Fins and Scales

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by

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F I N S  a n d  S C A L E S

A Series of Radio Messages
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In the eleventh chapter of Leviticus God has given us a picture of the believer's walk in a world of sin; and of the spiritual food provided for him in the Word of God, that he may maintain that walk with the Lord "in righteousness and true holiness." The chapter has to do with the clean and the unclean animals, fishes, birds, and creeping things, as set forth for Israel by Moses in the ceremonial law. Only those animals which had the cloven hoof and chewed the cud were pronounced clean by Jehovah. Only those fishes which had fins and scales were clean. Certain fowls and the creeping things were "an abomination" unto the Lord.

The cloven hoof represents a walk of separation from sin in a godless world. The chewing of the cud speaks to us of meditation upon the living Word of God, which alone can enable the Christian to walk with the Lord. The fins suggest power to rise above the degrading things that tend to drag us down in defeat. And the scales remind us of the Christian's "whole armour of God," given to enable him to resist the devil "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation" (Eph. 6:11; Phil. 2:15, R. V.). Certain birds and the creeping things of the earth speak of the depravity and deceitfulness of sin, over which the child of God can and should live victoriously—by His grace through the power of the Holy Spirit and the sacred Scriptures.

In other words, the eleventh chapter of Leviticus, in keeping with the message of the entire book, shows us how a redeemed people may live in the midst of a godless world, yet have fellowship with a holy God—only by a separated walk that leads to growth in grace, with consequent power and progress in a victorious battle against
Satan and sin. All this is the portion of the redeemed people of God, as they find their spiritual strength in the heaven-sent food, which is His unfailing, soul-satisfying Word.

The Way of the Cross—The Only Way of Approach to a Holy God

Before we consider, in some detail, the spiritual lessons set forth in this remarkable chapter, let us think for a moment of the message of Leviticus in its relationship to the whole Pentateuch, which we call "The Books of Moses." Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy are like a chain of five links, the one vitally connected to the other; and Leviticus, like all five of these inspired books, tells us that the way of the cross is the only way of approach to a holy God.

The very word, "Genesis," means "beginning"; and in this first book of Moses God tells us of the beginning of creation, of the beginning of sin in the world, of the beginning of His eternal plan of redemption, of the beginning of nations, and of the beginning of the Hebrew nation, through whom the Saviour was promised. This first book of the Bible opens with a perfect paradise, and closes with "a coffin." In other words, sin brought death; and but for the grace of God, there would be no light upon a scene of disobedience, darkness, and eternal doom. Except for the blood of His cross, sinful man could never stand in His holy presence.

Exodus, the book of the departure from Egypt and slavery to redemption by the power of God, speaks to us of our salvation in Christ Jesus. Sin brought death; but our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ "hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" of His cross. (See II Tim. 1:10). Exodus tells of deliverance from bondage through the blood of the paschal lamb; and the paschal lamb was a clear picture of "Christ our passover," who was "sacrificed for us'' (I Cor. 5:7).

In Exodus we read also of God's will for His redeemed people, Israel—that they should be "a peculiar treasure" unto Jehovah "above all people...a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exod. 19:5,6). But Israel asked for the law; and that law she could never keep. God permitted her to have it, in order to show her and all mankind "the exceeding sinfulness of sin." Thus the law became "a schoolmaster to lead us unto Christ" (Gal. 3:24).

When the nation of Israel asked for the law, rather than be "a kingdom of priests" unto Jehovah, then God called one tribe of that nation, the tribe of Levi; and from that tribe one family to be His chosen priests, the family of Aaron. Leviticus has to do with the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron. As God's appointed priests, they led His people in their worship. Aaron, Israel's first high priest, forshadowed Christ, our Great High Priest; whereas Aaron's sons typified the blood-bought church, composed of "the sons of God." The New Testament tells us that the church is called to be "a kingdom, priests unto God and his Father" (Rev. 1:6, R.V.). The message of Leviticus, therefore, vitally concerns the Christian; and does not, as some suppose, have to do only with the ceremonial laws of Judaism, which were done away in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

At the very beginning of this third book of Moses God shows, as He does in all the Pentateuch, that man can approach Him only on the ground of the shedding of innocent blood. We remember that Exodus closed with the finished tabernacle erected, and the glory of God filling this earthly sanctuary.
“So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud (the Shekinah Glory) covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (Exod. 40:33-35).

Moses dared not go into the tabernacle because of the glory there. But the opening verse of Leviticus tells us that

...the Lord called unto Moses, and spake unto him out of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying...

What God said to Moses from the tabernacle is recorded in all the book of Leviticus. It is significant that God spoke these words from within the tabernacle, not from Mount Sinai. At Sinai He gave the law. From the glory-filled tabernacle He taught His redeemed people how to worship. His very first instructions, given from within the tabernacle, were these,

“Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man of you bring an offering unto the Lord...” (Lev. 1:2).

He was talking, not about law-keeping, but about sacrifices—and those sacrifices pointed on to Christ. My friend, is that not highly significant? First we find the glory filling the tabernacle; and then God speaking out of that glory, showing how sinners, like you and me, could be made fit to dwell in that glory for all the endless ages. God does not want us to be on the outside; He wants us in that glory, in happy fellowship with Himself. One day He will take us Home to the Glory-Land. Meanwhile, He seeks our fellowship as we walk with Him, in separation of life, feeding our souls upon the Living Bread, which is the Word of God. This we may do as we worship Him; and Leviticus speaks to us of that worship, founded upon the shed blood of the paschal Lamb of God.

