

# The Way Of Cleansing

by James H. McConkey

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# The Way of Cleansing or Victory Over the Practice of Sin

*"Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Cor. 7:1).*

What is the final secret of victory over sin for the believer? Let us illustrate. You remember that when the priest came into the Tabernacle, the first object he met was the great brazen altar upon which he made the sacrifice for the sins of the people and for those of himself. Then as he passed on toward the Holy of Holies, the next object he met was the brazen laver. This was made of the metal which composed the consecrated mirrors of the women and was filled with water. As the priest looked into mirror and water he saw himself, even as the believer sees himself when he looks into the Spirit-indwelt Word of God. In this brazen laver then the priest was to wash. If he passed by it without washing, the penalty was death. Here is a striking teaching for the Christian. He has been washed from the guilt of sin by the Blood of Christ. But,

as he goes his way he must cleanse his daily life from the practice of sin. And wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? "By taking heed thereunto according to Thy Word." So as the Word of God, which is the mirror of revelation of His will, reveals to the believer his own practice of sin, he is to cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh, and is to perfect his holiness in the fear of God. Day by day, as the Word of God reveals these shortcomings and shows him where his life falls short of the holiness which God requires of him as revealed in His Word, he is to cleanse his life according to that Word. That is, because he has given himself in consecration to do the will of God, he is to cleanse himself from the practice of anything in his life which falls short of that will. Here is where multitudes of believers fail. They have accepted by faith their emancipation from the slave-mastership of sin by the cross of Christ. They have yielded themselves in consecration to God to become His servants. They have wonderful manifestations of the presence and power of God in their innermost souls. But by and by this begins to fade. They begin to talk of a lost experience. They say the joy of Christ and the peace of Christ which once they knew has fled away and they do not understand why. Would you know the explanation? They have failed to learn the

last great secret of victory over sin. They do not conform their practical daily life to the revealing and cleansing Word of God.

"If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body" is God's Word in Romans 8:13. Or, as Moule's fine translation puts it "If ye through the Spirit keep doing to death the practices of the body." It takes us back to the Lord's word to Saul, through Samuel:

"What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep...and the lowing of oxen?" God had ordered them put to death. But Saul had kept them alive. So God tells us to keep "doing to death" the practices of the flesh, but we keep them alive. And God is obliged to ask us the same question He put to Saul. What mean these jealousies, and envyings, and lust for high places among men who bear the name of the humble Nazarene? What mean these murmurings against God because we cannot see every turn of the path or understand every way of the Lord in dealing with us poor lumps of clay? What mean our testiness, impatience, resentfulness, and unlovingness toward others who are not quite as attractive in person or spirit or habits as we think we ourselves are? What mean our unfaith and unrepudiated doubts toward a loving father in times of stress, or need, or darkness of the way? What means all these practices of the Flesh which we defend and

suffer in our Christian lives by saying, "Well God does not expect a man to be perfect!" But what does God mean when He says through Paul, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh?" He means just what He says. We are to turn over the boards and planks on top of which we have been walking our pathway of life; let the sunshine of God's Word shine in upon the hideous creeping things of the Flesh which are underneath our life walk; and then we are day by day to "do to death" the whole loathsome brood which has lost us the throne of our spiritual power even as the Flesh with its disobedience lost Saul his. There is nothing so hateful to God as sin. Yet there is nothing so common as to hear it palliated by men who are the "sons of God" and are called to "walk worthy of Him."

### *Sin in the Members*

*"Yield your members servants to righteousness" (6:19).*

Physicians will tell you that if blood-poison gets into the system it will soon possess all the members of the body, such as, ear, nose, throat, etc., which are the outward expressions of the body's activities. So sin in the Flesh soon spreads through the entire being of the Christian and takes pos-

session of the members of the body. It uses the eye, the ear, the mind, the imagination and becomes a defiling power in everything the believer does. So the Word of God in Romans 8:13 says to the Christian, "If ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." As already noted Moule's fine translation of this is, "If ye through the Spirit 'do to death' the practices of the body ye shall live." In other words, the believer is called to do to death these practices of sin which have gotten control of the members of the body. This is practical holiness. This is the fruit of the holiness of which Paul speaks in Romans 6:22. Let us notice some of the members which sin uses in this way.

