

## "Without spot."

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In Numbers 19 we find, in the Authorised Version of the Bible, the first introduction of the words "without spot" in relation to the Jewish sacrifices. Whilst the word used for "spot" in the original language is differently translated in earlier books, it is nevertheless apparent that there is an additional thought in Numbers — indicated doubtless in the words "upon which never came yoke." It is of immense typical significance that these words should first appear in the book which speaks of the journey of God's people through the wilderness. Every sacrifice was to be entirely free from blemish and defect, but in Numbers 19 the additional requisite of freedom from yoke is introduced.

The full import of the instructions thus given by God to His earthly people is not perceived until our affections are happily engaged with our Lord Jesus Christ — in whom, and in whom alone, the perfect answer to every type is seen. The absolute perfection of His Holy Person illumines the pages of Scripture — unblemished, faultless, without blame — perfect in every thought and word and deed. The blessed God looking upon Him as He moved among men found complete delight in Him; the very atmosphere of heaven in all its purity and holiness was present in Him here! (John 3: 13).

As coming into manhood He was holy in His conception (Luke 1: 35); He was recognised as "the Holy One of God" (Mark 1: 24); the Spirit of holiness was manifested in His works of power (Romans 1: 24); Peter's reference to the resurrection in Acts 2 identifies Christ as "Thine (God's) Holy One" (v. 27); in His judicial movements amongst the churches He is presented as "He that is holy, He that is true" (Revelation 3: 7); Hebrews 7: 26 speaks of Him as a High Priest "who is holy, harmless, undefiled" — the words "holy" here and in Acts 2 (and also Paul's similar reference in Acts 13) indicating the intrinsic perfection of His holy Person. With fresh delight we read again the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the unblemished character of this precious Christ of God — "He knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5: 21); "He did no sin" (1 Peter 2: 22); "in Him is no sin" (1 John 3: 5). All creation is silenced by His challenge — "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" (John 8: 46). Holy Saviour — glorious Antitype of unnumbered offerings — "without blemish"!

In His pathway through this world the Lord Jesus, pure and holy in His own person, contracted no stain from the conditions with which He was surrounded — He was truly "without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke" (Numbers 19: 2). The temptation of Satan, with its offer of "the kingdoms of the world . . . and the glory of them" completely failed to influence His thoughts or movements; the envy and scorn of the Pharisees; the mocking materialism of the Sadducees; the unbelief of His brethren; as also the transient adulation of those who would make Him a king, caused no deviation from His steadfast pathway of unswerving devotion to the will of God. Conditions obtaining in the world through which He journeyed moved Him in His compassions, but were utterly powerless to affect the motives of One whose meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him (John 4: 34). Did that pathway of obedience involve His complete rejection by the Nation, the misunderstanding of even the intimate circle of His own; the agony of Gethsemane, the shame and ignominy of the cross, with its utter dereliction? — steadfastly He set His face towards Jerusalem (Luke 9: 51) and there, at Calvary, "He offered Himself *without spot* to God" (Hebrews 9: 14). Precious, holy, unblemished, spotless Lamb of God!

O wondrous Saviour, Jesus, Lord,

Worthy alone to be adored!  
We worship now.  
So perfect in Thy matchless grace,  
So spotless, pure in all Thy ways!  
To thee we bow.

Contemplation of the perfections seen *objectively* in our beloved Lord would ever move our affections towards Him in praise and worship. He is supremely precious to the heart of the Father, and in marvellous grace He is precious to us! (cf. 1 Peter 2: 4-7).

The traits so perfectly expressed in Christ personally yield such infinite pleasure to the heart of God that He would, by the work of the Holy Spirit, have those same features reproduced in the lives of His people. The work of the Holy Spirit would always leave an impress of Christ — the holy standard ever before God Himself. The Scriptures testify abundantly to the truth that what God desires to see in the lives and demeanour of believers has first been revealed in its absolute perfection in His beloved Son.

Paul in his godly jealousy for the Corinthian believers would desire that they should be presented "as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11: 2). The words used by the Spirit of God in this verse are of tremendous significance. "Chaste" involves bodily purity and moral blamelessness — but additionally carries the thought of that which is marked by *awe*, something quite uncommon to the trend of things in this ungodly world. It also has the further thought of being costly in a sacrificial sense. If we would yield joy to the heart of Christ, then essentially the flesh must be refused! Burdened thus in his desire for the glory of his Lord in the saints, the apostle is marked by godly jealousy — a *glowing with fervent heat*.

