

CREATE IN ME A CLEAN HEART

*or, Cleansed by Blood,
and washed by Water*

by Charles Stanley

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CRYING FOR MERCY

In Psalm 51 you will find the deep need of a soul that has found itself ruined and vile, utterly without power in the hour of temptation. How deep the sense of guilt and sin; and yet the cry for mercy according to what God is!

The prayer reads as follows: 'Have mercy upon me, O God according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquities, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit'.

These are the earnest desires of a sin-burdened soul — the groans of a broken heart that longs for holiness and purity, for cleansing and purging: 'Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow'. And much more: 'Create in me a clean heart, O God'.

Guilty, guilty, oh, wash me whiter than snow (cf. Isa. 1:18). Here is full unreserved confession to God, and faith looks

only to Him. Here is man's need — your need and mine, as God sees it — our very condition by nature.

CLEANSING, A NEW HEART, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Now if we turn to that day when God shall gather His ancient people from all countries, we find an answer to every cry and desire in this psalm. Let us read the words of the prophet Ezekiel: 'And I will sanctify my great name which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.

Then, will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you; and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleanness's: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen.

Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord God: In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to

dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded' (Ezek. 36:23-31).

All help comes from God: cleansing, a new heart, and the Holy Spirit. This is the purpose of God for His name's sake. How precious the 'I wills' of God! 'I will take you'. 'Then I will sprinkle clean water upon you'. Yes, from His own heart's free grace He will do all this for Israel. And is He not the same blessed God now? Poor helpless, sin-burdened soul, He says, I will cleanse you, and you shall be clean. How very striking are the words of Jesus to Nicodemus: 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again [or, wholly afresh] he cannot see the kingdom of God'. And again, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God' (John 3:3,5).

There must be a pure and holy new creation. And this is the work of God, entirely of God: 'I will cleanse,' 'I will give a new heart'. There must be a holy new nature. Only, mark, this does not alter the flesh. 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit' (John 3:6). This solemn distinction of the two natures is our blessed Lord's first elementary lesson. If this lesson is not learnt, nothing can be clearly known. Truly the new quickening birth is by the Holy Spirit — 'born of the Spirit'. And the thing signified by water is the Word: 'Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever' (1 Pet. 1:23).

But it is important to inquire why our blessed Lord used the term 'water': 'Except a man be born of water'. Does it not express the holy requirements of God? There must be a nature suited to Himself.

AARON AND HIS SONS

Now let us look at a few of the types, where water was used for cleansing. Indeed, let us notice the relative place in these figures of water, the blood, and oil. Suppose we look at Christ and believers, in the figures of Aaron and his sons in the day of their consecration. In Leviticus 8:6 we read: 'Moses brought Aaron and his sons and washed them with water'. Then from verse 7-12 it is all Aaron alone. And he put upon him the coat and girded him. And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him.

Thus, if we look at Jesus alone in this type, it is the water and the oil; the washing in water, then the anointing of the Holy Spirit. He was the sinless One, the washing with water marked His intrinsic purity. He needed no atoning blood. It was this that so surprised John — that the Holy One should come to be baptized. We read the story in the Gospels: 'Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him. And John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water, and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased' (Matt. 3:13-17).

He fulfilled this beautiful type of the law. He was baptized with water: and at this John might well marvel. But immediately He was anointed with the Holy Spirit. And God bore witness that He was the Holy One: 'My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased'. From His pierced side there flowed blood and water — blood to atone, and water to cleanse. But

you notice He was in His own essential being all that God, could require — the Beloved Son. This gives great force to the expression: 'Except a man be born of water'. He must have a wholly new nature — the very nature of the Beloved Son, the second Adam.

Turn back to Leviticus 8. If Aaron typifies the Holy One, who needed no sin-offering, the One on whom the Father could look with perfect delight, and on whom the Holy Spirit could descend; then when Aaron and his sons present Christ and believers, a sin-offering must be offered. Until the cross He, the corn of wheat, remained alone. Then He became sin for us. The holy, holy One, who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Look at Jesus in that figure: Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the sin-offering; and all this bearing the wrath due to our sins, in order that we might be one with Him in all the sweet savour to God of the burnt offering. For again, in the next place, the ram of burnt offering was brought; and Aaron and his sons all laid their hands upon its head. Now look at Jesus the Accepted of God; and then meditate on the wondrous fact, that all believers are perfectly identified with Him in all His acceptance before God. Still more, the ram of consecration is now brought, and Aaron and his sons lay their hands on the head of it also. Oh, look again at Jesus consecrated to the Father: and are we perfectly identified with Him in His consecration? It is even so.

