

This is a portion of a larger book. In this version, the Bible texts have been modified into modern English, the punctuation improved, headings and emphasis may have been added, and some sentences realigned.

Chap. 3

Controlling the Appetites and Passions

Abstain from fleshy lusts, which war against the soul,” is the language of the apostle Peter (1 Peter 2:11).

Many regard this text as a warning against licentiousness only, but it has a broader meaning. It forbids every injurious gratification of appetite or passion. Let none who profess godliness regard with indifference the health of the body, and flatter themselves that intemperance is no sin, and will not affect their spirituality.

A close sympathy exists between the physical and the moral nature.

Any habit which does not promote health degrades the higher and nobler faculties.

Wrong habits of eating and drinking lead to errors in thought and action. Indulgence of appetite strengthens the animal [physical] propensities, giving them the ascendancy over the mental and spiritual powers.

It is impossible for any to enjoy the blessing of sanctification while they are selfish and gluttonous. Many groan under a burden of infirmities because of wrong habits of eating and drinking, which do violence to the laws of life and health. They are enfeebling their digestive organs by indulging perverted appetite.

The power of the human constitution to resist the abuses put upon it is wonderful, but persistent wrong habits in excessive eating and drinking will enfeeble every function of the body. In the gratification of perverted appetite and passion even professed Christians cripple nature in her work and lessen physical, mental, and moral power.

Let these feeble ones consider what they might have been had they lived temperately and promoted health instead of abusing it.

Not an Impossible Standard

When Paul wrote, “The very God of peace sanctify you wholly” (1 Thessalonians 5:23), he did not exhort his brothers [and sisters] to aim at a standard which it was impossible for them to reach; he did not pray that they might have blessings which it was not the will of God to give. He knew that all who would be fitted to meet Christ in peace must possess a pure and holy character.

“Every man that strives for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beats the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Corinthians 9:25-27).

“What? know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own? For you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

An Unblemished Offering

Again, the apostle writes to the believers, “I beseech you therefore, brothers [and sisters], by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1). Specific directions were given to ancient Israel that no defective or diseased animal should be presented as an offering to God. Only the most perfect were to be selected for this purpose.

The LORD, though the prophet Malachi, most severely reproved His people for departing from these instructions.

“A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a Father, where is My honour? And if I be a Master, where is My fear [respect]? says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, that despise My name. And you say, ‘Wherein have we despised Your name?’ You offer polluted bread upon My altar; and you say, ‘Wherein have we polluted You?’ In that you say, ‘The table of the LORD is contemptible’. And if you offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now to your governor; will he be pleased with you, or accept your person? says the LORD of hosts . . . You brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus you brought

an offering: should I accept this of your hand? says the LORD” (Malachi 1:6-13).

Though addressed to ancient Israel, these words contain a lesson for the people of God today. When the apostle appeals to his brothers [and sisters] to present their bodies “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God,” he sets forth the principles of true sanctification.

It is not merely a theory, an emotion, or a form of words, but a living, active principle, entering into the everyday life.

It requires that our habits of eating, drinking, and dressing be such as to secure the preservation of physical, mental, and moral health, that we may present to the LORD our bodies, not an offering corrupted by wrong habits, but “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God”.

Stimulants and Narcotics

Peter's admonition to abstain from fleshly lusts is a most direct and forcible warning against the use of all such stimulants and narcotics as tea, coffee, tobacco, alcohol, and morphine. These indulgences may well be classed among the lusts that exert a pernicious influence upon moral character. The earlier these hurtful habits are formed, the more firmly will they hold their victim in slavery to lust, and the more certainly will they lower the standard of spirituality.

Bible teaching will make but a feeble impression upon those whose faculties are benumbed by self-gratification. Thousands will sacrifice not only health and life but their hope of heaven before they will wage war against their own perverted appetites. One lady who for many years claimed to be sanctified, made the statement that if she must give up her pipe or heaven she would say, “Farewell, heaven; I cannot overcome my love for my pipe”. This idol had been enshrined in the soul, leaving to Jesus a subordinate place. Yet this woman claimed to be wholly the LORD's!

Lusts That War Against the Soul

Wherever they may be, those who are truly sanctified will elevate the moral standard by preserving correct physical habits, and, like Daniel, presenting to others an example of temperance and self-denial.

Every depraved appetite becomes a warring lust.

