

Title: **FURY, FORBEARANCE AND FAITH**
Text: John 2:12-25
Subject: *Christ Cleansing the Temple*
Date: Sunday Morning — July 13, 2008
Tape: John #15
Reading: *2 Chronicles 34:1-33*
Introduction:

“*After this...*” — In the opening verses of this chapter we see our blessed Savior attending a wedding feast in Cana. There he performed his first miracle. Turning water into wine, by the mere exercise of his will, the Lord Jesus supplied all the guests with wine to make their hearts merry.

As we behold our Lord Jesus honoring the bridal feast with his presence and the first miracle he performed as our God-man Mediator, our hearts swell with joy in the consideration of a far more astonishing miracle, the great wonder of his grace when the Son of God first betrothed his Church to himself in righteousness and in judgment, in lovingkindness and in mercies, in faithfulness and forever (Hosea 2:19-20).

As our Lord provided wine for this wedding party, he is, our Ishi, our Husband, ever supplying the wine of his grace to his Church, his Bride, blessing us with his presence, meeting every need, and turning all our earthly water into wine that gladdens our hearts, causing us to believe on him the more. — “*This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him*” (v. 11).

Oh, may it please him daily to manifest forth his glory and cause us, by the sweet, effectual influences of his Spirit, to unceasingly believe him!

THE PASSOVER

Let's pick up in verse 12. — “*After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days.*” Our Lord's stay at Capernaum was very brief because, as we read in verse 13, “*the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.*” This was about six months after our Lord's baptism. John is the only Gospel writer who tells us that our Savior went up to Jerusalem to observe the passover four times after his baptism (2:13; 5:1; 6:4; 18:28). Because John identifies these four passovers observed by our Savior, we know that his public ministry lasted about 3 ½ years.

The Lord Jesus observed those legal feasts because he came to fulfill the law; and he did fulfill it in every detail as a man. But he fully, completely fulfilled the typical ceremony when he did as our Substitute, at the last passover. There, at Jerusalem, upon Mt. Calvary, Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7).

TEMPLE PURGED

Our Lord's second miracle is described in verses 14-17. Like the miracle in Cana, this second miracle performed by the Lord Jesus demands our attention. These two miracles are eminently significant as prophetic signs of things to come.

- At his first coming, the Lord of Glory attended a marriage feast and purged his house, driving out all who profaned the worship of God.
- When he comes again, the Lord Jesus will hold a marriage feast and purify his Church.

When the Lord Jesus came into the temple, we read in verse 14 that he...

(John 2:14-17) "found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: (15) And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; (16) And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. (17) And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."

Try to picture what our Lord saw when he went into the house of God.

What a ghastly sight was before him! There, in the temple, in the house of God, in the place where men and women gathered with their families to worship the triune God were caged birds, stalled oxen, and sheep. Hundreds of them! Imagine the stench! Men were selling them as a convenience (And for a profit, of course!), to those who were too busy to bother preparing for worship, too busy to bring a suitable sacrifice to God! Money changers were scattered throughout the courtyard and at the entrance of the temple, sitting in at tables to exchange money (For a fee, of course!), with those who rushed to the service without the shekel of the sanctuary with which God must be worshipped. All this was going on with the consent of greedy, self-

self-serving priests, who turned the worship of God into a profitable business. These people professed to have a great zeal for the law of God and the things of God; but their pretended zeal sickened and enraged the Lord of Glory.

As the songs of Zion were sung — While the priest read the Word of God — While a man taught the Scriptures, people were talking, making deals, running in and out of the place, as if they were at a sporting event! In a word, as it is today in most religious assemblies, it was then. — There was no reverence for God in his house and no reverence for the things of God! The Son of God was enraged by what he saw then; and he is enraged by such irreverence today.

Twice, during the 3 ½ years of his earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus observed the same profane behavior of men in his Father's house, here at the beginning of his ministry and again at the end (Matthew 21:12-13). Twice he showed his contempt for the Jews' irreverence in the strongest terms. "*The thing is doubled,*" J. C. Ryle observed, "in order to impress a lesson more strongly on our minds."

