

Moral Cleansing

John 19: 34; 1 John 5: 5, 6.

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Blood and water — the blood for judicial cleansing, the water for moral cleansing. The blood deals with our sins, affording expiation. The water deals with our moral state and conduct, affording purification.

1 John 1: 7 — "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

1 Corinthians 6: 11 — "but ye are washed . . ."

"That precious stream of water and of blood
Which from Thy pierced side so freely flowed,
Has put away our sins of scarlet dye,
Washed us from every stain, and brought us nigh."

The blood and water were the witness of Christ's death, the dual aspect of which is before us here. There is that which meets the judicial claims of God. As of old the blood was sprinkled upon and before the mercy seat — the cherubim, emblematic of the righteous attributes of God, looked down upon the sacrificial blood upon the mercy seat and were satisfied. The blood being sprinkled before the mercy seat indicated that a righteous way of approach to God had been opened.

Our Lord, "came by water and blood . . . not by water only, but by water and blood" (1 John 5: 6). He did not come — as had the prophets — with a purifying ministry only; as to its intended effect. He came to afford absolute satisfaction to God for sin, and a moral purification in men based upon His sin-cleansing work which had been accomplished by Him in the offering of Himself as a sacrifice for sin at the cross. The use of water as a cleansing instrument cannot be gainsaid, or that water is used as a figure of the cleansing property of the Word of God. In John 15: 2 the Lord spoke of purging the fruit bearing branches of the vine, and in that connection said, "Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you."

Obviously there is cleansing quality in the Word. In Psalm 119: 9, the question is asked, "wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his ways?" The answer is given, "By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word." The Word of God, where heeded, will enable any young saint to tread a clean path through this sin-benighted world, if ye or she hears and obeys it, for "Thy Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

As born into this world we are of sinful stock, and hence unclean. We are morally cleansed by the application of the Word of God in the hands of the Spirit of God. See John 3: 5, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

We are morally cleansed in new birth — not by the removal of the unclean nature — but by the implantation of what is altogether new. The apostle Peter wrote — "See that ye love one another with a *pure* heart fervently; being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter 1: 22, 23).

The instrument used to effect new birth is at once "incorruptible," "living," and "abiding."

James also, in James 1: 18, declared, "Of His own will begat He us with the Word of Truth, that

we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures."

Paul, in Titus 3: 3-6, having spoken of what these Cretian believers had been before their conversion, said that God had saved them "by the *washing* of regeneration."

They had been the subjects of a morally purifying work. This word "regeneration," by the way, does not mean "new birth." The word occurs but twice, here in Titus 3, and once before in Matthew 19: 28. Rather does it refer to the New Age which shall be brought in when our Lord sits as Son of Man upon the throne of His glory, as He said so plainly in Matthew 19: 28. According to Isaiah 65: 17, 18, the coming kingdom will be a new creation scene, morally. What a change will be observed then as compared with that condition of things deplored by God in Isaiah 1.

In the Christian company the 'new age', (that is to say, the world to come, the coming kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ) is morally anticipated, for the new birth which belongs to it is active now. Hence we have seen that new birth — is of *divine origin*, for "of His own will begat He us." It is the fruit of God's sovereignty. It is effected by a *divine agent*. for those born again are born of the Spirit of God. It is brought about by the application of a *divine instrument* — "born of water;" of "the Word of God;" of "the Word of Truth." It is divine in *result*, for the subjects are "partakers of the *divine nature*".

The question may now be asked — What connection is there between the death of Christ and moral purification? Well, the Word which God uses to form the clean thing in the soul of a man is the Word of the Cross. Did not Peter say, "this is the Word which in the glad tidings is preached unto you"?

The central theme of the gospel is "the Cross." Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1: 18, "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." Again, "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

This does not refer to the *act of preaching*, but rather to the *subject matter* of the preaching. How foolish to the wisdom of this world is the testimony that life and blessing are only available to men through the once crucified Christ! Romans, the setting forth of Paul's gospel, emanates from the Cross. In that epistle we are distinctly taught that Christ's death has dealt satisfactorily with both our guilt and our state; with our sins and with sin; with what we have done and with what we are. All has been met by the death of Christ. There is moral cleansing for us as we come under the application of the Word of God — the Word of the Cross. We are delivered from the mastery of sin (see the teaching of Romans 6), and we are set free for the service of God. The Spirit of God applies the morally cleansing Word of God, occupying us with a soul transforming object — Christ — a living attractive Man at the right hand of God. As we are affected by the Word we are freed from the features which once marked us, and we are marked by those features which we admire in Christ, features which are ever delightful to God. In a word, the Spirit of God reproduces in us the moral characteristics of Christ by His powerful application of the cleansing Word of God.

Thus we see the value of the Word of God in its cleansing power. How essential that we should live in obedience to it. We shall no longer move casually on the fringe of Christian testimony and fellowship. Brought into practical subjection to that Word we shall move right into whole-hearted allegiance to Christ; whole-hearted separation from worldly pleasures and company. How can we any longer remain world borderers if the Word of God grips us? How can we continue as merely quizzical spectators of the testimony of God? May God grant that we be brought out of what is contrary, and into the living enjoyment of the precious things of God under the drawing power of the attractive grace of our risen Lord.

God grant that we who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who know something of the blessedness of being cleared judicially from every charge of guilt by the blood of Christ, once shed on the cross, may also know something of the moral cleansing of the Word of God. May we prove this increasingly in our everyday life and way; our thoughts, our words, our actions, dominated by the Word of God. Let us esteem it then more than our necessary food, so that as we read it and feed upon it, we may be formed by it to the pleasure of God and to the honour of our precious Lord. Certainly He is worthy that this should be so with every one of us.

Keep us by Thy mighty power from this present evil world,

Sanctify us, make us holy, by obedience to Thy Word;

Cleansed by it; Hearn'ing to it;

Guided by it; Joying in it;

'Till we end our pilgrimage.