Again, the apostle in Galatians 4, is prepared for an excess of travail in order that Christ might be formed in the saints. Not the *outward* observance of the law, however good and right that might be, but a walk bearing the evidence of Christ having an abiding *inward* place in their affections.

With what moral power the apostle could engage in such a service! It was his own "earnest expectation" "that with boldness, as *always, so now also* Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1: 20-21).

Precious indeed the service and ministry of all who have thus laboured, and still do labour, joying to see Christ held in the affections of His people and manifested in their lives; but there is One glorious Servant who, whilst giving His own fragrance to every true activity of His own, yet exceeds beyond measure in His gracious service to those upon whom His love is set. The breathings of His heart of love, instinct with priestly feelings, pervade the prayer of John 17. His own were in the world, but not of it, *even as He Himself was not of the world*. He would determine their position by the place He Himself took — "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." In the intimacy of well-known love He would say to the Father — "And now *I* come to Thee" — and, precious Saviour, He would carry us with Him to that realm of perfect joy, (cf. John 20: 17). The "Upper Room" ministry commences in the atmosphere of the Son's movements to the Father (John 13), and at the end of that wonderful occasion we read His precious desire — "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory" (John 17: 24). Part with Him indeed, in full unending measure! In that chapter the Lord, in speaking of this world, addresses God as "Righteous Father" (v. 25); but it is in keeping with our subject that, when speaking

of His own, He says "*Holy Father*" (v. 11). Adoringly we notice that, when speaking of His own desires, He says in utmost simplicity and intimacy "*Father*" (vv. 1, 5, 21, 24).

The atmosphere of eternity engages our hearts as we meditate upon the words of the Son to the Father in this chapter; and again in the Ephesian epistle we are privileged to see something of the greatness of those eternal thoughts which filled the heart of the blessed God.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who . . . hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be *holy and without blame* before Him in love" (Eph. 1: 3-4). What a precious insight into the glorious thoughts of the eternal God! These words surely give us the key to the whole epistle, the unfolding of God's greatest thoughts of blessing, the establishment of all in the Man of His purpose, and the saints of God brought into full and complete accord with the eternal purpose of God Himself! All is established in the activities of perfect love. "Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of the water 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*" (Eph. 5: 25-27). Thus as the result of Christ's skilful application of the word in the Spirit's power, the features seen so perfectly *objectively* in Christ are now seen reproduced in His own.

At the close of His pathway He "*offered Himself without spot to God;*" at the end of the wilderness pathway He will present the Church to Himself "*not having spot — holy and without blemish.*" Love has triumphed — a realm of satisfied affections and of unsullied glory is eternally secured!

Nor what is next Thy heart,  
Can we forget;  
Thy saints, O Lord, with Thee  
In glory met,  
Perfect in comeliness  
Before Thy face,  
The eternal witness all,  
Of Thine own grace.

*Objectively* — the truth seen in all its perfection and beauty in Christ personally.

*Subjectively* — that which is of Christ being formed *now* in His own, to be displayed in a day to come to the eternal praise of God.

What shall be our present *practical* response to this revelation and desire of divine love?

In his first epistle, 1 Peter 1, Peter, referring to the God who called them, exhorts the saints — "Be ye holy; for I am holy . . . Forasmuch as ye know that ye were .. redeemed . . . with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and *without spot.*" As we meditate upon the intrinsic holiness and worth of the One through whose precious blood we have been redeemed to God — how powerful would be the incentive to a life of corresponding holiness and reciprocal affection.

In the end of his first letter to Timothy (1 Tim. 6) Paul pours out the desire of his heart for his son in the faith — the pathway, the conflict of faith, the appreciation of the calling, and finally adds the charge — "That thou keep this commandment *without spot*, unrebukable, until the appearing of our

Lord Jesus Christ."

Likewise Peter, with the day of God filling his vision, exhorts those to whom he writes — "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace *without spot and blameless*".

Perfection in its spotless purity is seen in Christ; the work of the Holy Spirit and the sanctifying effect of the word of God will eventuate in the saints being presented to Christ — "a glorious church, not having spot . . . but . . . holy and without blemish." As in the enjoyment of these precious truths let us seek, beloved brethren, whether as humbly serving in view of Christ's appearing, or as gladly anticipating the day of God, to "be found of Him . *without spot*".

O Holy Father, keep us here  
In that blest name of love,  
Walking before Thee without fear,  
Till all be joy above.