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The Cleansing Blood of Christ



Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean, Ezekiel 36:25. A sermon preached in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church by the minister, Rev. Ivan Foster

The most striking thing about this promise of mercy is the fact that it is a promise of pardon and conversion to a people who, for many centuries, would reject Christ and live in rebellion against God and His truth. These are words spoken to the people of Israel and they refer to that conversion of them to Christ which will come at the end of this age. God promises them a wonderful deliverance. From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

See how He knows the dreadful sins into which they would fall and yet He promises pardon. God ever begins to deal with sinners while they are yet in their sin. *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, Romans 5:8.* Mercy is not the reward for turning from sin and believing on Christ. Rather, mercy is at work already and it is it that causes the sinner to turn in faith and repentance. Is not this our text a word of grace and mercy to all, for God's dealings with future Israel is on the exact same basis as He presently deals with Gentiles?

I wish to concentrate upon the opening phrase of the verse: *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.*

I. MAN IS AN UNCLEAN CREATURE

In the Old Testament, there were many washings required under the law (Exodus 30:18-21). They all served to emphasise that man is unclean morally and must undergo cleansing, before he may stand accepted in God's presence.

1. It is his sin that has rendered him unclean. Sin has spiritually defiled man and corrupted his being. We are told that *sin is the transgression of the law*, 1 John 3:4. It is man's rejection and disobedience of God's law which renders him unclean in God's eyes. His every faculty is unclean in God's eyes. *And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*, Genesis 6:5. This verse clearly indicates the utter corruption of man's nature. Nothing is excluded from God's examination. Again, in Jeremiah 17:9, the same truth is graphically stated. *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?* The Saviour pronounces the same verdict in Matthew 15:19. *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.* These verses illustrate the wickedness of the human heart. Let all take note that they are the words of Him of Whom it is said: *the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings*, Proverbs 5:21; and again: *The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good*, Proverbs 15:3.



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2. Being unclean, he cannot approach God. His whole being is at enmity with God. He neither desires to approach nor could he, in his corrupt and polluted state, stand before God, even if it were possible for him to desire to seek God. After the fall, man was physically clothed by God to emphasise that there was that about him spiritually that now required him to be covered. Man had not physically changed but his outward clothing was to serve as a reminder that inwardly he was now offensive to God. The blatant and immodest uncovering of the body, in these evil times, is but the unregenerate sinner's rejection of God's verdict. An altar was also introduced as the place before which man must come if he is to approach God in worship. The idea of atonement is presented by the altar. An offering of a life must be made as an atonement for the worshipper's sin that is before God's eyes. The Old Testament sacrifices all prefigured the great sacrifice of Christ on the cross. He made atonement for the sins of His people and thus opened a way into God's presence by putting away sin. *Once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*, Hebrews 9:26. *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*, 1 Peter 3:18.

3. Man's uncleanness is the basis of the universal discontentment of man. All feel their uncleanness but know not how to rid themselves of it. There is nothing more fundamental to man's wellbeing and contentment than his relationship with God. Man's purpose and chief duty is to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever. Sin has interrupted man's relationship with God and made it impossible for him to enjoy Him. How could man be happy living in such circumstances? Instead of enjoying God, he lives in daily dread of Him, and the displeasure his sins have incurred. He can shelter from the terrifying wrath of God only by erecting the flimsy booth of the atheist's lie or the formalist's make-believe religion of works. At best, these shelters provide little shelter and the sinner finds it impossible to escape the dreadful knowledge of the frown of God. It is for this reason that the business of diversion and amusements has ever been the popular resort of those with the aching conscience and the guilty soul. Man will employ anything to blot out from his thoughts those thoughts of God which disturb and alarm. Here is the explanation for the alarm which gripped Jerusalem when the birth of Christ took place. *Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard [these things], he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him*, Matthew 2:1-3. Man desires to live in a world in which there is no reference to God and if religion must be practised, let it be that religion where no mention is made of man's sin and God's wrath.

II. THE BLOOD OF CHRIST IS REQUIRED TO CLEANSE MAN FROM SIN

That is what is symbolised by the clean water.

1. Life on earth is utterly dependent upon clean water. As it is the essence of life here on earth, so we cannot have eternal life except through the blood of Christ. We must partake of its blessings and benefits if we are to live. *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*



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will raise him up at the last day , John 6:53-54. Rome may teach her adherents that they respond to this verse when they partake of the wafer, which according to Romish myth is transubstantiated into the body and blood and deity of Christ in the priest's hand at the mass but such teaching is a lie. Partaking of Christ's blood is not a physical but a spiritual action. Feasting on Christ is an action of the soul not the stomach. The soul cannot be fed by way of the digestive organs of the body. *As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste* , Song of Solomon 2:3. One of the fruits which our souls enjoy when we spiritually feast upon Christ by faith is cleansing by His blood. *The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness* , 1 John 1:7, 9. All who perish in hell will do so because they have not partaken of the blood of Christ by believing on Him.

2. It is clean or cleansing water that God sprinkles upon the sinner. The blood of Christ is cleansing blood. *From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you* , verse 25. Clean water refers to cleansing water. The blood makes the sinner upon whom it is sprinkled instantly clean in God's sight. *In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness*, Zechariah 13:1. This is a reference to the same saving work referred to in our verse. Instead of clean water sprinkled, the symbol is that of a gushing spring of water which will work cleansing. The result of washing in the fountain of the Saviour's blood is given us in Revelation 7:14. *And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* Heaven's song is all about the cleansing blood of Christ. *And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation*, Revelation 5:9. God invites sinners to that fountain today. *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.

3. The power of the blood to cleanse lies in its atoning efficacy. Christ's blood atoned for the sins of His people. It clears away our debts from before God and removes from His sight our filthiness. As a cheque made out for the amount of our debts has power to clear them, so the blood of Christ cancelled all the debts of His elect. Christ's atoning death *blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross* , Colossians 2:14. The broken body of the Saviour upon the cross is the public nailing up of the receipt, that proclaims the clearing of all the debts of God's elect people incurred by their sins. Those who are under that blood are safe from judgment, as were the Israelites under the blood of the Passover lamb in that dark night of judgment in Egypt. *And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt* , Exodus 12:13. Dear friend, are you under the blood of Christ?



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III. IT IS GOD WHO MUST APPLY THE BLOOD

Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you.

1. How important to note that God has only one way of pardoning sinners . It is by the blood of Christ. How foolish to think that baptism could cleanse our sins or that the very imperfect observances of church ordinances, which is the best we can render, could save us from our sins. We must submit to God's means of salvation or forever be lost.

2. It is from God's hand that cleansing comes. It is not self-applied. We cannot save ourselves. As it was with the dead Christ raised, the lepers Christ cleansed, the blind Christ made to see, so it is with the sinners ... He, and He alone, must work this cleansing.

3. Is this not grace indeed? The Mighty God stoops down to wash me and that from filth He so much hates! *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity*, Habakkuk 1:13. Yet He stooped to empty His veins of His blood in order to cleanse me from my filthiness. *And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross* , Philippians 2:8.

4. Please note that the blood must be applied. You are yet in your sin if the blood of Christ has not been sprinkled on you by the hand of God. Let me ask the question posed by the hymn writer.

Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

You have no hope for eternity if you are not washed in the cleansing blood of Christ. Seek the cleansing of your soul in that precious flow now.