

No.  
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"IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS  
WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE  
RIGHT HAND OF GOD." COL. 3. 1.

THE LAVER.

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by

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Our tabernacle subject, beloved friends, is the Laver. The whole of the tabernacle is full of Christ, and therefore full of His people; but can you separate HIM from HIS people? Impossible! You recollect that in the book of Exodus we have brought before us God's appointment for the Laver, in chapter 30. 17, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the Lord: So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations". And in chapter 38. 8, "And he made the laver of brass, and the foot of it of brass, of the looking-glasses of the women assembling, which assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation". And chapter 40. 30, "And he set the laver between the tent of the congregation and the altar, and put water there, to wash withal. And Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet thereat: When they went into the tent of the congregation, and when they came near unto the altar, they washed; as the Lord commanded Moses. And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate. So Moses finished the work".

Here we have instructions as to the Laver several times, but not so early in the record as some other parts of the tabernacle. Yet sometimes (indeed always), the silence and order of

Scripture are full of teaching. What was the shape of the laver? We have only hints. It was probably round: the temple-parallel may imply this. What was the exact size of the laver? We cannot tell. God has a reason for not telling us. But we know the MATERIAL of the laver. It was made of brass, or, as the Hebrew word signifies, copper, which denotes strength and particularly earthly glory; at least (shall we not rather put it?), glory manifested upon earth, for EARTHLY glory is of a very different character. A RESISTING strength, and a glory manifested upon earth! The laver was not made of ordinary copper, it was made of looking-brasses. We call them looking-glasses, but the ancients' looking-glasses were looking-brasses. It was made of those.

Precious thoughts at once begin to flow in. First of all, we can say that the laver "reflected". Now what would it reflect? The nearest object was the altar. Upon that was the continued fire with the sacrifice. The looking-brass reflected the glory of the sacrifice. But also the priest, on going near the laver, would see something of HIMSELF. What is there that reflects Christ's glory and shows me myself? Furthermore, we have brought before us that which was given up by the women. A peculiar privilege was granted to the women of Israel to make the laver. God has special privileges for different ones. I do not mean they made the laver, from the mechanical standpoint, but they supplied the material. They GAVE UP that which Eastern women valued, looking-brasses. They assembled for worship instead of keeping their looking-brasses. Now, the looking-brasses were linked with personal adornment; therefore, the giving up was a denial of self. Happy are believing sisters who give up that which pleases the flesh. Love to the Lord involves a putting aside of personal adornment. Here was the privilege granted to God's people

in those days. But at once the typical teaching shines out. Assemblies are brought before us as sister-assemblies (in e.g. 1 Pet.5.13 and 2 John), even as the whole assembly is regarded as the Bride. Miniatures of the Bride are therefore thus pictured. What if we have here a picture of the united Bride and of the local assemblies? Would this fit the Divine teaching? Let us go a step further. What was put inside the laver? Water. Nothing but water. What is the symbolism of water? The washing of water is linked with the Word in Eph. 5. The Word of Truth has a cleansing power. Thus was there strength upon earth, glory manifested upon earth; and fittingly the laver was placed in the court which pictured earth. What then? Assemblies of God's people united together should reflect the Lord Jesus and His finished work; and show also to His servants themselves and their needs; and make manifest the giving up of earthly pleasures and earthly adornment, and be occupied with possessing unitedly, and holding, the Words of Truth - the Words of Truth alone! Ah, this is a beautiful thought. Let me repeat it. Sister assemblies on earth are to make one complete assembly. They are to be found with a strength that resists evil, and is a glory BEFORE GOD on the earth. They are to have one testimony, the testimony of the Word of Truth, which they not only acknowledge, but hold, and hold, not for creed purposes, but for the purpose of godly use, as a cleansing Word. Moreover, in their unity they are to reflect at all times the finished work of the Lord Jesus, and the needs of His worshipping people, that they may individually and collectively use the Truth for the cleansing of their hands and feet, that their walk and activities may please God.