That is why the first seven chapters of Leviticus tell of the five offerings—the burnt offering, the meal offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering. In our former radio Bible studies we have seen how these five offerings present a portrait of the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yes; the approach to God is only on the ground of the atoning work of Christ. There is no other basis, upon which a sinner can stand in the presence of a holy God, save on the ground of the shed blood. It is this fundamental fact that the Lord is setting forth in the five offerings of the opening chapters of Leviticus.

The next three chapters of this book of worship tell of the consecration of the priests, of the beginning of their ministry, and of the righteous judgment of a holy God upon Aaron’s sons when they abused their sacred office as priests of God. Then follows chapter eleven, which is our lesson for today. We have seen that it has to do with the clean and the unclean food, and God’s express command concerning what His people should eat. In this chapter we find the key words of the book, often repeated by Jehovah as He spoke all of Leviticus to Moses from the glory-filled tabernacle:

“I am the Lord your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy. . . .For I am the Lord that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy” (Lev. 11:44, 45).

From chapter twelve on, the Lord continued to tell His people how they could be clean, holy in His sight, as illustrated by the cleansing of the leper, by the ministry
of the high priest on the Day of Atonement, by worshipping Him in “the feasts of Jehovah.” In all these and in other lessons of Leviticus, God was reiterating His command, “Be ye holy, for I am holy.”

Numbers takes up the story of Israel’s journey where Exodus left it, and continues the record of the wanderings of God’s people from Sinai to the very border of the promised land. It is a sad story that Numbers tells, the story of Israel’s murmuring against God, of disobedience and sin; but it is the story of God’s gracious dealings with His rebellious and gainsaying people. Had He not redeemed them? Were they not His own, by faith in the coming of the promised Redeemer? Though they were faithless, yet He was ever faithful; for He was and ever shall be their covenant-keeping God. And the book of Numbers tells of His patient, chastening love for Israel, whom He was ever leading on toward a holy walk with Himself.

Deuteronomy gives us the rehearsal of the law and of God’s guidance of Israel throughout the forty years of wandering. It was given by Moses just prior to his death and Joshua’s leading God’s people on into Canaan. It was spoken to the younger generation that had grown up in the wilderness, in order that they might hear, from the lips of Moses, lips which spoke with authority from Jehovah Himself, the message He had for them. And that message was none other than that of all the Pentateuch; indeed, of all the Word of God—a helpless sinner may stand before a holy God only on the ground of the shed blood of the “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). The way of the cross is the only way of approach to a holy God, who hates sin, but loves the sinner enough to die for him.

“Be Ye Holy, for I Am Holy”

We are told that the key word, “holiness,” occurs eighty-seven times in the book of Leviticus. What does this mean? It can mean only one thing: There can be no fellowship with a holy God except by a holy people. That is why the blood sacrifices are set forth in the very beginning of the book. That is why the priests were given minute instructions for their sacred office. That is why disobedience of these commands was swiftly and justly punished. That is why even the food Israel was told to eat symbolized a holy walk with a holy God, a walk of separation from the things that defile, a walk with God through meditation upon His Word, applied to the heart by the Spirit of God.

There is no room here for a self-righteous motive for separation from the things that defile; for God’s express command says plainly,

“Be ye holy, for I am holy.”

God is holy; the redeemed sinner belongs to Him; therefore, the sinner saved by grace must be holy, in order to have fellowship with Him, and in order to represent Him before a godless world. There is no room for pharisaical parading of a false sanctity. God is holy; if we love Him, we want to please Him, to hold communion with Him—and these things we can not do without God-given holiness.

The New Testament command is equally clear and equally compelling:

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as
God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (II Cor. 6:14-18).

That Jehovah’s prohibition concerning the eating of unclean foods was typical and ceremonial and moral, is clear from the fact that no material thing separates a people from others more than does the food they eat. God wanted Israel to be separated from the idolatrous practices of the nations surrounding them. The Arabs even today eat the camel. The Canaanites ate swine. The Mohammedan still sets up a barrier against the followers of all other religions by the food he eats. The devout Jew would not think of touching or tasting anything “common or unclean,” even as Peter said to the risen Lord when he was upon the housetop of Simon the tanner. God’s laws concerning Israel’s food helped materially to keep the obedient Israelite from the evils of the heathen nations, in the midst of whom they dwelt.

Again, that Jehovah’s prohibition concerning the eating of unclean food was typical and ceremonial and moral, is clear from the fact that these prohibitions were not altogether dietary, though the clean foods, quite naturally, served their purpose for dietary reasons. If these prohibitions concerned diet alone, then why did the risen Christ remove the restrictions when He spoke to Peter in the housetop vision? We shall consider this point later in this lesson; but just here we want to make it very plain that the law of Moses was “a shadow of good things to come” in Christ Jesus (Heb. 10:1). And the eleventh chapter of Leviticus is in the very heart of the law of Moses, an integral part of it.