By what power, or value, or merit can we possibly be thus identified with Him in His consecration to God? By the power, the value, the merit of His blood. The blood of consecration was first put upon Aaron's right ear, thumb, and great toe; and then put upon his sons. To have His eternally-loved many brethren, He must pass through death. And the power, the value, the merit of His blood must be upon them; yes, upon us. As the blood was put upon all the sons of Aaron, so the value of the blood is reckoned to all believers.

Now, mark, this consecration was never repeated; and if the infinite value of the blood of Christ be upon us, our consecration can never cease and can never therefore be repeated. Then followed the anointing oil, or rather the oil and the blood, sprinkled upon Aaron and his sons. Thus all believers are anointed with the Holy Spirit, the distinguishing mark of Christianity. Blessed abiding witness of the value of the blood of Jesus!

Thus we have the divine order: the water, the blood, the oil. It is our complete consecration. Born of water and Spirit, the Holy Spirit using the Word to quicken us — to give us an entirely fresh, new nature, and to wash us from all defilement by the washing of water by the Word. Then the infinite value of the precious death, the blood of Jesus put upon us once and for ever. Then the anointing with the Holy Spirit.

THE CLEANSING OF THE LEPER

In the cleansing of the leper in Leviticus 14 the divine order is very striking. There it shows first the ground on which the leper can be cleansed. There are two birds; the one is killed over running water, the other is dipped in the blood of the dead bird, and that blood sprinkled on the leper.

Precious figure! Jesus must die, and must rise again, and His resurrection applies the value of His blood, as the only basis on which the sinner can be cleansed. But now mark the order of the cleansing. Please read verses 8 to 20. Again we find, first the water, then the blood, then the oil. Twice is he to be washed with water. The holy pure requirements of God are thus confirmed in the type. Then the precious offerings that set forth the perfections of Christ are taken, and he is presented with the whole value of these before the Lord. How far have you got?

The believer, thus typified, is to be washed with water; he must be cleansed from all defilement. He must be presented to God with all the perfections of the work and person of Christ. Yes, we are thus presented. Then the blood is to be put upon the right ear, thumb, and toe. The value of the atoning blood of Jesus put upon him. And then the oil is to be put upon the blood. Thus again the type sets before us the water, the blood, and the Holy Spirit. Meditate on the completeness of this wondrous type!

And now look through this Book of Leviticus, and you will find every possible defilement must be washed by water. Even so every possible defilement to the believer must be met by the washing of water by the Word of God.

Read also in Numbers 19, the water of purification. What a lesson of washing by water! Blessed fact, that water derives

all its virtue from death. So the water of the Word derives all its value from the death of Christ. As the apostle tells us: 'In the body of his flesh, through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight' (Col. 1:22).

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

We now turn to another Scripture of great moment — Leviticus 16 — the great day of atonement. Even here the priest that brings the blood within the veil must first wash in water. But there is more: 'He shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil, and he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy-seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not'.

Yes, such must He be who should come and offer Himself without spot to God. He must be pure and holy. Yes, from the fire of the altar He must be the sweet savour unto God. The cloud — emblem of the divine presence — must cover the mercy-seat. Oh, what wondrous shadows of Christ!

I want my reader to fix his thoughts on two things especially in this chapter. The value of the blood before God, or propitiation, and the transfer of the believer's sins to Christ, or substitution. There are two goats to set forth these two things. One is offered as a sin-offering, and its blood is sprinkled on the golden mercy-seat before the eye of God.

We have seen, and fully admit as proved, that there are repeated washings of water. Now our solemn inquiry is: Are there, or can there be, repeated applications of the blood? How long does that blood sprinkled on the mercy-seat remain? The last verse of this chapter answers the question: 'An atonement for the children of Israel, for all their sins, once a year'. Then there required a fresh application of the blood of the goat once every year? Certainly.

Mark also, there is no transfer of sins to the sin-offering of propitiation here. No hand of identification was laid upon its

head. In propitiation it is what the blood is to God, turning the throne of righteous judgment into the mercy-seat. God meets a world in righteous mercy. Jesus is a propitiation for our sins, and not only so, but for the whole world.

