

FLAX-LINEN RIGHTEOUSNESS PURITY

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Linen and Righteousness

Jesus wants to take his bride, the church when she is ready. Revelation 19:7-8, *"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints."* What do we need to know about this fine linen, clean and white?

Linen and Purity

In Ephesians 5: 26-27, *"...Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of 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."* What do we need to know about not having spot or wrinkle, being holy, and without blemish?

Linen's Importance in Scripture

To begin to understand the answers to these questions, we can learn the importance of fine linen, clean and white, used throughout Scripture. The priests were clothed in fine linen (Exodus 39:27-30). On the day of atonement, the priest was

clothed in linen garments (Leviticus 16:32). Specifically, the priest wore linen for the breeches (white trouser or undergarment), the decorated robe (blue and ornamented), ephod (outer garment) that held the breastplate (holding the 12 stones of the 12 tribes), girdle (sash or belt) of the ephod, and mitre (headdress, turban or bonnet) (Exodus 28:43). This fine linen was also used in the curtains, hangings, and veil of the tabernacle. Pharaoh arrayed Joseph in fine linen (Genesis 41:42). Jesus was wrapped in fine linen at his burial in the sepulchre (Mark 15:46).

Flax and Linen

The importance of fine linen can be better understood by knowing that linen is made from very fine fibres, derived from the flax plant. It is almost unbelievable what flax has to go through to be made into linen! Credit for how flax is made and qualities of linen comes from a source called Christian Churches of God (go to www.ccg.org and then in site search, enter paper CB63). Now, flax has special qualities that help us to understand our spiritual growth. It can help us realize that we need to yield every part of our life to the Lord to do what He wants.

The making of linen from flax is a long, hard process. Flax plants are grown close together so they will grow tall, up to 3 or 4 feet.

Growing close together is like loving each other. John 13: 24, “... *love one another as I have loved you....*” Flax has to be grown in moist, wet areas. Water, as well as oil, is often used to represent the Holy Spirit. Like flax, we need lots of the Holy Spirit for our growth. John 17:38, “*He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*” Harvesting flax requires gathering it into bundles and laying them in the sun to dry. Once dry, the seeds are combed away. Isn’t this like trials, temptations, and hard things that come into our lives?

The next step in the process involves fermenting or rotting which is called retting. This is where the outer layer of the stalks is decomposed or broken down through bacterial action in a wet environment. It can be carried out by laying it in wet fields of dew, putting it in bogs or slow rivers, or more recently, using chemicals. The use of dew makes the strongest fibres. They are then rinsed, squeezed dry, and laid out to dry. The removal of coarse fibres and cleansing of dirt to make pure linen is like breaking down of our nature that is not part of God’s will, purpose, and nature. Shouldn’t we look for what God is teaching us through the trials? Like the dew making strong fibres, shouldn’t we let the Holy Spirit make us strong by being our guide in everything we do and say and, in every part, and every corner of our heart, thoughts, and life?

The next step, called breaking or scutching, is the beating of the flax until the fibres for fabric use are separated from the woody parts. It once was done with wooden knives but now grooved steel rollers are used. The fibres are then scraped with iron knives and, only when pure, are given to the spinners. Do we realize God can use us more as we allow Him to remove anything in our lives that needs changing? Like a traveling elder taught us, if we open ourselves completely to God to show us what needs to be changed and then change, we will be more like Jesus. Read 2 Corinthians 12: 7-10. Note it says, “...*my strength is made perfect in weakness.*” It is God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit who help us. Members of the body of Christ help us as we learn from one another.

The pure fibres are then combed to be parallel to one another in a process called hackling. This teaches us that we all have to be of one mind and spirit, going in the same direction, and living by God’s Word. 1 Corinthians 1:10, “*Now I beseech you, brethren by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*” Philippians 2:2, “*Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*” Isn’t this wonderful that we need to be conscious of one another so that we are flowing together? This is where we must watch what opinions we often have. Have you ever found some of your opinions weren’t as accurate as you thought? I have. We need to be always aware of the gentle guidance of the Holy Spirit in all matters.

Next is the spinning process to make the fibres into thread. Wet spinning produces the finest fibres. This is like the Holy Spirit working in us to help us to become more and more mature. The thread can then be woven into many different fabrics. This is like the Christ-like part of each of us being woven or becoming part of one another’s lives. Romans 12:5, “*So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*” Ephesians 4:25, “*Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.*” Incredible! I don’t know if I fully grasp this, but I do know we are part of one another’s lives in Christ more than we think. Now, spinning is the twisting of intermittent fibres that are parallel into an unbroken thread that will have a uniform thickness, twist, and

strength. Isn’t this like the Lord taking us, who are all kinds of people, with all kinds of individualities, into one body moving with one accord? Incredible! Thank you, Holy Spirit, for doing this almost unbelievable job! Now the yarn that is produced is grouped according to its fineness, strength, and wearability. Shouldn’t we want the highest quality of character in our lives by walking close to our Lord?