God was saying to Israel, in the eleventh chapter of Leviticus, something like this: “I want you to be clean; I want you to be like Me; I am holy; ye are My people; be ye holy and clean in heart and life. Then you may walk with Me, in nearness unto Me, even though the world around you is unclean and degraded and vile. ‘Be ye holy, for I am holy!’ ”

Leviticus has been called “the priest’s guide book.” We are “priests unto God.” And through the lesson before us today we hear our Great High Priest speaking to our hearts, guiding us on the path that leads to a closer walk with Him, “in righteousness and true holiness.” Just as the physical life is sustained by food, so also the spiritual life is sustained by the Living Bread. May God’s Holy Spirit feed our souls today upon the “bread which came down from heaven,” even the glories of our crucified and risen Lord. May we let Him sanctify us and separate us from all that would mar our fellowship with Him during our earthly pilgrimage, or hinder our testimony to His grace, as we witness before a God-dishonoring world.

A Separated Walk and Growth in Grace Through the Word as Symbolized by the Cloven Hoof and Chewing the Cud

“And the Lord spake unto Moses and to Aaron, saying unto them, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, These are the beasts which ye shall eat among all the beasts that are on the earth. Whosoever parteth the hoof, and is clovenfooted, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that shall ye eat” (Lev. 11:1-3).

At the beginning of our lesson for today we saw that the cloven hoof is a picture of a separated walk; the chewing of the cud, of meditation upon the Word of God. The two are inseparable; therefore, we would consider them together. Our Christian walk in a world of
sin will be above the plane of degradation and cold indifference to the things of Christ only as we feed our souls upon the Living Bread. We shall be able to walk with God, as did Enoch and Abraham, only if we do not neglect the daily spiritual food which God has abundantly provided for us in His Book. We can never obey the admonition and exhortation, which we read just a few minutes ago from the inspired apostle without this daily, hourly food. How else shall we be able to “come out from among them” who dishonor our Lord, except as we spend much time letting Him speak to us through His Word? Only as we “touch not the unclean thing” shall we have true fellowship with God, our Father, and His Son, our Saviour, through the Holy Spirit.

Throughout the sacred Scriptures, the Word of God is repeatedly likened unto food. It was Job who said concerning this spiritual bread,

“I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food” (Job 23:12).

Again, the psalmist sang unto the Lord, saying:

“How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Psalm 119:103).

“More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb” (Psalm 19:10).

“O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him” (Psalm 34:8).

Jeremiah, in the days of his affliction, cried unto the Lord, saying,

“Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart” (Jer. 15:16).

When Satan tempted our Lord, the Saviour answered him in the words of Moses, and said,

“It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4; cf. Deut. 8:3).

Moses first spoke those words, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He was comparing the manna, sent down from heaven to Israel in the wilderness, to the Living Bread, which is the Word of God. More than fourteen hundred years later, the Lord Jesus Himself, who is the Bread of Life, explained fully the typical significance of the manna, given to Israel in the wilderness. After having told the multitudes, who followed Him for the loaves and fishes, that He Himself was the “bread sent down from heaven,” of which manna was only a type, He told them plainly:

“If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. . .It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:51-54, 63).

We need to read the entire message of our Lord, recorded in this sixth chapter of John, in order to get the full significance of these remarkable words. The Jews were striving among themselves, asking,

“How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” (John 6:52).

It was in answer to their questionings that the Lord gave them and us the key to the whole truth He was setting
forth, summarized in verse 63. Let us read it again,

"It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

Do you see, my friend, that our Lord was comparing His Word to food? As in all the book of John, the Holy Spirit was proving that Jesus of Nazareth is the eternal Son of God, by whom alone the sinner can be saved. In keeping with the entire message of this Gospel, Christ was saying that the words He was teaching about His eternity, His omnipotence, His power to save from sin and death—these words were and ever shall be food to the believer's soul. So it is with all the Bible; for all the Bible tells the same wonderful story, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and that the sinner who feeds upon Him, the "bread of life," "shall never die."

God often illustrates deep spiritual truth in simple terms that we can understand; hence many of the figures and comparisons that are found throughout the sacred pages of His Book; hence the typical laws concerning Israel's food, as set forth in the eleventh chapter of Leviticus. We have seen that the law of Moses was "a shadow of good things to come" in Christ. To take these dietary laws literally and bind them upon the Christian, thus making them a part of a religious ceremony, is what Paul calls in his letter to Timothy "the doctrine of demons." Listen to his words of exhortation to the young minister of the Gospel, whom he loved to call his "son":

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons... commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth" (I Tim. 4:1, 3).

Again, the same inspired apostle wrote to the Roman Christians, saying,

"The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17).

Let us consider, for a moment, how the animal with the cloven hoof chews the cud; then we shall see, I believe, the spiritual lesson God has for us in our chapter for today. At once we think of the cow, as belonging to this class. She goes into the meadow and stores away much food. Then she lies down to rest and to chew the cud, to assimilate what she needs for strength and growth. Hours and hours she chews, digesting what she had previously stored away.

My friend, the picture God has for us here is unmistakable. Every morning, before the rush and problems of the day, God would have us hide in our hearts His food for our souls. Alone with Him we let Him speak to us from the Word He has given. From the pulpit each Lord's Day He would have His servants put into the hearts of His people a veritable storehouse of the Living Bread. Then during the day or week before us we go about our daily tasks, often to find problems arising. We breathe a swift prayer, perhaps a silent prayer, to Him in our time of trouble; and He brings to our minds the message already written in our hearts, the very message for the particular need. Joy comes into the day's experience; and our first reaction is to sing a song of praise as our hearts echo some brief passage from a Psalm or prayer of thanksgiving. This is meditation upon the Word "all the day." This is letting it become a part of our very being, feeding us, strengthening us, adding joy upon joy, as we see God's gracious provision in the answers to our prayers, and in His leading us where we may "lie
down in green pastures,” even in the midst of a world of confusion and turmoil and tragedy and sin. This is what the Psalmist meant when he prayed, saying:

“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer” (Psalm 19:14).

