquity. And when Satan attempted to tempt him with misapplied Scripture, Jesus had the Word of God abiding in him and he came right back at Satan with the Word of God, properly applied. He used the Sword of the Spirit, and Satan then was overcome.

Right here we have a clue as to Satan’s “devices.” He uses deceit—he makes darkness appear as light. He endeavors to palm off error as truth, as the correct understanding of the Word of God. And he tries to cover up the Truth in such a way that it is looked upon as error, as something contrary to the Word of God. For instance, our Pentecostal friends think the eternal torment doctrine is from the Word of God. We look upon this doctrine as false and blasphemous. And when we present the Truth on the subject, these Pentecostal friends raise their hands in sincere holy horror, and they are really shocked. Satan has thoroughly deceived them—they think their error is the true understanding of the Word of God; and they think the Truth we hold on the subject is false teaching. We can give another illustration in our own midst as Bible Students. As we come to an understanding of Present Truth, we were impressed with the value and importance of the doctrines of the Divine Plan as a basis for faith and Christian growth. Upon this foundation we were exhorted to grow UP-WARD. As the Apostle expressed it in Heb. 6:1, “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection,” etc. The proper thought is a growth UPWARD in character structure. But now note a subtle trick of the Adversary. Some are teaching that we are to leave the first principles of the doctrines of Christ in the sense of leaving them behind, as you would leave behind your home town if you were going to another city. This supposed growth could be pictured by a horizontal line. The thought behind this teaching is that after all

the first doctrines, the simple principles of truth are not very important and could be left behind to our profit; and that we should go on and not bother our heads any more about the doctrines of the Divine Plan. This teaching is definitely from Satan, and is blinding the minds of some to the Truth on the subject. If our eyes are fully open and we are aware of the lying methods of Satan, then as Paul says in 2 Cor. 2:11, “we are not ignorant of his devices.” We are able to overcome the evils of Satan then by abiding in the Word of God and are protected from his deceitfulness.

We are to overcome evil in ourselves and evils from Satan. But that is not all. We are to overcome the world too. As Jesus said in John 16:33, “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” This sounds strange doesn’t it? Jesus said, “In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” If we are having tribulation in the world how should it cheer us to know that Jesus overcame the world? In this way—Jesus is the Head of the New Creation, and he has passed through tribulation from the world and He came through triumphantly by his absolute faith in God. He has had experience, and He can lead us and show us how to overcome as He did. He overcame the allurement of the world and the opposition of the world.

We are to look to Him and all the providences of God that are for the purpose of making it possible for us to overcome the world. As Jesus said, “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace.” We are to overcome the world just as Jesus did—through FAITH. 1 John 5:4 and 5 give us the proper thought—“For whosoever is begotten of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”

Referring back to our original text, that Jesus is going to “present his church to himself without spot or wrinkle or any such thing,” we should like to draw a little lesson from the word “wrinkle.” We all appreciate freshly ironed and pressed clothing. We know how we can remove a wrinkle from an article of clothing. We sprinkle on a little water, and then we use a hot iron and pressure, and the wrinkle disappears. Now if we have some trait of character that has a wrinkled appearance, it can be eliminated by the use of some instruction from the water of truth, then we have some fiery experience and we are under pressure, and the wrinkle disappears.

For example, we may have the habit of using slang too much, or we may be too boisterous in our joking. The water of Truth that would apply would be the record of Jesus’ example—“they WONDERED at the GRACIOUS WORDS that proceeded out of his mouth.” Along with this we may be using slang in connection with the Truth, and we may note the expression of disapproval on the faces of the brethren. This is a fiery

experience and heats up conscience, and then conscience puts on the pressure; and if we love the Lord's will we will be rightly exercised and learn the lesson and the wrinkle disappears, and we are then more fit for our Master's commendation beyond the veil.

Or take another instance—we may give a sharp answer or speak harshly and then the water of Truth comes to mind—"a soft answer turneth away wrath." If we have a tender conscience and are meek, willing to learn to become Christlike then we are having a fiery experience, and our conscience puts on the pressure and we learn a valuable lesson and another wrinkle disappears. This reminds us of our Master's words, "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." We must watch and analyze our words and if we discover a wrinkle, then we are to sprinkle on some water of truth and let the pressure of a good conscience do its work.