Now look at the other goat — the azazel — the live goat: 'And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited'.

Nothing could more distinctly set before us the transfer of all our sins to Christ, the Substitute. This is substitution. There is perhaps not a more fatal mistake in modern theology than the confounding of these two truths together (that is, propitiation and substitution). It deceives those who have not faith, and it robs the true believer of the overwhelming comfort this fact gives, namely, that all his sins and guilt were transferred to Christ and borne away, never to be remembered against him for ever.

But to say that Christ bore the sins of the world — that the sins of all men were transferred to Christ — is to imply that all men therefore must be saved; or that His death has been in vain. I need not say that Scripture never makes such a mistake. Scripture presents Christ as the propitiation of the whole world, so that God in divine righteousness proclaims mercy and forgiveness to every man. But the transfer of sins is never applied in Scripture except to those who believe, where, so to speak, the hand of faith is laid on His precious head, as the hand was laid upon the goat.

I make these remarks, so that shortly we may have the full unhindered testimony of God's Word to our souls.

A FRESH APPLICATION OF THE BLOOD?

One word more. Had this transfer of all the sins of Israel to be repeated? It had to be repeated once every year. And in cases of individual sins, had there to be a fresh sin-offering? Undoubtedly, as Leviticus 5 fully states.

Then would not all this prove, one may ask, that the modern thought of constant fresh applications of the blood of Christ is correct and Scriptural? Let us turn to the New Testament and inquire. Will you read Hebrews 9 and 10? First, it is fully admitted that under the law there was this constant repetition, a remembrance of sins once every year; and the reason why is given: 'For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins'.

Now, do these chapters present the sacrifice of Christ in comparison, or in contrast, with the offerings of the law? If in comparison, then clearly there must be frequent applications of the blood of Christ to the believer, and for precisely the same reason. It is like saying: For it is impossible that the blood of Christ should take away sins! Indeed, this is exactly what Satan and unbelief are saying.

But nothing can be more clear than that these chapters present the one sacrifice of Christ in direct contrast with the often repeated sacrifices of the law. The offerings of old could never bring man into the presence of God. The veil shut him out; the Holy Spirit signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest. But now the veil is rent, and we have boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus. Then the sacrifices of the law could not really take away sins even for a year. Now the one offering of Christ has for ever perfected them that are sanctified.

Look at the sprinkled blood on the mercy-seat of old. Twelve months pass over, and it loses its value; there must be a fresh application of blood. But let faith look at the blood of Jesus before God; now say, twelve months pass over, has it lost its value? Twelve years, twelve thousand, twelve millions, eternity — has it lost its value? Must there be a fresh application of blood before God?

Please do not give up the everlasting efficacy of that precious blood! I may need to come boldly again and again to that throne of grace, but to say there needs or can be a fresh application of the blood of Christ is to overthrow the very foundation of Christianity. No! the one offering perfects in perpetuity all that are sanctified.

Let us now look at Jesus as the believer's substitute. As all the sins of Israel were confessed over and laid upon the azazel — the scape-goat, we now see Christ once offered to bear the sins of many. What a wondrous reality this is! All my sins and iniquities transferred to Christ, borne away by Him, never to be remembered against me! All this is made true to my soul the moment by faith I lay my hand on His dear head.

Is this true for twelve months? Does this work of Jesus my Substitute then fail? and then require a fresh work, a fresh application? Oh! my reader, would you thus deny the everlasting value of the blood of Jesus? A fresh application of the substitution of Christ bearing all or any of our sins transferred to Him? The thing is impossible. It would make His death of no more value than the blood of a goat! Again and again may the Word be applied to my heart and conscience, revealing to my soul, the all-stupendous fact that all my sins were transferred to my holy Substitute on the cross. Oh, soul-sustaining truth!

We have then two things certain and everlasting: the blood of Jesus before God, never, never losing its efficacy — never, never needing repetition; and the sins of believers once transferred to Him put away for ever. In all the believer's sins

being transferred to Christ the Substitute, the blood must be as perfect and everlasting in its efficacy for us as it is before God; and if all our sins have thus been transferred, there remains none for which there can be a fresh death or application.