“O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day” (Psalm 119:97).

“I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord” (Psalm 104:33, 34).

To illustrate the typical teaching of the clean and the unclean, God told Moses to say unto Israel, ·

“Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together” (Deut. 22:10).

Now the ox is a clean animal, and represents a child of God; whereas the ass is unclean, and represents the child of the devil. And let us remember that we either belong to God, or we belong to Satan; there is no middle ground; either we believe that Christ died for our sins, and are saved; or we deny His atoning blood on Calvary, and are lost. In the passage we quoted from II Cor. 6:14-18 earlier in this lesson, we were reading God’s interpretation, through Paul, of the command He gave to Moses, saying that the ox and the ass should not be yoked together,

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.”

Therefore, when a Christian marries an unsaved person, this command, stated in the Old Testament and explained in the New, is definitely set aside and disregarded. When a child of God enters into a business partnership with a child of the devil, figuratively speaking, the ox and the ass are yoked together. When unsaved people are received into the church, a God-dishonoring union is formed that leads to confusion and compromise and sin.

We have seen that the clean animals had to meet both requirements; that is, have the cloven hoof and chew the cud. And we have realized that a separated walk can be maintained only as we feed our souls upon the Word of God. Moses named certain animals that met only one of these two requirements, and pronounced them unclean. For example, the camel chews the cud, but does not divide the hoof; the swine divide the hoof, but do not chew the cud; and both were pronounced unclean.

The lesson is very plain: A self-righteous walk, apart from meditation upon the Bible as the inspired Word of God, absolutely authentic and authoritative, becomes a stumbling-block to many, and is a mockery before God; whereas a superficial reading of the Bible, in order to tear it to pieces, or to have a head-knowledge only, leads to skepticism and unbelief and indifference toward the things of Christ. The separated walk of a godly man can not be maintained apart from the daily, hourly feasting upon the Living Bread.

The first Psalm expresses this eternal truth beautifully:

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (verses 1, 2).

“Blessed” means “happy.” And happy is the man who “walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,” and who meditates in the law of the Lord “day and night.” When the inspired writer said, “law of the Lord,” he did not mean merely the ten commandments; for the five books of Moses were called “the law.” And, in a general sense,
the term covers the whole Bible, all of which is ours for meditation “day and night.’’

The godly man will not only be happy; but he will be fruitful in the Lord’s service, winning souls, giving a testimony that honors the Lord who bought him.

“He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psalm 1:3).

When the young man, Daniel, was a captive in a heathen country, serving as a prince at a pagan court, he “purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself.” He would not eat the king’s meat, which had been sacrificed to idols. Nor would he drink the king’s wine. He lived a life of separation, even in the midst of idolatry and corruption and wickedness. With what result? He was next in authority to the king of the greatest empire of his day; he served in a position of power throughout the reigns of several kings—kings of Babylon and of Medo-Persia. He “stopped the mouths of lions” by his great faith (Heb. 11:33). He was given vision after vision from God Himself, and saw far down the ages concerning things to come. The Word of the Lord was precious to him; that is why he could maintain a holy walk with God; and that is why God could use him for His own glory.

My Christian friend, Daniel’s God is none other than our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who became God incarnate, “God manifest in the flesh,” in order to die for us and to lead us with Him to glory. What He did for Daniel, He will do for you and me—keep us close to Himself as He “walks with us by the way,” feeding our souls on the true “bread which came down from heaven,” even His own glorious Person as set forth in His Holy Word. But we must yield our minds and hearts to His will and guidance, if we would enjoy His blessing. How can we help but let Him have His will worked out in us and through us, when we behold His love for us and the blessing He is awaiting to bestow?

Power and Progress in the Christian Life as Symbolized by the Fins and Scales

Continuing His instructions concerning the clean and the unclean foods, God said to Moses:

“These shall ye eat of all that are in the waters: whatsoever hath fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, them shall ye eat. And all that have not fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters, and of any living thing which is in the waters, they shall be an abomination unto you . . . ye shall not eat of their flesh, but ye shall have their carcases in abomination” (Lev. 11:9-11).

This description of the unclean fishes undoubtedly refers to the scavengers of the sea, which have neither fins nor scales. Lacking fins, they have no power to lift themselves above the slime at the bottom of the sea. Lacking fins, they can make no progress in moving about. And lacking scales, they can not withstand the impurities of the environment in which they live. For example, the eel and the oyster have neither fins nor scales. They live in the slime at the bottom of the water; and they take into their systems the impurities found there.

Now the clean fish had both fins and scales: fins, with which to make progress against the current of the stream; and scales, with which to resist the elements in which they lived. Unlike the oyster, which attached itself to a rock at the bottom of the sea, there to remain; the fishes with fins and scales could make progress, because of their power to rise above their environment.
The lesson is very plain. God wills that the Christian make progress in the things of Christ; and to do this, he must rise above the degrading influences of the world, moving ever on toward "higher ground" spiritually. In order to have strength to make progress, he must have the proper spiritual food, which is the Word of God. And in order to resist the "fiery darts" of Satan, he must be protected by "the whole armour of God." In other words, the fins suggest both power and progress; the scales, a God-given defense against the devil's snares.