First—

### *Sin uses THE EYES*

"I have made a covenant with mine eyes," was Job's statement. And every believer needs sorely to make such a covenant! Sights we ought not to gaze upon may come under the range of our eyes without any volition of our own. But it is the second look that counts. The first may be, and usually is, accidental or incidental. But the second look has in it the sin of choice. And it is there our guilt begins. You know what I mean. And it is here that we are responsi-

ble, and here that our defeat is born, if we have not learned the secret of victory at this point. There is a clear border line between things which thrust themselves upon our vision, and things which we choose to look upon. The one is innocence; the other is sin. So long as we are in the world we cannot escape the first. But unless we "keep doing to death" the second we will find ourselves daily skirting the edge of the precipice of sin and final downfall. Too many catastrophes, spiritually and moral, have come to pass here to allow any man to trifle with the lust of the eyes. Through the open portal of the eyes the destroyer has entered into the innermost lives of thousands and hurled them from the place and path of purity into the slough of sensual sin and shameful defeat. Make a covenant with your eyes, and, by the grace of God, "keep yourselves unspotted" from the defilements that are waiting to enter by that easy route. The appeal of the eye is the deadliest and easiest route to the soul's undoing, and the nation will some day, when it is too late, awaken to the fact that the modern movies have wrought the moral wreck and ruin of its youth. (We believe that if Mr. McConkey were living he would add television).

*Sin uses THE MIND*



Keep it clean. Not only keep your own lips clean from the shady story, but stop another man when he starts to tell you one. For the mind is the vestibule of the heart. Keep out the pitch and the slime of impurity in any shape or form, else it will soon seep down into the heart and become the seed of deadly temptation. All foul and suggestive things which enter the mind are like the streams which feed the river of lust and passion, and unless you shut off these tiny streams the river will overflow its banks in some unguarded hour, and work your moral and spiritual undoing. Do not think of telling a story that will pollute a boy's mind. Do not let any man tell you one. Get out of earshot. Move on. You remember General Grant's fine rebuke of an officer who began a doubtful story by saying, "I see there are no ladies here," Grant's stern reply was, "Yes, but there are gentlemen here, sir." Even in the holy hour of prayer sin will endeavor to pollute and occupy the mind if possible. Guard that mind with care from every avenue of defilement. And in your quiet hour beware that your imagination is not suffered to become the dwelling place of sinful thoughts and imagery.

### *Sin uses THE LIPS*

How we sin with our lips! Hasty words;

bitter words; cruel words; unkind words; critical words! How Christian men and women need to do to death all such sinful words! There is no one of our members which sin uses with more deadly effect than the lips. Sinful words are like the stabs of a stiletto. They go straight to the heart. They cause wounds so deep they can never be healed. They bring estrangement into the lives of multitudes. They mar and blast the most beautiful friendships. More Christian men and women fail and fall and sin at this point than at any other in their lives. Unguarded lips in unguarded moments work the wreck and ruin of many lives.

### *Other Sins*

Many other forms of sin there are with which Christians are only too familiar. There is the sin of anxious care. Only when we put this in the sin family and see that it is distrust of God and His loving care, do we begin to get victory here. There is the sin of covetousness which has laid hold of multitudes of Christian men and so enslaved them that they do not realize it to be a sin. There is the sin of murmuring against God and His providential dealings in our lives, of which the Israelites were so heinously guilty. There is the sin of indulging in some form of the fleshly lusts

which war against the soul. Keep doing to death these practices of the body until they have no place in your life and in your walk.

### *The Secret of Failure*

With multitudes of Christians their failure of victory is right here. Their lost victory is this victory of mortification. They have learned to reckon themselves dead to sin through our Lord Jesus Christ. They have given themselves in a real consecration to Him. They have known most blessed and definite manifestations of His presence and power. But here they have stopped. They fail in the progression of victory; in the practical victory in their daily lives. What they need is to bring to bar before God every sin revealed to them by the Spirit and the Word of God; to lay down the straight edge of that Word alongside of those daily lives; and then with steady, unflinching hand and heart, to keep "doing to death" that practice of sin which has become a habit in their members until they have it in triumph under their feet, and its power and practice passes out of their daily lives.