And now, whether in the cleansing of the leper, or the consecration of the priest, where the blood was put upon the person, there was not repetition. The oil was put upon the blood. This is a third important aspect of the blood of Jesus. In the first, it was before God; in the second, it is for us, in our stead; in the third, it is upon us, the whole value of the blood is put upon us: placed to our account. Now if the blood of Jesus never can lose its value before God, nor for us in our stead; neither can it lose its value upon us. And if it can never lose its value, there need be, there can be, no fresh application of it. A fresh application implies it has lost its value. To doubt this is to doubt the infinite perfections of the person and value of the work of Christ.

This is very wonderful; yes, so wonderful that, it must be entirely of God. The believer, then, must be clean every whit in God's sight. That is just what he is, and he need not wash, save his feet. The blood is ever before God: therefore we can come boldly to the mercy-seat. All our sins have been transferred, laid on Christ, borne away. God has put the same blood upon us, the infinite value of the sacrifice of Christ upon us.

As to the believer who sees this, and understands these three aspects of the death of Christ, he must know that, though all unworthy sinner in himself, yet cleansed by the blood of Christ, he is whiter than snow in God's sight — without spot, made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

No doubt this was the faith once delivered to the saints a long time ago. Oh, if believers were but in that light now, clear and bright! A change now from Christendom to Christianity, is almost as great as it was of old from Judaism to Christ.

THE PREACHING OF PAUL AND JOHN

In the blessed Lord's commission to Paul we read that 'he was sent to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified, by faith that is in me' (Acts 26:18).

How much of that light, the true knowledge of God, has been obscured by the traditions of men! There was then the complete turning from ignorance to God, to the full knowledge of God in Christ, and of the believer's standing in Him. Thus one can give 'thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son' (Col. 1:12).

All this could not possibly be, if we were imperfectly cleansed from sins, and needed further applications of the blood of Christ. And that this is a present thing is evident from the testimony of another apostle: 'But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises [or, virtues] of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light' (1 Pet. 2:9).

Much depends on whether my reader enjoys that marvellous light, in all its clear brightness, or not. If you do, you have God's thoughts as to the blood of Christ before Him on the mercy-seat, and His thought of that sacrifice as the Substitute for you. You must see all your sins have been transferred to Christ, and for ever gone; and more, His thought about the whole value of that precious blood upon you for ever. Then you must see in this wondrous light that all your sins are gone as to their guilt, and that that blood thus cleanses you from all sin.

And if so, there can be no repetition, or fresh application, of the blood of Christ.

And to this agree the words of the Spirit through John: 'But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin' (John 1:7). Must it not be so? The blood before God, the blood to make atonement for us; the blood on us, the blood of Jesus Christ His Son, that cleanses from all sin. God sees the blood, and sins cannot be reckoned to us; they have been borne by Jesus. That blood — ever the same in infinite value: ever on us, and ever before God — it cleanses us from all sin.

FOR EVER PERFECTED

It cleanses, in the sense that we are perfected for ever, in perpetuity, by that one offering. To make this a matter of work or attainment on our part would be to deny the work of Christ. He has perfected in perpetuity. It is the abstract statement of the value of His blood, in the light. And if we are there, in the light, walking in it, we shall have this blessed certainty.

But perhaps my reader will say, I have been told that verse means this: 'that if a believer sins, he must come to God again, as he came at first, for a fresh application of the blood of Christ; and it will cleanse him again from his sins'. Now read the verse carefully. There is no question here of 'if we sin', that is, if we do not walk in the light; but 'if we walk in the light'. We will look at that question, 'if we sin', shortly. It is of all moment rightly to divide the Word of God.

If I said, 'The gas lights this room' [Written in the second half of the XIXth century], this would not mean it is gone out, and needs a fresh application, needs lighting again. If I said, 'The sun shines in the heavens, dispelling all darkness', this would not mean there needs a fresh application of the sun's light to do so. No, such has been the misuse of this precious verse that some have fallen into the fatal error, that if a believer sins he is no longer a child of God. But more of this presently.

A blind man could not see that the gas lit the room, or that the sun lights the heavens. If a man is in darkness, he cannot see this wondrous truth, that the blood of Jesus puts away sins, cleanses from all sin. As 'Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited'. Even so have all our sins been

transferred to Jesus. 'The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all' (Isa. 53:5-11). 'So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many'. 'But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God'.

If we are in the light, we see Him there by faith; His work done, never to be repeated. 'For by one offering, he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified'. In this full, complete, everlasting sense, if we are in the light, if we walk in the light, we have fellowship in this one with another; and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.