The eel, which has neither fins nor scales, is slimy; it partakes of the slime of the place where it lives. It has no power; it makes no progress against the element in which it abides. If a Christian lives as the eel lives, he does not "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." He has no ringing testimony for God. He is not claiming the power of the Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, to lift him up, above the low and base and degrading elements of a godless world. Moreover, his life partakes of the slime, as it were, in which he abides.

I have just received a letter from one who had gone down into the slime of the sea. But she took Christ as her Saviour and Lord. Now she has power; she makes progress in the Christian life; and she is resisting the enemy's fiery darts by the "whole armour of God." My friend, "Christ is the power of God." Let Him be to you both fins and scales—that your testimony may bring honor to him, that you may know the peace and joy that He alone can give.

To be like an eel, living down at the bottom of the water, where the impurities are, you need not be a drunkard or a gambler or a thief, or a murderer, my brother. You may be living in the midst of cares, worries, doubts, bitterness of soul. These things may have been robbing you of your power and progress in the things of Christ. And that is just as displeasing to God as allowing the impurities of this world to enter your heart. I met a woman of my congregation some time ago, who was in the depths of despair. Her face was the picture of gloom. When I asked her why she looked so miserable and discouraged, she replied, "Mr. Talbot, did you ever run a boarding house?" "No," I answered. "Well I do," came her quick response; "and I have come to the conclusion that there is no victorious life for one who runs a boarding house." But she was mistaken! I know many dear saints of God whose positions are far more trying than that of the gloomy-faced woman. Yet their lives are radiant, victorious, filled with the glory of God. That dear woman needs fins, and she sadly needs scales. Like an eel, she is living in the darkness of despair. She has no power, with which to lift herself above her element. But there is a power to lift every child of God above every circumstance. That power is Christ!

Would you like to know, my friend, about "the whole armour of God," which He has provided for us, even as He gave to the clean fish scales? Then turn with me to the sixth chapter of Ephesians. Let us read together verses 10-13 first:

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."
When the inspired apostle wrote of our wrestling not against "flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," he gave us an insight into the power of Satan and his hosts. If the devil were "flesh and blood," we should be more equally matched against him. But He is a wicked angel, very powerful, and very subtle. We can never fight against him to win the battle, except by the power of God's Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, protected and shielded by "the whole armour of God."

We are to "put on" this armour, not "hang it on." In the Tower of London there are statues, on which armour is hung because the images have no life. Sometimes men, "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1) "hang on" the armour of God, and try to produce the graces of the Spirit in their own strength. They need first to be born again; for to "put on the whole armour of God" requires life—new life in Christ Jesus.

But let us read further in the sixth chapter of Ephesians, noting this armour, piece by piece, to get the message God has for us here. First, we are to have our "loins girt about with truth" (verse 14). When this epistle was written, a girdle was a belt worn around the soldier's waist, to bind his loose garments in such a way that they would not hinder him in his meeting with the enemy. To have the loins of our minds girt about with truth, is to have a belt of Scripture controlling our desires, that we may resist the devil. When our loins are girt with the truth of the Gospel, all our flabbiness and looseness of character will give way to strength and power through Christ Jesus. Only the daily, systematic, prayerful reading of God's Word will bear such fruit in our lives; but it pays a thousand-fold!

"The breastplate of righteousness" is next mentioned by the Holy Spirit in this description of "the whole armour of God." This is not the righteousness imputed to us by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, by which we are saved from the penalty of sin; but, rather, it is personal righteousness wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, by which the world may know that we have been born again, made "a new creation" in Christ Jesus. The apostle refers to this righteousness in Titus 2:12, where he exhorts us to deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts," and to "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." The next verse tells us that the incentive to such a righteous life is "the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." What an incentive! What a hope! Allowed to bear fruit in our lives, it should lead us to live so righteously before a sinful world that souls may be drawn to the Saviour.

Now the breastplate is worn upon the heart, from whence originate our affections and emotions, out of which are "the issues of life." Many unconverted people rankle under a sense of injustice as they have dealings with professing Christians, because such members of the church do not have on the breastplate of righteousness. They may or may not be born again; but they have no testimony for God. Profession carries little weight when it is nullified by unrighteous deeds and speech. As we are filled with the Holy Spirit, as we yield our lives to the indwelling Christ, we find it easy to put on the breastplate of righteousness.

In "the whole armour of God" there is provision made for our feet. They are to be "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (verse 15). With this part of the armour, the Christian is ready to go at the Lord's commands, ready to go swiftly as a bearer of "good tidings." Oh, for obedient and ready souls, ready to go anywhere
and everywhere, ready to tell the lost of the only Saviour—on the train, in the streetcar, on the highway, in the office, school, or home! Our Lord Jesus has “made peace through the blood of his cross” (Col. 1:20). But He has entrusted to us the responsibility of making that peace known to a lost world.

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“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that publisheth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!” (Isaiah 52:7; cf. Nah. 1:15; Rom. 10:15).