I want to be gathered with an assembly of God's people. Yes, well and good. What comes

first? The altar or the laver? The altar. Am I a child of God? Am I redeemed by blood? I get to that position, and I go on to the laver. Can I be linked with a company of God's people? Let me see, the laver is only for the PRIESTLY family. 1 Pet. 2 helps us. If I have stood the first test, I have acknowledged the blood, I am in the High Priest's family. Am I willing to use the water of the Word? Salvation by blood, regeneration and bringing into the family of God's people, and then holiness of life, in the power of the Holy Spirit, as the PROOF of being born from above, and willingness for the water of the Word - these are the stepping-stones to true worship. No priest dared to enter to worship at the holy place unless he washed at the laver. You cannot go straight from the altar to the holy place, nor can you go straight from confessing Christ to a position of Christian fellowship in an assembly, in its worshipping aspect. Do you own the Word in its cleansing power? God does not separate the two things. He does not say if I profess to be a Christian then I have a right to be gathered with believers. Do I profess to be a Christian? Am I acknowledging the blood of Christ? and also acknowledging the Word in its cleansing power? John 13. 10 illustrates. When Israel were brought out of Egypt they had the blood of the Passover, but the casting out of the leaven is emphasized immediately afterwards. Unless by personal sanctification we show we have been justified, we cannot be recognized as children of God. THAT is Divine teaching. It is throughout Scripture. A Scriptural gathering is not a gathering of those who call themselves Christians, but of DISCIPLES, and you cannot tell who is a disciple, except VIA disciplelikeness. There is no other principle acknowledged in the Words of God. First the altar, then the laver, then the Holy Place. Baptism pictures acknowledgment of atonement and

humble recognition of personal ruin, and the beginning of a new life. Hence, John 13. 10 alludes to its symbolism, and then to the subsequent repeated cleansing - so is it here. Baptism is deeply important, but the CONTINUED use of the laver must follow.

I go a step further. We may have been gathered years ago, but WHENEVER we gather there is one principle that always applies. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat". No believer is entitled to come to the Breaking of Bread without SELF-EXAMINATION first. Self-examination is not merely an introspection, it is the application of the water of the Word. That is the TRUE self-examination. The hands speak of action, and the feet of walk. Not only must my actions please God, but my whole character, my walk, if I am to be rightly worshipping.

You will notice the worship was NOT in the court. God has no place of worship ON EARTH. The usual expression "place of worship" is unscriptural. We have boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus. THAT is the place of worship. But the washing, the cleansing, is on earth. It is so easy for us to confuse the two aspects, and to lose much spiritually thereby. Beloved friends, it is easy, it is natural, rather to take the laver into the holy place and to bring the holy place out to the laver. Have you not known children of God who, in the middle of worship, bring in the laver? They seem somewhat to lose the joy of a position of worship in heavenly places, and go out to the laver in the middle of it. We do need to realize that the stress is the laver FIRST, and then we are to go into the holy place realizing no more conscience of sins, that the whole work has been finished by the Lord Jesus, and His people acknowledging that, are to rejoice in their heavenly calling and in all that it

involves. Sin has been judged and dealt with, and thus there is the enjoyment of the heavenly place. Do not misunderstand me. I can recognize, beloved friends, that if in the middle of our worship we are brought in any way to feel our shortcomings, it is quite right that we should go out quickly again to the laver before we come back to worship, and that we may individually confess sin if we realize it in the middle of worship, and we may even need to do so collectively. But the general tendency is to confuse the two thoughts. Ah, we need to realize the laver upon earth, AND the worship in the counterpart of the tabernacle. The bread was there, the lampstand with the ascending light was there, with the rent veil and access to the Holiest, and the altar of incense there.

An Assembly, consequently, is a place where the words of God are honoured, where self-esteem is shut out, for the looking-brasses are removed. I take it that this not only suggests a parallel with such passages as 1 Cor. 11. 1-16 and 1 Tim. 2. 9, 10, and shows the godly concern believers should have in these simple, practical matters of adornment, but also gives the general principle which extends far beyond looking-brasses - the general principle of shutting out the exaltation of the body. We judge the flesh. The position of an assembly pleasing to God involves having no confidence in the flesh. There are many more looking-brasses than those which were held by the women in Israel. ANYTHING that exalts the flesh is rightly shut out from an assembly. Look to Phil. 3. If we are to have a right position in an assembly, we must give up OUR looking-brasses, and we must emphasize that the looking-brasses henceforth are to reflect Christ, and if they show us anything, to show us our need for the laver. This is the true attitude. If there is any self-glorification, the real glory of an assembly is tarnished.