But my reader may say: This wondrous work was accomplished before we were born. Yes. Then all our iniquities, from our birth to our departure from this sinful world, were transferred to Jesus on the cross. To the believer this is surely true, or who can be saved?

And when is all this made true to the believer? As the hand of Aaron was laid, in identification, on the head of the goat, so the moment the Holy Spirit imparts faith to the soul, there is complete identification with Christ. Then we receive, in living power in our souls, the blessed fact that all our sins have been transferred to Christ, never, never again to be laid to our charge. And more than this, we are reckoned dead with Christ, and risen with Him. As all our iniquities have been transferred to Him on the cross, so now we are accepted in Him, identified with Him in all that He is, the risen Christ, at God's right hand.

The doctrine of a fresh application of the blood — a doctrine nowhere taught in Scripture, but taught by men — sets all this aside, and reduces ancient Christianity into modern Judaism. Neither must we read 'cleanseth from all sin', as if it meant an unfinished continuous process, like a woman washing a garment, or a man scouring a pack of wool. This is the Romish view of the work of Christ. If that woman is still washing the spots of dirt out of the garment, then she has not really perfected it. This error robs Christ of the glory of His finished

work, and needs for the Romanist a purgatory hereafter, and for others a purgatory here.

An anxious soul, that cannot say: 'Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood' (Rev. 1:5) — if he cannot say this, in the light, then he must be in purgatory, in the dark. Dear reader, if you are in the dark, you are tormented with uncertainty as to your sins. If you are in the light, you know the blood of Jesus Christ has washed them all away; they are all gone. Which is it? This is the true standing of every believer in the light before God, washed in the blood whiter than snow.

WHAT ABOUT OUR SINFUL NATURE?

Perhaps my reader will say: I had thought these verses in First John very difficult. Indeed, tell me your difficulties. Well, am I to understand by the blood of Jesus cleansing us from all sin, that therefore we have no longer a sinful nature? That we have here below a pure sinless nature, our old sinful nature changed, or sin eradicated?

How could you have had such a thought? Do you not see verse 8 expressly corrects that mistake? 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us'. Do you not find these words to be truth? 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh', and again: 'The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other' (John 3:6; Gal. 5:7).

But how can we be for ever perfected, if there is still a sinful nature? Because that sinful nature has been fully judged: 'God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin [or, by a sacrifice for sin], condemned sin in the flesh' (Rom. 8:3). Then we may fully own the truth, as to the unchanged old nature, sin in the flesh; knowing that all this has been judged on the cross? Certainly, and instead of difficulty, this gives blessed relief to the soul.

Well, one more, indeed the great difficulty to many. If the Christian should sin, does he then lose all this wondrous value of the blood of Christ? Is he no longer a child of God? And has the blood of Christ to be applied afresh? Why these very verses answer with the utmost clearness each of these questions. And mark, these truths are not given that we may sin; and God forbid that I should write one line that we may be careless in our walk: 'My children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our

sins: and not for ours only, but also for the whole world' (1 John 2:1-2).

Even in this extreme case there is no thought of a fresh application of the blood. If the believer sins, does he lose the value of the blood? Oh no, He who died for our sins is our Advocate, Patron, Solicitor — the One who undertakes the whole case of our restoration; as we see in that beautiful figure, when He took the basin and poured water, and washed His disciples' feet (John 13).

But it does not say: Advocate with God, but with the FATHER. This is important! The relationship is still there. Not a sinner before God, to be saved again; but a fallen child, to be restored to the Father; and by Jesus Christ the righteous? Yes, He is still my subsisting righteousness with the Father, and He is — not, He must die again to be — He is the propitiation for our sins.

This for ever decides the question of a fresh application of the blood. He is the propitiation. With the Jew the blood of the goat was needed once a year to be repeated on the propitiatory mercy-seat. Not so the blood of His Son; once shed, it is for ever before God. Have you sinned? Come boldly to that propitiatory, that throne of grace. Oh, the claims of that blood for us before God!

Fearful is the error of admitting for a moment the thought that there needs a fresh application of blood. What! was that sin, which breaks your heart in sorrow and contrition, transferred to Christ on the cross? Is that precious blood on the mercy-seat before the eye of God? Is that blood also on you as we saw in the cleansing of the leper? Need you more? Need you a fresh application of blood? Does God need more than the death of His Son? Will He deny the claims of that precious blood? 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness' (1 John 1:9).