“With “the shield of faith,” we shall “be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” one” (verse 16). Satan is that wicked one; and in a thousand ways he seeks to discourage the child of God. He puts doubts into the minds of some, trying to persuade them that God is not faithful, that His promises fail. Such doubts are like fiery darts, to be met and withstood only by “the shield of faith.” Thus the heart is protected by this never-failing shield. Sometimes Satan’s darts take the form of unbelief; we do not trust God’s promise to forget our sins that are past, blotted out by His shed blood. Sometimes the fiery darts of the wicked one cause us to worry and fear and fret when we are passing through trial or affliction. How often Satan uses this dart! The loss of a loved one, the failure of crops, illness, trouble in a thousand forms—these fiery trials all too often lead us to doubt the goodness and the faithfulness of God. He has promised saying,

“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5).

And He always keeps His Word! Let us not give the devil an opportunity to cast darkness, discouragement, and doubt around us. Rather, let us bow before our loving, living Lord, and say: “Oh, God, teach me the lesson which Thou hast for me to learn through this circumstance. Give me the heart of a little child to believe that what I do not understand now I shall understand hereafter.” That is the God-given way to ward off the fiery darts of the wicked one—by “the shield of faith.”

Job wore this shield, even though he did not understand about Satan’s accusation, and God’s permissive will that he should be tried, possibly as man was never tried before or since. Job’s faith taught him to say to his accusers, concerning the Lord, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15).

“The helmet of salvation” suggests to us a knowledge of sound doctrine concerning the Person and work of Christ. If Christians would read their Bibles, they would not be “tossed about” by false teachings or emotional excitement. We are without excuse if we do not know how to “give a reason for the hope” that is within us.

Again, Satan seeks to cause our pride to lift up our heads in self-seeking and conceit, supplying an abundance of applause and flattery. John Bunyan once expressed it tersely, when he said to a man who praised his sermon, “You are too late,” was his reply; “the devil told me that this morning before I came out of the pulpit.” My dear Christian worker, the devil will tell you the same thing; and, lest you become intoxicated with your success, you need to wear the helmet of salvation.

The last piece of armour named by the Holy Spirit is “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (verse 17). Our Lord used this Sword when, three times in the wilderness temptation, He said to Satan, “It is written...” He met each fiery dart with a verse of Scripture. And if we, like the psalmist, hide God’s Word in our
hearts, we shall not sin against Him, as we let it be our effective, sharp, "twoedged sword."

This is the only offensive weapon mentioned in this armour of God. But it is all-powerful. We need no other. Nor was there ever a time in the history of the church when we needed more to wield it. Satan is putting it into the minds of unbelievers to ask, "Hath God said...?" He has sought to pervert it, and to counterfeit it; for he knows that when "the sword of the Spirit" is wielded, battles are won for the Lord. That is why he seeks to turn men's minds to human philosophy and vain reasoning.

Our business, as Christians, is to proclaim the Bible, whether men believe it or not. We do not need to defend it; it is the "sword" that cuts into the hearts and consciences of men, if only it is used aright in the hands of the child of God. Spurgeon once said: "You need not defend a lion; let him out of his cage, and he will defend himself." So it is with the Word of God. As we preach it, make it known, proclaim its great doctrines, show forth its marvelous Gospel, the Spirit of God will use it as God's chosen instrument to lead men out of darkness into "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

"The whole armour of God" will be effective only as we heed the closing admonition concerning its use, "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" (verse 18). True prayer is like a spring that bubbles up from a hidden source, a desire that God may be glorified, and our own hearts blessed. As we "put on" this armour, with prayer, we shall be able to resist Satan's most wily attacks; sin shall not have dominion over us; and our own souls shall be kept in fellowship with our crucified and risen Lord. We shall be like the clean fishes, which have scales, with which to resist the impurities of the environment in which they live.

My friend, have you noticed, as we have been considering the Christian's armour, how much it has to do with the Word of God? It is our spiritual food, of which the lessons in the eleventh chapter of Leviticus were typical. May God help us to begin every day with a portion of this spiritual food. Then and then only shall we live for Him, having, as it were, a good pair of fins, with which to make progress in the Christian life, and a fine coat of scales, with which to resist the fiery darts of Satan. We shall be in the world, which crucified our Lord, but not of the world. And when our pilgrimage is over, we shall have the assurance that we have pleased God.

Victory Over Sin

Beginning with verse thirteen of the eleventh chapter of Leviticus, the Holy Spirit described certain unclean fowl, creeping things, and "whatsoever goeth upon his paws, among all manner of beasts that go on all four." The spiritual lesson is the same as that set forth in the preceding portion of the chapter. Indeed, our own instinct tells us that these creatures suggest that which is sinful and revolting and unclean. Who would think of eating an owl, a vulture, a bat, a snail, a fly, a mouse, or a serpent? And these are only a few of the unclean creatures, named by Moses here as among the living things that are "an abomination unto the Lord." By reason of their habits, they repel us, even as our souls should revolt against all the evils of degrading sin!

As someone has expressed it, the fowl that are carnivorous were pronounced unclean; and some of those listed here not only feed upon flesh, but they are also scavenger birds. Again, all the omnivorous birds, those which would
eat anything and everything, were pronounced unclean. Whereas all which could soar into the heavens, yet would "grovel upon the earth," were, with some exceptions, unclean. Again, the spiritual lesson is very plain: The unsaved man and the carnal Christian are not careful about what they read or see or say. They are not discerning what the will of the Lord for them is. God wants us to use our wings, so to speak, soaring up, above the low and the base and sensual, walking in close fellowship with Him, "in righteousness and true holiness."