Everything that conflicts with natural law creates a diseased condition of the soul. The indulgence of appetite produces a dyspeptic stomach, a torpid liver, a clouded brain, and thus perverts the temper and spirit of the man. And these enfeebled powers are offered to God, who refused to accept the victims for sacrifice unless they were without a blemish! It is our duty to bring our appetites and our habits of life into conformity to natural law. If the bodies offered upon Christ's altar were examined with the close scrutiny to which the Jewish sacrifices were subjected, who would be accepted?

With what care should Christians regulate their habits, that they may preserve the full vigor of every faculty to give to the service of Christ. If we would be sanctified, in soul, body, and spirit, we must live in conformity to the divine law. The heart cannot preserve consecration to God while the appetites and passions are indulged at the expense of health and life. Those who violate the laws upon which health depends, must suffer the penalty. They have so limited their abilities in every sense that they cannot properly discharge their duties to their fellow men, and they utterly fail to answer the claims of God.

When Lord Palmerston, premier of England, was petitioned by the Scotch clergy to appoint a day of fasting and prayer to avert the cholera, he replied, in effect, "Cleanse and disinfect your streets and houses, promote cleanliness and health among the poor, and see that they are plentifully supplied with good food and raiment, and employ right sanitary measures generally, and you will have no occasion to fast and pray. Nor will the LORD hear your prayers while these, His preventives, remain unheeded".

Says Paul, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1). He presents for our encouragement the freedom enjoyed by the truly sanctified: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1). He charges the Galatians, "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16). He names some of the forms of fleshly lust – "idolatry . . . drunkenness . . . and such like" (verses 20, 21). And after mentioning the fruits of the Spirit, among which is temperance, he adds, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (verse 24).

Tobacco

James says that the wisdom which is from above is “first pure” (James 3:17). If he had seen his brothers [and sisters] using tobacco, would he not have denounced the practice as “earthly, sensual, devilish” (verse 15)? In this age of Christian light, how often the lips that take the precious name of Christ are defiled by tobacco spittle and the breath is polluted with the stench. Surely, the soul that can enjoy such uncleanness must also be defiled. As I have seen men who claimed to enjoy the blessing of entire sanctification, while they were slaves to tobacco, polluting everything around them, I have thought, How would heaven appear with tobacco users in it? God's word has plainly declared that “there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defiles” (Revelation 21:27). How, then, can those who indulge this filthy habit hope to find admittance there?

Men professing godliness offer their bodies upon Satan's altar and burn the incense of tobacco to his satanic majesty. Does this statement seem severe? Certainly, the offering is presented to some deity. As God is pure and holy, and will accept nothing defiling in its character, He must refuse this expensive, filthy, and unholy sacrifice; therefore we conclude that Satan is the one who claims the honour.

Jesus died to rescue man from the grasp of Satan. He came to set us free by the blood of His atoning sacrifice. The man who has become the property of Jesus Christ, and whose body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, will not be enslaved by the pernicious habit of tobacco using. His powers belong to Christ, who has bought him with the price of blood. His property is the LORD's. How, then, can he be guiltless in expending every day the LORD's entrusted capital to gratify an appetite which has no foundation in nature?

An enormous sum is yearly squandered for this indulgence, while souls are perishing for the word of life. Professed Christians rob God in tithes and offerings, while they offer on the altar of destroying lust, in the use of tobacco, more than they give to relieve the poor or to supply the wants of God's cause.

Those who are truly sanctified will overcome every hurtful lust.

Then all these channels of needless expense will be turned to the LORD's treasury, and Christians will take the lead in self-denial, in self-sacrifice, and in temperance. Then they will be the light of the world.

Tea and Coffee

Tea and coffee, as well as tobacco, have an injurious effect upon the system. Tea is intoxicating. Though less in degree, its effect is the same in character as that of spirituous liquors. Coffee has a greater tendency to becloud the intellect and benumb the energies. It is not so powerful as tobacco, but is similar in its effect. The arguments brought against tobacco may also be urged against the use of tea and coffee.

When those who are in the habit of using tea, coffee, tobacco, opium, or spirituous liquors are deprived of the accustomed indulgence, they find it impossible to engage with interest and zeal in the worship of God. Divine grace seems powerless to enliven or spiritualize their prayers or their testimonies. These professed Christians should consider the source of their enjoyment. Is it from above, or from beneath?

To a user of stimulants, everything seems insipid without the darling indulgence. This deadens the natural sensibilities of both body and mind and renders him less susceptible to the influence of the Holy Spirit. In the absence of the usual stimulant he has a hungering of body and soul, not for righteousness, not for holiness, not for God's presence, but for his cherished idol. In the indulgence of hurtful lusts, professed Christians are daily enfeebling their powers, making it impossible to glorify God.

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