Whatever dishonouring thoughts we may have had of the blood of Christ, God is faithful to its infinite value and unchanging claims. Therefore, sins confessed are sins forgiven. Thus, through confession, the believer is restored to communion; not through a fresh application of the blood, but because the blood is ever before God. And surely God is faithful to forgive the sins which have been once transferred to Christ, and borne by Him. What a provision God has made in His own Son!

Well, my reader may say: All this is very different from what I have been taught. I have been told that to walk in the light was a very great attainment, in fact only attained by very few; and that those few were so cleansed by the blood of Jesus that they were sinless, sin in some way being eradicated. But now I see that to walk in the light is the normal or true place of every child of God; and that the blood of Jesus presents me before God whiter than snow. Though in myself I still find sin, and need One in the presence of God as my Patron or Advocate when I sin, Jesus Christ the righteous, the propitiation for our sins; yet all I need I have in Christ. Well, the fact is I am amazed and filled with comfort. Christ is the rock; and the soul built on Him, evidently, never can be moved.

THE SECURITY OF THE TRUE CHRISTIAN

But I should like to name some other difficulties that have been presented to me. I would now briefly refer to the Romanist's view of salvation through Christ. The way to heaven is thus described: 'Suppose a traveller, going towards a magnificent city where his family and a brilliant fortune await him, between him and the city there is a fathomless abyss, and impervious darkness covers his way. This traveller has neither guide nor light; over this abyss there is only a small plank, narrow and very unsteady, and there is no other way by which he can reach the city'. Then follows the use of the Decalogue to help the poor souls across. [From 'The way to heaven', recommended by the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church.]

What a picture! Is it true? Is the Romanist in impervious darkness, without a guide, without light, and to him Christ a narrow unsteady plank across the bottomless abyss? Well, you say, I have not been brought up exactly in that impervious darkness. But really, I must say, not much better. The sum of the preaching I have heard is this: salvation by Christ is a sand-bank; to-day it is high above water mark, and all is safe; to-morrow the waves of temptation and dark billows of sin may have swept it away, and I, poor soul, may sink in the unfathomable depths of perdition. And I have been taught to regard as the most dangerous error the doctrine of the believer as a stone built on Christ the immovable rock.

Now for the strengthening of my faith in Christ, and the value of His precious blood, I will put out some of my old difficulties, and, I may say, the present difficulties of thousands I love and believe to be Christians. This is one. I have known many most zealous members of the professing Church, who appeared, so far as one could see, to be sincere Christians; yet at last they have been found to be practising sins, have fallen

away, given up all profession, and have never, to their dying day, been restored. Does not this look like the Roman Catholic unsteady plank, or with some Protestants the shifting sand-bank? How is this?

Let the same Epistle answer: 'They went out from us, but they were not of us; if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us' (1 John 2:19).

The parable of the sower also shows the same thing. Out of four parts that appear to receive the truth, only one receives it in the prepared heart; and, understanding it, brings forth fruit. It is not the assent of the intellect, but the reception of Christ in the heart by faith. Have you thus received Christ? If you have, you will no doubt continue; if you have not, you will sooner or later fall away. How plain the truth of God!

Will you now turn to First John 3? In chapter 2 we have seen the remedy and provision if any man sin. Most comforting to my soul! Now we read: 'Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not. He that committeth sin is of the devil. Whosoever is born of God sinneth not' (1 John 3:6,8,9).

Now these passages not only take away the comfort of the former, but they terribly affright many a sincere soul. I have sinned, therefore I am not a Christian at all, I am of the devil. This terror of soul arises from two mistakes. Firstly, the not seeing the two natures. The new nature, that which is born of God, surely sins not. And secondly, because of a mistranslation in these verses. It should be: 'He that practises sin is of the devil'. It concerns a lifestyle, a constant life in sin. Such people — non-Christians — are of the devil.

And there were those Nicolaitans, who were openly practising sin, and yet pretending to be Christians. In the very twelve, we have a notable instance of the difference. Judas practised sin: he sought opportunity to betray Christ, and he was of the devil. When Peter sinned, sad as it was, yet did that

look of Jesus say: There Peter, you have denied Me; you may go, you are of the devil now? What a contrast! Just such a contrast is there between the believer if he sins in chapter 2, and the practiser of sin in chapter 3. It is not a difficulty, but a solemn heart-searching truth.