Flax and Linen’s Qualities

Fibre length is variable. The longest ones are the strongest. The more time we spend with the Lord each day in communion with Him as we carry out our daily activities, the stronger we become.

The fineness of the thread is a result of the processing step. We must realize that the things we go through produce the best in us as we walk with the Lord.

Also, a high lustre or shine comes from processing flax fibre. We are to be a bearer of light to the world (Matthew 5:14-16).

Flax is one of the strongest fibres and, when wet, its strength is increased by 20% or more. We are the strongest when we are closest to God through the Holy Spirit who increases our strength and wisdom to get through all things.

Flax is one of the heavier fibres with good wicking properties (soaking up liquid). Similarly, we need to only absorb that which is good and shun that which is evil.

Flax is hollow so it absorbs moisture easily and can absorb sound. Likewise, the Holy Spirit can speak in a small, still voice (1 Kings 19:12). We must listen carefully or we can miss it. Have we ever missed it and realized afterward, if we had only listened and responded, things would have been much better? I have.

Linen does not have electrostatic properties so it doesn’t attract lint or hair or other foreign particles. It also has antibacterial properties that are used in book bindings. Likewise, in a similar manner, we should also stay clean and pure, rejecting anything that would harm our walk with the Lord.

Linen is soft, and the more it is washed the softer it becomes. This is like the Holy Spirit making us softer with more compassion, more understanding, more kindness, more mercy, more forgiving, more willing to overlook other people’s faults, less willing to judge, but instead have a great love for all people just like the unconditional love and gracious love of the Lord Jesus who associated with all kinds of people. The Lord is able to see deep into a person’s heart, seeing the good, and yet able to speak to his/her heart about what to change. We just need to respond to the Lord, for the softening helps us to be more gentle, more flexible, and more workable in God’s hands, like a potter with clay. Hebrews 10:22, “*Let us draw near with a pure heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*” 1 John 3:20, “*For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.*”

Linen can be made so that it will not shrink. Similarly, Ephesians 4:14, “*That we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.*” We need to be solidly rooted and grounded on God’s word and not shrink from doing God’s will and upholding God’s truth.

Very interestingly, linen becomes softer, whiter, and shinier each time it is washed. Just like washing with water, the Holy Spirit

helps us to be softer and less judgmental of others, whiter as in more purity, shinier as in the radiance of Jesus shining out to all around us. However, the opposite is true when linen is dried out, it becomes brittle. When we don't listen to the Holy Spirit, it hurts us. Thankfully, linen can be renewed to its flexible state by absorbing moisture. Similarly, and wonderfully, we, being washed by the Holy Spirit again, can return to a better state. Thus, it is very critical for us to be in constant communication with the Lord, obeying what the Holy Spirit says to us. As we repent and change our ways, more of the Holy Spirit is poured out to us, and we are more useful to our heavenly Father.

The quality of the linen is judged by its shade of whiteness. People find that it wrinkles easily, and it is hard to iron. The trick is that the linen must be damp and a very hot iron used. A steam iron or heavy iron doesn't work, but it needs moisture already present in it while a very hot iron is applied. Have you ever looked at an iron and noticed that the very highest setting of temperature or heat level is for linen? Similarly, God allows us to be tried by fire (the hardest things in life) and we need as much of the Holy Spirit as we can get to make us into what He wants us to be, useful in His hands and with the highest character, pure and white. Whiteness represents purity and true righteousness. Don't we need to let the Lord refine us and cleanse us? If we are to be Christ's bride, don't we need to be free of every spot or wrinkle?

There is a difference between ordinary linen and fine linen. Today, the finest linen, made in India, is 100 threads to the warp (length) and 84 to the weft or woof (width) per inch. Incredibly, in Egyptian tombs, fine linen was found containing 540 threads to the inch and some warp yarns contained more than 360 separate fibre strands. This cloth is finer than any woven today, and, almost unbelievably, this was done all by hand (twisted together by being rolled on the thigh by hand)! Since the Egyptians used slaves to make linen, it is highly likely the Israelites knew how to make fine linen since they

were slaves in Egypt for 400 years. This Egyptian linen was of peculiar whiteness and fineness. As mentioned in Exodus 28, and Leviticus 16:4, the priests and high priest used fine linen for their coats, breeches, girdles, and mitres as they were to be separate and set apart by God for a holy purpose. Let us today remember Revelation 1:6, "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father..." Similarly, today we need to be separate from worldly ways. John 17:15, "*I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.*" We must be extremely careful that worldly ways don't sneak into our thinking. 1 John 2:16, "*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*" We must strive to obey God fully and completely at all times.