The beasts which go upon all four are "bent downward, destined to perish." They suggest to us those people who have no heart for the things of Christ; as slaves of sin, they seek their satisfaction in the perishable things of earth, dishonoring God, and losing their own souls.

Who, but some pagan, would eat a serpent? The serpent is the very symbol of sin, the most "subtle beast of the field," which "the Lord God had made." He lent himself to Satan, and tempted Eve. And one of God's names for the enemy of our souls is "that old serpent... the Devil" (Rev. 20:2). Surely all creeping things are revolting to us, as food; and surely they symbolize all that is deceitful, crafty, poison as sin, and deadly as a poisoned arrow.

There can be no question that, in all this typical picture, God was seeking to show His people the deceitfulness and the loathsomeness of sin. Not only did He want them to be clean in their bodies, and in the food they ate; but also in the secret thoughts and intents of their hearts. Jeremiah said many centuries ago,

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9). But "thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!" (II Cor. 9:15). In Christ Jesus there is cleansing from sin; for "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5:20)!

Perhaps a glance at a few of the unclean creatures named in the latter part of this eleventh chapter of Leviticus will help us to visualize some of our own frailties and sins, enabling us also to rise to a higher plane of living, by the grace of God. Let us look at a few of these.

God forbade Israel to eat the owl. Now the owl is a bird of the night, the creature of gloom. How many of God's born-again children have an owl, as it were, in their souls! Their faces are mournful-looking. One looking at them would suppose their Lord were a hard taskmaster. One would never dream that these dear souls were on their way to glory. Nothing about them would attract sinners to the Saviour. The Christian should be the happiest person in the world. And, my friend, you will never be a soul-winner, unless you can offer sinners a greater joy than the devil can offer. If you happen to have an owl in your soul, open the windows of your heart, and drive out this bird of gloom by experiencing the joy of the Lord.

Again, some Christians are like the scavenger birds, the vulture and the raven; they appear to rejoice in the failure of others, bearing tales, repeating gossip, injuring other Christians, and driving the unsaved away from Christ and the church. I know a man who was a drunkard for years: then he was saved by faith in the atoning work of Christ on the cross. He gave a glorious testimony for the Lord, until one day he fell into the old habit of drink. With what result? Those vultures came like a cloud to break the news to me, that man's pastor, and to everyone who knew him. Instead of praying for the member of the body of Christ who needed to confess his sin and get back into fellowship with God, they drove him from them; in
misery and sorrow he shunned their very presence. That man's soul was not lost because he sinned; his fellowship with God was broken, and his testimony marred; but he was not lost. He needed praying friends to encourage him, and to lead him to repentance; not critics, ready to pounce upon his fall in harsh criticism. May God give us "the milk of human-kindness," that we may not be like the vulture and the raven!

Who would think of eating a bat? What is a bat? It is half bird, and half mouse. It seems partly to walk, and partly to fly; yet does neither well. Thus the bat becomes the emblem of those Christians who try to cling to the earth and to heaven at the same time. They want to walk on earth in worldliness, and yet fly toward heaven in spirituality. My friend, be one thing or the other. Make up your mind whether you will walk in earthly pleasures, or fly with heavenly expectations. Be not as a bat, neither seeming to walk or to fly, having just enough of heaven in your soul to spoil you for the world, and so much of earth to spoil you for heaven.

The chameleon, too, was pronounced unclean by Moses. It is a lizard, known by its changeableness of color. It takes on the color of its environment; sometimes brown, sometimes red, sometimes gray, but always the color of its surroundings. How like the man who has no convictions about right and wrong! When he is talking to a liberal theologian, that man is Unitarian; yet when he comes to The Church of the Open Door, where we stand for the Christ of the Bible, that man is ready to die for the "faith of our fathers." That attitude of heart is an abomination to God.

Once again, we look at the snail, which God said was unclean. There are 1,500 species of the snail; yet not one of these has a backbone. The snail moves slowly, and leaves behind it a slimy trail. The snail might be compared to those professed Christians who are slothful in their service for Christ. Put a little obstacle in the path of a snail, and its progress is at an end; put a little obstacle in the path of a sluggish Christian, and he gives up his God-given task. My Christian friend, put the snail out of your soul! God wants you to be among those who "mount up with wings as eagles," who run and are not weary, who walk and are not faint.

We might continue this analogy; but surely this is enough to teach us this spiritual lesson! As we read the chapter carefully, as we let God speak to our hearts concerning the things that would defile our souls and mar our testimony for His name's sake, we shall make this our prayer—that His Holy Spirit may cleanse us and keep us clean in heart and life, for Jesus' sake!

Before we turn from this chapter to the New Testament teaching concerning it, in Peter's vision, we would note two much-heralded criticisms of the text, on the part of those who seek to discount this as the inspired record of God. I refer to the word "hare" in verse six, and to the "grasshopper" of verses 21, 22. The "hare" in verse six is not the animal we know by that name today. The Hebrew word here is "arnebeth," "an unidentified animal, but certainly not a hare, possessing as it is said to, characteristics not possessed by the hare. The supposed error in the text is due entirely to the translators' assumption that the English hare and the ancient 'arnebeth' were identical" (Scofield Reference Bible, note, page 139).