Every time I read about our Lord driving these people out of the temple, I am reminded of the young King Josiah in 2 Kings 22-23 repairing the breaches of the Lord's house and remember the wise counsel Solomon gives us in Ecclesiastes 5:1. — "*Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God.*"

THE MIRACLE

Before I get to the spiritual lesson intended by our Lord's action here, let me call your attention to the miracle before us in this passage. It is one of the greatest miracles wrought by the Son of God during his earthly ministry.

Here is the Lord Jesus going through the temple, driving everything before him, literally whipping men and beasts, driving the herds of cattle, overturning tables, and dumping men's money on the floor; and no one dared to resist him, get in his way, or even ask him what he was doing! Their minds must have been utterly overawed by some supernatural display of his invincible power as God. They saw such majesty shining forth in the face of the God-man that they were completely bowed before him. When the Lord's disciples saw what happened, they immediately realized that the

Scriptures were being fulfilled before their eyes. — “*For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up*” (Psalm 69:9). — “*My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words*” (119:139).

As he drove these self-serving merchandisers out of the temple, with their cattle and their money, the Savior said, in what must have been a loud voice expressing anger, “*Make not my Father’s house an house of merchandise!*” No prophet ever used such language. No one but Christ ever called God his Father! And God never called any prophet his Son. This cleansing of the temple by the Christ seems to be precisely what Malachi spoke of in Malachi 3:1-5.

(Malachi 3:1-5) “Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, **shall suddenly come to his temple**, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. (2) But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he *is* like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap: (3) And he shall sit *as* a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness. (4) Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years. (5) And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in *his* wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger *from his right*, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.”

SPIRITUAL LESSONS

What are we to learn from this event? What lessons are being taught here? Why has God the Holy Spirit caused this record of our Lord’s zeal in purging the temple to be preserved upon the pages of Inspiration? What are the spiritual lessons we are to glean from it?

As you well know, the physical temple at Jerusalem was symbolic of three things:

- Our Lord’s physical body (v. 21),
- Our bodies (1 Corinthians 6:19),

- And the assembled Church of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).
The things we see in John 2 are to be applied to all three.

First, the temple represented each believer's body. After the temple at Jerusalem was left desolate by the Jews' rejection of Christ, the Holy Ghost came down at Pentecost and took possession of one hundred and twenty temples, so that they became the dwelling places of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8). We are admonished repeatedly to look upon and use our bodies as God's temple, that which is dedicated to his honor. We must not defile God's temple by immoral behavior or by idolatrous religion (1 Corinthians 6:9-20; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1).

(1 Corinthians 6:9-20) "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, (10) Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (11) And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. (12) All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. (13) Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body *is* not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. (14) And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power. (15) Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make *them* the members of an harlot? God forbid. (16) What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. (17) But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. (18) Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. (19) What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? (20) For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

(2 Corinthians 6:14-18) "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"

(15) And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? (16) 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. (17) Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, (18) And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

(2 Corinthians 7:1) “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

Blessed Spirit of God, we give praise with our thanks for this record of our Savior’s zeal in purging his temple; and we beg of you our Lord, so cleanse our hearts, day by day by your grace! Drive out the vain thoughts that lodge deep within our nature, defiling your dwelling place, defiling your temple. Then, by your indwelling presence, grant us grace to glorify our God in our bodies and in our spirits, which are yours, for you have bought us with your blood!

Second, the temple represented the assembled Church of God, the local Church, gathered for worship (Matthew 18:20; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17).

Let us take great care that we do not defile the house of God.

- With Corrupt Behavior — Strife, Gossip, Slander — General Irreverence!
- With Corrupt Practices — Wood, Hay and Stubble!
- With Corrupt Doctrine

(1 Corinthians 3:9-17) “For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, *ye are* God’s building. (10) According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. (11) For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (12) Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; (13) Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. (14) If any man’s work

man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. (15) If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. (16) Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? (17) If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which *temple* ye are."

CHRIST'S BODY

But, if we read on in John 2, we see that the temple also represents the physical body of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Savior seems to have shone the beam of his deity, as our mighty Samson, laying heaps upon heaps, as he marched through his house.

(John 2:18) Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? (19) Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. (20) Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? (21) But he spake of the temple of his body. (22) When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them: and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

It appears, from these men asking the Lord Jesus to show them his authority for purging the temple, that they were unwittingly convinced that he was indeed the Christ.¹ Had this not been the case, these men would have been enraged. They would have tried to seize the Savior and kill, as the often did later. Instead, they did not oppose anything. They made no effort to resist anything he said or did. They simply asked for a sign of his mission as the Christ. — "*What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?*" (v. 18).