May we not go a step further? How does the laver stand? I have hitherto left that point out, not with any wish to leave it out. The water would have all been spilt but for the laver and ITS FOOT, and the word "Foot" is not sufficient, rather we think of the laver and ITS FOUNDATION. You go to the tabernacle, and you find the boards of the tabernacle are standing upright, because they have silver sockets of redemption. All the foundations picture Christ, you cannot have another foundation, and there is no doubt as to this matter; the Foundation here pictures Christ. But here is a different aspect to that which we have inside the tabernacle room on the mercy-seat. The cherubim are of one piece with the mercy-seat - THERE we behold Christ glorified and His people glorified in Him. The lampstand is of one talent, and the branches come out from the lampstand. THERE we have the Lord's redeemed members united with Him on resurrection ground, for where there is gold there is a type of living union; where there is copper there is not exactly the same ASPECT of living union. Observe the difference! Gold pictures living union in heavenly places. We are united to Christ in resurrection ground and glory. The copper typifies strength of character to resist. In that aspect, we behold a resting UPON Christ, and RESPONSIBILITY. Hence the laver stands upon this foundation; it fits upon this foundation. The socket of redemption makes it possible for a gathering around the Lord, - the house. But there is another possession we have to hold fast - the faithful Word, and in this connection there must be the laver AND ITS FOUNDATION. Again and again it is thus mentioned, the laver AND its foot: not one without the other. Unless you and I are brought to emphasize THE Foundation, we shall make grave mistakes. There cannot be Christian

fellowship without the Foundation that Paul says was laid for a Christian assembly, in 1 Cor. 3. The united assembly, a local assembly, are alike in this matter. Christ exalted, the Foundation. All our nearness is linked therewith. Now observe the two thoughts. The united assembly - only one laver. All the looking-brasses blended TOGETHER - the united assembly resting upon one Foundation. That was God's own beautiful manifestation, and every measurable enjoyment of Christ in these days will have a measurable reminder of that original plan.

Do we want the words of God? We do; we want them as our food; we want them as the water, to apply them; but, as an unsaved soul, we cannot reach them. We must come to the altar first; having come to the altar, if we wish to apply them aright, we do not apply them simply to get information, but because we love to be worshippers, to go in. Unless we apply the Word in order that we may be worshippers, unless we recognize that to be gathered with a Christian assembly is deeply important, we cannot apply the Truth rightly. Individualism finds no place in Scripture; I cannot find the laver except VIA the altar. When I reach the altar I must go on next to the laver if I am a member of the High Priest's family - that is my responsibility. Fellowship with saints is deeply important. You cannot have an assembly with excusing of sin; there must be the washing of the feet; there must be a recognition of failure, and this involves that intimate concern for one another which Scripture recognizes as true affection, even though it be not so regarded by all in these "independent" days.

Observe, further, beloved friends, the link of the three thoughts: Christ is the Foundation for all witness, the unity of the redeemed, the exaltation of the Word. Ah, it is deeply important to recognize that a Christian assembly

is not simply an arrangement whereby believers can come together and meet to break bread ONCE A WEEK; it is a gathering of those who acknowledge no confidence in the flesh, but exalt Christ and recognize the need for purity of life, and for a worship that glorifies God, all the week. That is the aspect. Now, we can well understand why the laver is placed just where it is, and why the Holy Spirit lays His stress upon this placing, and only as we take the attitude of recognizing this can we hope to see God's work of uniting His dear people in these dark days - only as we lay the stress on the water. An empty laver is an empty witness, a useless witness, yea, no witness at all; but if there is to be the water there should be the laver to contain it. The foot without the laver would be incomplete, and Christ DESIRES a witnessing people on earth. But the laver without the foot would fall. The water without the laver would not be recognized upon the earth. You must have the three together; the Holy Spirit has linked them. The foot fundamental, the laver with the object of keeping the water; and Aaron and his sons wash, not thereat, not THEREIN, but THEREFROM. This is the expression which Scripture uses. And we are not told that the laver became empty, we are not told of the filling of the laver. Blessed be God, Who always supplies sufficient water to wash, and we are to wash therefrom. There is not the aspect of making the laver unclean, or the water unclean. The Word of Truth always remains clean. We wash THEREFROM. God always supplies to meet every need of His people with the Word of Truth. We wash THEREFROM. Ah, beloved friends, if you and I are gathered with any of His dear saints, let us remember whenever we come to a meeting we expect to find that there must be some washing. Now that is not always the idea of an "enjoyable" meeting. "I have had a blessing" says one, and so may go

forth with an impulsive sentiment. We need something far deeper. Thanks be unto God, there are blessings, rich blessings, but there is something far deeper than the mere sentimental thought of a blessing. If we wash at the laver, so that we become more fit to worship our glorious God in that loving fellowship which He has appointed for the redeemed family, in the power of the Holy Spirit, THIS exalts Him. Oh that you and I may enter into what THIS means, and that we might cry unto Him with concern for His people everywhere that there may not be only a readiness to talk of the glorious aspect of the altar, and of the tabernacle, but that we may not forget how in between the altar and the tabernacle, where worship was appointed, there was the laver with the water, and that was needed by EVERY priest on EVERY occasion that he drew near or sought to serve God in ANY way with respect to the tabernacle. The Lord give us grace to accept His teaching, whatever it means! Thus shall we please Him!

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