

Chapter XV

PURIFY YOUR HEARTS, YE DOUBLE MINDED

James has prosecuted his case against the Jews in the first three chapters of his epistle very well. In this fourth chapter, he has brought an indictment against them: they were spiritual adulterers and adulteresses. This evoked the question:

Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that [dwelt] in us lusteth to envy? But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. (James 4:5-10, emphasis mine)

The Jews' pride needed to be broken. They needed to know they worshipped falsely. They needed to know they were spiritual adulterers and adulteresses. They needed to remember God's indictment against their fathers, revealed in His instructions to Hosea:

Then said the LORD unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine. So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley: and I said unto her, Thou shalt

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abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee.

For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days. (Hosea 3:1-5)

The Old Testament is replete with Israel's idolatry and God's desire for them to return unto Him. In fact, before they ever entered the land, Moses prophesied:

But Jeshurun [Israel] waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger. They sacrificed unto [demons], not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not. Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.

And when the LORD saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith. They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people [Gentiles]; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. (Deuteronomy 32:15-21, emphasis mine)

The Spirit of God had often been provoked to jealousy because of Israel's false worship. It was only a little over three months after the Jews had come out of Egypt: with the deliverance of the passover; with the deliverance at the Red Sea; with the slaying of the army of the Egyptians in the Red Sea; with the sweetening of the bitter waters at Marah; with the daily provision of manna; with God's abiding presence in the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud; with God's presence on Sinai; with God's voice speaking the precepts of the law to Israel; with Israel's response, *All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do* -- when Israel demanded of Aaron, *Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land*

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of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him (Exodus 32:1).

If Israel had paused to reflect upon all of her previous failures (before she entered into the covenant of the law), she might have realized she could not possibly keep the law, but she did not. She had rebelled against Moses and Aaron in Egypt. When she left Egypt, except for a brief time on the far shore of the Red Sea, she complained every step of the way from Egypt to Sinai; but this did not stop her from declaring her desire to enter the covenant of the law: to be blessed on the basis of the performance of the law, never considering she would be cursed for her failures.

The truth is: Israel did not know how weak she was. This can be seen in the fact that before Moses could return from the mount (after forty days and forty nights), Israel had violated every precept of the law in the debauchery associated with the worship of the golden calf. Therefore *in the determinate counsel, and foreknowledge of God*, the law was *added because of transgressions, till the seed should come*. The purpose of the law, then, was to direct Israel back to God's grace, revealed in the sacrificial system and fulfilled in Jesus Christ *in the fulness of the time*. It did this by being a ministry of condemnation and death -- to magnify the transgressions of Israel that they might trust in the Lord for salvation. Therefore:

... he giveth more grace. Wherefore, he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. (James 4:6)

The *humble* in this text are those who have been humbled by the law and recognized themselves sinners before God. They have no air of smug self-righteousness, based upon law-works, but the recognition: *There is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good and sinneth not*. The law has performed its *schoolmaster* role for them: to bring them unto Christ, Who, incidentally, was portrayed in the sacrificial system.

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Thus, in addition to receiving the tablets containing the law on mount Sinai, Moses received the pattern of the tabernacle and all of the terms of the sacrificial system. The tabernacle in the wilderness was a manifestation of the grace of God. It was erected (according to God's specific instructions) to provide a place where God could dwell with the nation of Israel. (Compare Exodus 25:8 with Matthew 1:23)

The ministry of the tabernacle and its priests was to make provision for Israel's failures under the law. Therefore the tabernacle in the wilderness (and later, the temple in Jerusalem) represents, through the shadows and types of the Scriptures, the Person and the work of Emmanuel (God with us), the Lord Jesus Christ. Any failure which was wrought under the terms of the law was dealt with by the appropriate sacrifice upon the altar at the door of the tabernacle. This was the basis for James's statement, *But he giveth more grace*, and it is the reason Paul wrote: *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith* (Galatians 3:24).

As we have emphasized before, Israel's tragedy was that she held to the traditions of the elders rather than to the Word of God. When the law condemned Israel, she merely interpreted it so that it did not condemn her. This, as we have already seen, is the reason our Lord told the Jews, *Ye make the commandments of God of none effect by your traditions*. Therefore, to counter the Jews' traditions, James wrote, *God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble, submit [or humble] yourselves therefore to God*.

In their pride the Jews accused others and excused themselves, and a traditionalized law was the perfect instrument for this. It enabled them to boast, but not before God. It enabled them

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to ignore the indictment of Isaiah:

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as [menstrual] rags, and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities. (Isaiah 64:6-7)

Isaiah is very clear: Israel's righteousness compared to God's Holiness was as if she stood before God clothed in menstrual rags. This is not a very pleasant picture, but it is an accurate one. Israel rejected the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ for the works of her own hands. This was typified in the law by the fact that a woman, on her monthly cycle, was declared unclean until a week after it was ended and she brought the appropriate sacrifice to the priest to offer it for her cleansing. Similarly all who reject the blood of Jesus Christ for the works of their own hands are declared unclean until such time as their minds are changed (repentance) and they trust the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, to cleanse them from all of their sins.

During the first advent of our Lord, Israel (as a whole) declared, *We will not have this man [Jesus Christ] to reign over us.* James wrote to the twelve tribes scattered abroad to arrest their thinking. He sought to change their minds: to bring them to salvation in Jesus Christ. He wrote, *Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you.*

How does one resist the Devil? He does so by operating according to the truth of the Word of God. The Word of God plainly teaches the Devil operates in the realm of deception with three weapons: *the lust of the flesh; the lust of the eyes; and the pride of life.* The Devil deceived Eve by casting doubt upon the Word of God and by substituting his lie for that which God had spoken. The Devil promised Eve life instead of death. He promised her she would become *as [Elohim],*

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knowing good and evil, if she would disobey Elohim. Therefore the Devil substituted his corrupted morality (the knowledge of good and evil) for God's Word.