The second criticism of our text is that concerning the grasshopper, as we observed a few moments ago. Recently I heard a Bible teacher in an Indian mission school tell how the sixth grade children had found in their state-adopted reader that "Moses was mistaken," that Moses said
the grasshopper has four legs, whereas everyone knows that it has six. Those Christian children knowing only to believe the whole Bible, because it is the Word of God, were amazed that “anyone would print a book like that”! But they needed to know also, as you and I need to know, how to explain to questioning souls the real meaning of the text. God wants us to know how to give “a reason for the hope” that is within us. And there is a very simple, plausible explanation of this reference, one which satisfies the honest, seeking soul. I turn to as eminent an authority as Dr. Harry Rimmer, President of the Research Science Bureau, Inc., for his ready answer to the question:

“The error was not made by Moses, but is rather to be found in the careless reading of the text. You will notice in the twenty-first verse that the Bible clearly states that the people of Israel could eat of every flying creeping thing that 'goeth upon four,' but which have 'legs beside and feet wherewith to leap' upon the earth. (We must remember that all words printed in italics in our English Bible are not in the original Hebrew and Greek, but were added by the translators to make the meaning clear. And the Hebrew text does not say 'all four'; it says, 'goeth upon four'.) If you observe a grasshopper quietly feeding or creeping along the ground, you will see that he uses four of his legs to walk with. The two great legs trailing behind the walking legs are always cocked and ready to go into action. As he walks along upon his four smaller legs, suddenly something startles him. At once with his two leaping legs he sails high in the air and as far from danger as his jump can carry him. For generations the critics have been claiming Moses identified grasshoppers as four-footed insects, but anybody old enough to read print should be able to add four creeping legs plus two leaping legs and get a total number of six.”

Although this quotation from Dr. Rimmer is beside the point, in our lesson for today; yet we give it here, lest some, reading the eleventh chapter of Leviticus, wonder just what the passage does mean. It is but one of many familiar verses from the Bible, pointed out by skeptics as uninspired; but, like all the others, when it is examined by scholars, capable of reading the Hebrew and Greek text, all difficulty passes away; and we stand in wonder and awe at the infallibility of God's Word!

“What God Hath Cleansed”

If anyone listening to this radio Bible lesson is not familiar with the story of Peter’s vision on the housetop of Simon the tanner, then let him turn to the tenth and eleventh chapters of Acts for the record. It gives the New Testament unfolding of some of the precious truths bound up in the eleventh chapter of Leviticus.

Peter had been taught from infancy to observe the Law of Moses. He had never eaten anything “common or unclean.” If by chance he had even touched a mouse or a serpent or a camel or a hog—any of the unclean beasts, birds, fish, or creeping things—he had obeyed the Mosaic Law of ceremonial cleansing, laid down in Leviticus. He had never associated with Gentiles; for that, too, was forbidden in the Law of Moses. God had been training Israel for centuries to be a separated people, a witness to the Gentile nations around them, and a channel through whom the Saviour and the Bible should be given to the world.

Then Christ came. He died and rose again and ascended into heaven. God wanted to break down the barriers that had separated Jew and Gentile for so many long centuries. He wanted to show to Peter and to all the world that “there is no difference” in His sight; that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”; and that all alike
can be saved only by His grace. He wanted to show to Peter and to all the world that “what God hath cleansed” by the precious blood of Jesus, no man dare call “common or unclean.” He wanted to show to Peter and to all the world that the Jewish laws regulating Israel’s food for years and years were typical and symbolic; that no longer was God’s standard to be ceremonial and earthly, but that it was to be spiritual and heavenly.

That is why God sent a vision to Peter, telling him to rise, kill, and eat from the vessel that he saw come down from heaven. Upon it were “all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air” (Acts 10:12). What a revolutionary experience this must have been to Peter, a strict Jew! Little wonder he exclaimed, “Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.” And the divine answer came back, “What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.”

Three times this was done. Meanwhile, God appeared to Cornelius, a Gentile, a Roman soldier, preparing his heart for Peter’s visit. And by a chain of wonderful miracles, God taught Peter, his Jewish friends who went with him, Cornelius, his kinsmen and near friends, and all the Christians of all the age that He “is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34).

It was a beautiful sermon that Peter preached that day in the house of Cornelius—beautiful because of its simplicity and straightforward story of the cross of Jesus, His empty tomb, His forgiving love, and His second coming to be the “Judge of the living and the dead.” Then the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentiles in that home; and they were added by the Lord to the church. The “middle wall of partition” between Jew and Gentile was broken down—forever broken down! The risen Christ, by His matchless grace, had cleansed Jew and Gentile by the same atoning work on Calvary.

It is still true—and will be forever true—that nothing unclean can enter heaven! (See Rev. 22:11, 15.) Only those who trust in the shed blood of the only Saviour can be made clean, “whiter than snow.” And of all these spiritual lessons, the ceremonial law of Leviticus eleven was but a prophetic shadow or type. Therefore, to quote from Paul, who spoke with authority from the risen Lord, we would remind ourselves of these emphatic words of exhortation:

“Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (touch not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? . . . If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (Col. 2:20; 3:1).

“Wilt thou be made clean?” the risen Lord is asking you, my unsaved friend. Do you want to be made fit for heaven and the presence of God for all the endless ages? Do you want to be cleansed from all the petty littleness, to which the flesh is subject, my faltering Christian friend? I ask myself that same searching question. And to all men everywhere—to the unregenerate sinner and to the sinner saved by grace, God’s voice echoes down the centuries in words that need to be written on our very souls:

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).