Will you now turn to First Corinthians 9:24-27? Does this not look like the unsteady plank, or the moving sand-bank? What! a man may be a preacher to others, and yet himself a castaway. Terrible as this is, doubtless there are instances all around. But notice this chapter, and this Epistle, is not so much about salvation, but service, ministry, and Church order. And surely the Holy Spirit well knew what the future clergy would be. One of the most godly of the reformers said of the clergy in his day: 'Whose god was their belly, and whose religion was the kitchen'. I trust there is much change for the better. Perhaps no class of men have pampered the body more than the clergy; so that there is not a solemn warning of Scripture more needed than this.

But because the Holy Spirit foresaw the worldliness of a hired clergy, and forewarned the godly minister of Christ of the need of keeping the body under, I cannot see for a moment that this touches the security of the true Christian, having eternal redemption through the blood of Christ. It does prove this, that preaching to others is no security. Judas again may be cited in proof. He was of the devil, and became reprobate.

Well, I confess I do not see anything here to shake the confidence of the believer in the blood ever before God for him; and the certainty that all his sins were transferred to Christ; and that the blood is upon him; and the Holy Spirit bearing witness, not to his feelings, but to the efficacy of that blood, in putting away all sins; and more, that if he sins, Jesus the righteous One is his Advocate on high; and that, he having eternal life, God is still his Father.

Will you now turn to Hebrews 6:1-6? 'Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto

perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame'.

Oh, the darkness, and difficulty many have through misuse of these verses! Surely then they must misunderstand them altogether. Now, clearly, if these verses mean that a believer, who has eternal life, and is for ever perfected by the one offering of Christ, may nevertheless fall away; then they also prove the impossibility of such an one ever being restored to repentance.

Now this would prove too much, both for the men of the unsteady plank, and the men of the moving sand-bank; but what do they mean? If you look at the context you learn in the end of chapter 5 that the believing Hebrews had not gone on to perfection, or full mature Christian truth. They were still occupied with truths known by them as Jews, such as repeatedly laying again the foundation of repentance, like the yearly day of atonement; of the doctrine of baptisms or frequent washings of water, as the priests, and believing priests, were still practising; the laying on of hands on the heads of goats and bullocks, etc.

Remember, the temple was still standing, and the multitude of them that believed more or less were practising its rites and occupied with its doctrines. As for resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment, all these had had their place; but now believers were to go on to perfection, to the full developed Christian truth. And this the apostle does in this Epistle,

showing that Christian truth is in direct contrast with the old shadows of the law. And in these very verses the contrast is sharp and striking. The very plan of Judaism, or the law, was constant renewals. If a man sinned, he must bring a fresh victim. His hand must be laid upon it; it must be killed. There must be a fresh application of blood, and his relationship with God (such as it was) is renewed or restored. For a man to leave the one infinite sacrifice of Christ, and go back to the offerings of the law for restoration in case of sin or defilement, nothing could be more certain than that such restoration was now impossible. There was great temptation to do so whilst the temple was standing. No doubt some who had been brought into all the outward privileges of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Christian Church did so go back.

Repetition was quite right before the one sacrifice had been offered; but now, to give up Christ — and not only, give Him up but to go back to the very murderers of Jesus, to account Him an impostor as they did — and again to seek renewals by the offerings and rites of the law, was to crucify to themselves afresh the Son of God, and to put Him to an open shame. I fail to see the trace of a contradiction here to the precious truths we have been considering in First John.

You say you have been greatly troubled about this Scripture. Tell me: Does it apply to you? Have you given up the one offering of Christ and gone back to the offerings of the law? Have you laid your hand on the head of a goat or a bullock? True, you may have had all the advantages of a Christian education; yes, some eye may rest on this paper, who has wilfully given up the one sacrifice of Christ, and gone to infidelity or ritualism. Have you thus closed your eyes and refused the truth as it is in Jesus? If this is the case, no words can describe your dreadful condition. I think I hear you say: I never understood it a bit, I have been totally misled about it.

The apostle now goes on to contrast fully developed Christian truth with Judaism; imperfect priesthood with the

perfect priesthood of Christ; the imperfect offerings of the law, which could never take away sins, with the one offering of Jesus, which for ever perfects all that are sanctified by it.