The apostle John referred to this lie as *the sin* in his first epistle. Unfortunately the translators did not translate the definite article that precedes the singular noun *sin* in this text. If we supply the definite article and a more appropriate meaning of *poieo* (translated: *committeth*), a free translation of verse four in First John chapter three is: *Everyone making the sin his own* [as a source of righteousness], *makes the iniquity* [the lawlessness, introduced in the garden of Eden] *his own. For the sin is the iniquity* [the lawlessness].

When a man operates in his self-determinate knowledge of good and evil to try to gain acceptance with God, this is the iniquity (the lawlessness) of which John wrote. This is (in every sense of the word) idolatry. Remember, in the verses we quoted from Isaiah sixty-four, it was the iniquity of the Jews which carried them away. It was the iniquity of the Jews which kept them from trusting in the Savior. God's promise to Israel, as well as to all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, is, *Their sins and iniquities will I remember against them no more*. In this context, *their sins* are the overt sins of the flesh, whereas *their iniquities* are their unscriptural concepts of worship.

James's admonition to *resist the Devil* is an admonition to resist man's innate attempts to glorify God by self-effort. As long as the Devil can keep man thinking he can satisfy God by self-efforts of human goodness, the Devil knows man will not submit to the condemnation of the law, nor to salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. However if a man will resist the ploy of the Devil, God will draw nigh to the sinner who will draw nigh to God by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ.

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The individual who submits to God's plan of salvation, by faith in Jesus Christ, will not be rejected of God. Our Lord said: *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out* (John 6:37). So James admonished the Jews to *Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded*. This cannot be an admonition to self-cleansing. Self-cleansing is reformation, not salvation. It is the way the world thinks. It is the very thing James argued against and is inconsistent with the revelation of the gospel in the Scriptures. A sinner's cleansing comes from only one source. The apostle Peter wrote:

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain [manner of life] received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. (I Peter 1:18-19)

A change in life-style often comes with salvation, but must not be confused with salvation. Such a change is effected by the Spirit of God and the Word of God. However a man may experience a change in life-style from sources other than by faith in Christ. This means a change in life-style is not a good criterion for determining one's salvation. To think it is, is a misconceived idea which has gained popular acceptance in our day.

We frequently hear the testimony, *We know God is working by the changed lives we see*. This is not necessarily true. The Devil has a righteousness and man has a righteousness, but neither is acceptable to God. Both the Devil's righteousness and man's righteousness can produce an outward change in life-style. In fact, the outward life-style of the average Pharisee under Judaism would put the average Christian to shame. Our Lord told the Jews: *For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye*

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shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:20). By this our Lord sought to convince the Jews of the futility of an outward show of righteousness. Outward righteousness was not the point (the scribes and Pharisees had that down to a science). Genuine righteousness was the point. Therefore the righteousness which exceeded the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees was the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ.

When we consider our Lord's sermon on the mount, in which we have the above quotation, it is evident that our Lord was using the law as a schoolmaster to bring the Jews to salvation. Thus He showed the Jews (who were satisfied with outward show) that God's law demands perfection in both thoughts and deeds. This prompted Him to say: *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.* Our Lord also taught the Jews a man does not have to commit murder to be a murderer in his heart. He then concluded these arguments by showing them, if a man is to be accepted of God on the basis of the law, he simply must be perfect. Therefore our Lord said: *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect* (Matthew 5:48).

Thus when James admonished the Jews to *cleanse your hands ye sinners*, he did not encourage them to self-cleansing, but to be cleansed by their identification with Christ. This was an allusion to the rite of the laying on of hands in the Old Testament sacrificial system, where the sinner laid his hands on the head of the sacrifice to identify himself with the sacrifice and the sacrifice with himself. Thus the apostle Paul wrote: *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him* (II Corinthians 5:21).

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The Jews had been able to maintain a sense of well-being and joy instead of guilt because of their unrealistic interpretation of the law. The traditions of the elders enabled the Jews to have a measure of comfort before the law. Nevertheless, if the Jews had looked at the law for the perfection it required, they should have seen themselves as sinners. The false sense of joy which they had should have been turned into depression. Their laughter should have been replaced with tears. Their sense of exaltation before God should have been humiliation. Therefore James wrote:

Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. (James 4:9-10)

The net result of the humiliation which the law produced could have been salvation if it had performed its *schoolmaster* role, but it did not, in most cases, because the Judaizers, who followed Paul into Galatia, perverted the gospel by the addition of ritual and law to the grace of God. Therefore Paul wrote his epistle to the Galatians to correct this error:

Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed [Christ] should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness would have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. (Galatians 3:19-25, emphasis mine)

Despite Paul's clear teaching on the relationship of a believer to the law, many denominations have added the necessity of ritual and law to the grace of God for salvation. Therefore Paul made his appeal to the Gentiles, and James made his appeal to the Jews of *the*

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twelve tribes scattered abroad, so they would both clearly see that a man cannot be justified by the deeds of the law. Justification before God is available only through the grace of God by faith in Jesus Christ. He fully satisfied the righteousness and legal aspects of the law as well as offering Himself as a ransom for sin. Thus He truly is the only way into the presence of God.