

Christian glow with the beauty of holiness.

1. The Christian may be clean as a dove in business.

No honorable business will grime the soul. The machinist, mechanic, artisan, and laborer may have grimy work to do, but he can be clean as a dove in character. Far better is the laborer's soiled hand, with a clean soul behind it, than the gentleman's clean hand with a soiled soul behind it. Though you have lain among the pots of the shop, store, wharf, foundry, or coal mine, you may have a soul clean as a dove's silver wing. Your character is not cheapened because your work is in the kitchen or at the forge, nor is it ennobled because you handle diamonds, write poems, thrill, breathless auditors, or sit behind mahogany office desks. There are men in coal mines with souls like the wings of a dove; and there are men in decorated mansions with souls sooty and black with sin as the miner's face with coal-dust. One has the soot on his face, the other on his soul. How beautiful a sight to see a man who has spent the day amid the pots of business, environed by the dust and grime of greed, of selfishness, of fraud and falsehood, fly home at sunset unsoiled and clean as the wings of a dove covered with silver!

2. The Christian must be clean as a dove in social life.

Man has needs which only social life can meet. In this there is a great good, and great evils lie close beside it. "Society" is not loyal to Christ, but is obedient to the spirit of "the world." Its ethical code is not the morals of the New Testament. Here are the pots dusty and grimy. We may mingle in social life only on the plane of our Christian birthright: "Brethren, ye are called unto holiness." To mingle in society and not touch its wines, not patronize its demoralizing amusements, not bow down to its false maxims, customs and conventionalities, not lose the zest and fervor of a holy life, is proof of the constraining love of Christ. But no one can touch pitch without being

defiled, nor take fire into his bosom without being burned. To join in social life and yet be clean as a dove's wing is not only a possibility but a privilege; not only a duty but a beauty. Demanding watchfulness, firmness, self-denial, nevertheless it has its reward in robust Christian character. The one thing we may not do is to compromise the highest moral tone of conduct. Better be a holy hermit than a social leper.

3. Clean as a dove in religious life.

Perhaps no other passage of Scripture more impressively teaches the privilege of a holy life under the most unfavorable conditions. "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet ye shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." Surrounded by defilement, yet ever clean; rising out of unfavorable circumstances, with graces of silver and virtues of yellow gold, we shall glorify the grace of God. The sweetest promises of the Bible are full of paradoxes. "He that loseth his life shall find it." "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee."

The things impossible with men are possible with God. The things impossible to the unregenerate are possible to the regenerate man. Born again by the Spirit of God, and filled with divine grace, he can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth him. If the lines fall to him among the pots, still he may emerge "as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

This does not cover presumption and reckless precipitation of one's self into moral dangers. Had Daniel been recklessly roaming around that lions' den, and fallen in, God would not have sent an angel to shut their mouths. We must use all prudence to avoid evil influences: then, if our path of duty lies