Conclusion

We must learn to listen to the Holy Spirit and do what He says. We must choose the good for our benefit and the benefit of others. When we fail, we must admit our mistakes to the Lord Jesus, ask forgiveness of Him, and move upward to more purity. We must be honest and open with God, our Father, continually letting Him show us our shortcomings, weaknesses, etc., and genuinely asking for His help. We must watch what things trigger those weaknesses, yielding to the Lord and His will so we can turn to the things that strengthen us in the Lord. These include reading the Bible, praying, being careful what we watch or listen to, being on guard in our lives and the lives of others, speaking in tongues (the heavenly language), keeping ourselves in tune with the Lord, using our spiritual gifts, imparted by the laying on of hands of the presbytery, and thinking about good things. Philippians 4:8, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." †

YOU MAY ALL PROPHECY

MARKUS HANSEN

What thoughts occurred in your mind when you saw the above title? Did you believe it? Did you doubt it? Did you say, "Yes I want to prophesy?" Be assured that it is possible for you to prophesy for the Apostle Paul wrote "*For you can all prophesy*

one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged" (1 Corinthians 14:31, NKJV).

What is prophecy? Spiritual prophecy is speaking God's words and only God's words; by you acting as God's spokesperson

sharing God's heart with men's hearts.. It is literally God speaking through you in your own language. *"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth"* (1 Peter 4:11, KJV). The words, *"the oracles of God"* imply that the words spoken are God's utterances, God's words, **not words coming from man's intellect**. Prophecy is not composed of words conjured up in your human brain or from the books you have read. True and anointed prophecy occurs by God bypassing your intellectual human brain and directly imparting His words into your heart, then you speaking those words.

When Samuel went to anoint Saul to be the first king of the Israelites, he told Saul he would meet a group of prophets that would be prophesying and *"Then the Spirit of the Lord will come upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man"* (1 Samuel 10:6, NKJV). Note that in order for Saul to prophesy, the Spirit of the Lord had to descend upon him. If you have been filled with the Holy Spirit, then you can prophesy. Your human spirit has been made alive by the impartation of the Holy Spirit enabling you to hear God speaking to your heart. Samuel then mentions that when Saul begins to prophesy he will be "turned into another man." When you prophesy, something very significant happens to your being. God begins changing you into a different person. Every time you yield to the will of God and prophesy, you are being changed little by little into His image, the image of Christ. Glory to God! In addition, *"he (she) who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men"* (1 Corinthians 14:3, NKJV). Isn't this what the church needs in this hour, to be lifted up, encouraged, and comforted?

If you have never prophesied or you are of a quiet nature or are a shy person, the thought of prophesying in your local church meeting may seem daunting and onerous or maybe even unlikely. Consider what is written in Revelations 19:10 (NKJV), *"the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."* Testifying of God's saving grace, mercy, and love can be your first step toward speaking publicly in the local church and later prophesying.

You do not need a degree in theology, have memorized volumes of Bible scriptures, or read many sermons to prophesy. You do not even need the gift of prophecy to have been imparted by the laying on of the hands of a presbytery to prophesy. True spiritual prophecy depends only on yielding your will to the Holy Spirit. If you spend time waiting daily on the Lord and reading your Bible, God imparts more and more of Himself into your heart. You do not premeditate what to say when you prophesy because *"The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach"* (Romans 10:8, KJV). God by the Holy Spirit, who resides in you, will give you the words to speak.

When you attend your local church and the spirit of prophecy falls on the meeting, ask the Holy Spirit to give you a few words to speak to the church. The more you yield to that still small voice in the recesses of your heart, the more His words will come alive and want to burst out. Just yield to the urging of the Holy Spirit and engage your tongue and begin speaking, *"Thus says the Lord ..."* God will give you His words to speak. Do not be surprised if you raise your voice when you prophesy for prophecy is for the whole church to hear. Therefore, earnestly seek to prophesy and you will *"edify, exhort and comfort"* your sisters and brothers in the Lord, especially during the difficult times we are presently experiencing. It is interesting to note that anointed prophecies are most often short, to the point, and contain nuggets of God's truths. Therefore, they are not to be teaching sessions.

After Paul wrote one of the most well-known scriptures in the New Testament, the love chapter (1 Corinthians 13), he begins the 14th chapter of 1 Corinthians by writing: *"Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy."*

Let us all take heed, and seek the Lord that we all may prophesy one by one and in order. Prophecy is something that you can enter into if you earnestly desire to and seek the Lord for that liberty. ✚

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SHARON STAR

The Sharon Star is a monthly publication and mailed as a free-will offering plan. The articles within are intended for inspiration and information to those who are interested in the unfolding revelation of the Word of God.

Published by:
Global Missions Inc. in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, Canada.

The Sharon Star is found online at:
www.globalmissionsinc.org/sharon-star

Publications Mail Agreement 40012206

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