### *Perfecting Our Holiness*

The text quoted above says we are to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the

flesh. That we are to perfect our holiness in the fear of God. But someone says, "How can this be? How can we cleanse ourselves from all filthiness? How can any man live a perfect life?" Let us answer in a very practical way. There are some sins in your life over which you practically have complete victory. There is the temptation to murder, or the temptation to steal. Your victory over these is practically complete. Now there is no reason in the world why any Christian man should not bring every sin of the flesh to the bar of his conscience, and keep doing it to death day by day, until he gets the same victory over it that he has over the temptation to steal or murder. This passage does not mean holiness of nature, but holiness of walk. For no believer has any innate, intrinsic holiness of nature apart from the holiness of Christ dwelling within him. But every believer is called to holiness of walk and dare not set before himself any lower standard than that set by this text, namely, that he cleanse himself from ALL filthiness of the flesh. As a matter of simple, practical common sense every man of us would be well satisfied to have as complete a victory over all filthiness of the flesh as we have over the temptation to steal or to murder. *Sinlessness of nature* is one thing, and is not ours to possess. But victory over the *practice of sin* in our lives is another thing, and every child

of God is expected to realize it. To attempt to justify our failure of victory over sin by saying that no man can be perfect is much of a quibble. It is a kind of spiritual smoke-screen to conceal the humiliation of our daily defeat. Let us be honest enough to discern and acknowledge this vast difference between *sinlessness of nature and holiness of walk*. The Apostle John makes it beautifully clear. "If any man say that *he hath no sin* he deceiveth himself." "But these things I write unto you, little children, *that ye sin not*." In other words, if any man say that he is sinless, that is, has no sinful nature, he deceiveth himself, says John. But every believer is called to victory over the practice of sin, that is, to a holy walk in Christ Jesus.

### *A Defiled Temple*

A beloved friend cites this fine illustration culled from mediaeval history:—"In the peninsula of Sinai at the foot of the mountain of the law, stands the ancient monastery of St. Katharine, the oldest religious monastery in all that region. Built in the twelfth century, it has withstood the fierce monsoon sweeping over the desert; it has stood the poverty of the land, the summer's scorching and the winter's cold. Through centuries hordes of Saracens have again and again sought to destroy this

insult to the Crescent and the prophet Mohamet. In the 16th century one of these attacks was upon the point of being successful. The Abbot of the monastery and the Mohammedan general made this grim bargain which the Abbot accepted; That a Mohammedan Mosque with all of the accessories be established in the very heart of the Monastery, in one of the innermost rooms, and that the Mohammedan pilgrims be permitted to worship there once a year. And so it was for many centuries until the power of the Turk was broken. The Monks never referred to it; it was a room that was closed save for the yearly pilgrimage. And yet the monastery lost its ancient glory and became pitiful because of that room within." The story has its spiritual analogy. The believer's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. It is to be kept clean from the practice of sin. If it is not, its glory is dimmed and the Spirit's victory through it is marred and hindered.

### *The Call to Mortification*

The secret dalliance with sin ends in the open shame. The backward look toward the abandoned land of the flesh still brings the Lord's sharp rebuke, "Remember Lot's wife." Job's Old Testament teaching "I have made a covenant with mine eyes," finds its counterpart in Paul's, "Yield not your

members." The break with sin in the heart of the believer must be real if the indwelling Christ is to be a realization. When sin is still cherished as a sweet, even though forbidden morsel under the tongue; when there is a lingering grasp instead of a cleanly broken one; when the imagination wanders in pathways which we have closed to our feet; when the flesh though discrowned is not yet despised and spurned; in short wherever a man has not pressed the issue of separation to the bitter end, and made the break with sin clean-cut, absolute, and all-comprehensive, then let him look to himself, for he will surely drink of the bitter cup of defeat.

The above is the fourth chapter of Mr. McConkey's book "The Way of Victory." We shall be glad to send you a copy if you will request it.

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