If in the days of his humiliation such glory occasionally shined forth in the Lord Jesus as God incarnate, to the utter consternation of his enemies (John

¹ If I am not mistaken, this was their blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12): — Though they were convinced that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, they ascribed to him the works of the devil, rather than bow to him.

18:6) and the comfort and joy of his saints (Matthew 17:1-5), what will it be like when he comes in his glory?

(2 Thessalonians 1:7-10) “And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, (8) In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: (9) Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; (10) When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.”

(Revelation 1:7) “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they *also* which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.”

Robert Hawker rightly observed, — “Oh! the forbearance of our adorable LORD, when driving those buyers and sellers from the temple, that he drove them not into hell!”

Though he refused to give a sign to the Jews, though he refused to answer the demand of his foes, our dear Savior gave a precious sign to his chosen, for whom he had come to lay down his life. It is for his chosen, for his redeemed, that he does all things. When he spoke of the destruction and raising up again of the temple, God the Holy Spirit tells us plainly that he was talking about his body and his resurrection from the dead, three days after his crucifixion as our sin-atoning Substitute. — “*He spake of the temple of his body*” (v. 21; Romans 4:25).

So when the Lord Jesus arose from the dead three years later, the Lord’s disciples remembered this conversation with the Jews and, by divine conviction, “*they believed the scripture, and the word which he had spoken.*” That is another lesson we must not fail to learn from this passage. — **The Word of God often has its efficacy long after it is first heard.**

It is upon this same testimony that the whole Church of God rests. Our Redeemer was and is “*declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead*” (Romans 1:4). This is the Foundation upon which we are built. Christ is our Resurrection

and our Life. Because he lives, his redeemed shall live also! Because he lives, I shall live!

As the pillar of cloud and fire at the Red Sea was light to Israel but darkness to the Egyptians, this word of our Lord was blinding to the Jews, a stone of stumbling, and rock of offence; but for God's elect it stands as a blessed testimony to that glorious Rock which Jehovah laid in Zion.

The Jews used these words of our Lord as a charge of blasphemy against him, when he was arraigned before Pilate (Matthew 26:61). But we, being taught of God, see his eternal power and Godhead. — "*Destroy this temple,*" he declared, *this temple of my body*; and "*in three days I will raise it up!*" And they destroyed his body when with wicked hands they took our Savior and crucified him (Acts 2:23). Three days later, by his own almighty power, he arose from the dead.

Don't miss: this He said, "*I will raise it up!*" Having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it, he raised up his body by the power of the redemption he accomplished in the sacrifice of himself (Acts 2:24). He could not be held in the grave because...

- The sin he bore in his body on the tree, he put away.
- The debt we owed he fully paid.
- The demands of justice he completely satisfied.

(Romans 4:25) "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

(Romans 5:1-5) "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: (2) By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (3) And not only *so*, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; (4) And patience, experience; and experience, hope: (5) And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

(1 Timothy 3:16) "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

(Psalms 16:10) “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”

(1 Peter 3:18) “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:”

HEARTS READ

In the last three verses of this chapter we are reminded of this solemn fact: — The Son of God is he who reads and knows the hearts of all.

(John 2:23-25) Now when he was at Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast *day*, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. (24) But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all *men*, (25) And needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man.

Who less than he who made man, can know the thoughts of a man’s heart?

(Hebrews 4:12-13) “For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (13) Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”

You may not know the difference, but he knows the difference between true faith and false faith.

- Natural faith, faith arising from sight, is a notion of the head.
- That faith which is the gift and operation of God the Holy Spirit is the commitment of the heart to Christ. — (The word translated “*believe*” in verse 23 is exactly the same word translated “*commit*” in verse 24.)

Christ knows all things. He knows what is in you. He knows what is in me. He knows us. That fact terrifies, rightly terrifies the hypocrite. But this is a fact that gives indescribable comfort to the believer (John 21:15-17).

(John 21:15-17) “So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. (16) He saith to him again the second time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. (17) He saith unto him the third time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.”

Amen.