There are certain laws that are working, and one of them is the law of sowing and reaping. "As we sow so shall we reap." The Apostle makes it very strong when he says (in Gal. 6:7, 8), "BE NOT DECEIVED, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." There is a lesson here for all who love the Lord's will. GOD IS NEVER MOCKED! His laws eventually bear fruit. Violations bring a harvest that is in the nature of a punishment or lesson of some kind. Obedience of God's laws always bears fruit in the form of a blessing of some kind. God is NEVER mocked. What He says is true and there is no mistake about it. It may take a long time to make clear to all this fact, but eventually his laws bear fruit one way or the other. The nations are now reaping a harvest from past misdeeds. "Righteousness exalteth a nation," but very few nations follow out fully the laws of righteousness.

This reminds us of Matt. 12:36, "I say unto you, That every idle [unprofitable, pernicious] word that men shall speak, that they shall give an account in the day of judgment!" Our Day of Judgment is now; and as sons, who are supposed to "love righteousness and hate iniquity," it is our privilege and duty to war a good warfare against all imperfection, evil and selfishness ("spots and wrinkles"). We are to cooperate with our Lord and "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." This is the way Paul puts it in 2 Cor. 7:1.

Paul told us to THINK ON GOOD THINGS. Beloved Bro. Benjamin Barton gave a talk one time and he labeled it "Consecrated Thinking". What a powerful idea this is—that our THINKING is to be consecrated! It is natural for the mind to wander into endless avenues of thought and imagination. But we must be good shepherds of our thoughts and not permit them to wander hither and yon, either idly or in channels of fleshly selfishness. The more we think on this expression "consecrated thinking," the more deeply moving it is. The Psalmist says, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Let the words of my mouth,

and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.” (Ps. 19:12-14)

If we do not follow the Lord’s directions for us as New Creatures, the Lord may permit us to have some jolting experience to make clear to us the necessity of cleansing ourselves. (R5739:5) In Exodus 20:7, we read, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” We have taken the name of Christian after our Lord and this should mean something to us in the way of sanctification of our words and thoughts. There is an article entitled “Careless Living a Form of Profanity.” (R5404) This is quite a thought isn’t it, that careless living is a form of profanity?!

2 Cor. 7:1, “Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.” It is easy to detect any filthiness of the flesh. For instance if we spilled some catsup on our clothes, the red stain would be easily seen. Or if we stepped into a mud puddle we would find mud on our shoes. Or if we upset a bottle of lineament we would have a strong lineament odor about us. The Apostle urges us to be clean. It is just as essential that we cleanse ourselves from dirty appearances and odors pertaining to our spirit, or disposition. Have we not often heard people say, that was a dirty trick,” or “that person stinks,” and we know they have reference to some traits of character that are evil, selfish. We as Christians are to follow Peter’s advice—1 Pet. 1:15, 16, “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.”

There is a wholesome lesson that is brought to our attention in Isa. 1:16, 17, “...cease to do evil, learn to do well.” Paul in Eph. 5:15, 16 exhorts us to “see that we walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” “Circum” means around; spectly” means look. Look around us and be careful because we are surrounded on every side with evil, both within and without. The struggle we have in overcoming evil reminds me of a little poem called HEROISM on page 152 in Poems of Dawn. This was written by C. P. S. Gilman. There are four verses but I shall read you the first one only.

It takes great strength to train  
To modern service your ancestral brain;  
To lift the weight of the unnumbered years  
Of dead men’s habits, methods and ideas;  
To hold that back with one hand, and support  
With the other the weak steps of new resolve!  
It takes great strength to bring your life up square  
With your accepted thought, and hold it there,  
Resisting the inertia that drags back  
From new attempts to the old habit’s track.  
It is so easy to drift back—to sink—

So hard to live abreast of what you think!

And now as we said at the beginning of our talk, we wish to stir up our pure minds as to the wonderful future that is promised to those who do use the Lord's strength to vanquish evil. I think the promises to the seven churches are very wonderful indeed. Each promise is addressed to those who are overcomers. These are found in the 2nd and 3rd chapters of Revelation: 2:7, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." 2:11, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." 2:17, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." 2:26-29, "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers; even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. 3:5, 6, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." 3:12, 13, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." 3:21, 22, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

### Hymn #196 - WALKING WITH GOD

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,  
As the swift seasons roll!  
Leave thy low vaulted past!  
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,  
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,  
Till thou at length art free,  
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea.  
—The Chambered Nautilus.