This brings us to that other Scripture, such a terror to many: 'If we sin wilfully' (Heb. 10:26-31). Now, what is this wilful sin? Is it not this: As he that despised Moses' law died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment is he worthy, who has trodden underfoot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing? Is not this again the Hebrew who, by professed faith in the blood of the Son of God, had been outwardly separated from the Jewish sacrifices to Christ, and who now wilfully despises the sacrifice of the Son of God, and by going back to open sin tramples Him underfoot? Can there be anything but vengeance for such an one? Have you done this? Have you gone from Christ? Do you despise and trample underfoot the Son of God? Undoubtedly, to give up Christ and go after flesh, and the world, is the same thing in principle now.

I grant that the ritualist, in going to the Mass, is doing as much so as he can. But the sin of apostasy, wilfully rejecting and despising Christ, cannot be the sin of a believer, who clings to Him as his Advocate with the Father. Therefore this sin of the apostate Jew, or the modern despiser of Christ, has nothing to say to the security of the believer, as a stone built on the immovable Rock, and that rock is Christ.

Where have been my eyes, my reader may say? I fear in the dark; and darkness and light make all the difference in reading the Word of God. I will only bring one more Scripture — Second Peter 2:20,22. Now here it seems evident that there are some who had escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And they had known the way of righteousness, yet the latter end with them was worse than the beginning.

This is a very solemn chapter. 'There were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false

teachers among you', etc. Their character is described at full length. For a time these false teachers had escaped the corruptions of the world, as we have seen. This must be so. They would not have been received into the professing Church if they had not been outwardly moral. 'But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire'.

Now is it not sad to use this Scripture which thus so solemnly describes false teachers as dogs and swine, who thus return to their own evil ways, as if it described true Christians, the sheep of Christ? This wresting of Scripture, however, will not shake the foundation of the believer, and that foundation is Christ the Rock. Surely no person who thus misuses this Scripture can have read the first and last verses of the chapter. Please read the whole chapter. Oh! poor soul, tossed by false teaching, look up! the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses from all sin. Your sins have all been transferred to Him. God is your Justifier. Nothing shall separate you from the love of Christ.

THE WASHING OF WATER BY THE WORD (1)

But, to return, what is the meaning of the words 'to cleanse us from all unrighteousness?' This brings us to the washing of water by the Word, as it is explained in the Epistle to the Ephesians: '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' (Eph. 5:25-26). 'Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth' (John 17:17).

Is it not remarkable that we rarely hear a single reference to this washing of water by the Word? If we remember how the types abound with the washing of water, surely there must be truth of great practical importance signified in them. Let us then inquire what is the meaning of the washing of water that preceded the blood, as in the consecration of the priest; and the frequent washings after the blood was put upon him.

God had no purpose of restoring man's fallen sinful nature, as we have seen, but giving him a wholly new nature, pure and holy. The Lord announced this fact to Nicodemus, that man must be born wholly anew. And hence water was used as the express figure of this needed purity of the new birth, or new nature.

Only the Lord carefully excludes the idea that water imparts this new life: 'That which is born of the Spirit is spirit'. You could not say, That which is born of water is water. There is no ground in the Scriptures for the modern error, that water is the instrument used by the Spirit to effect this new life. The Word of God leaves no possibility of mistake as to this. 'Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever' (1 Pet. 1:23).

Are we born by the water of baptism? No! By what then? By the Word of God. Even as Jesus said, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life' (John 5:24).

Could words be more plain, or more certain? Study this verse well, and then tell me, is it not sad for men to alter all this, and to say baptism and water do all that? I will not copy the dreadful words that even Christian men try to justify in their catechisms. Let us return to the Word of God.

A careful examination of John 3 will convince you that there is no direct reference to baptism in the words: 'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God'. Nicodemus had not the remotest idea of Christian baptism, or its meaning; and yet, if he had only remembered Ezekiel 36:22-36, he would have well understood that, when God shall bring his nation into the kingdom or reign of God, the very things that Jesus had now said to him were distinctly foretold there ('Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you').

It is quite true that baptism, as a figure, gives a deeper and fuller meaning to the wondrous truth of salvation by Christ's death. As Jesus said: 'Even so must the Son of man be lifted up'. He must die. We must be identified with Him in that death; that the new life must be wholly new to us, even the life of the risen Christ. This is beautifully set forth in baptism; see Romans 6 and Colossians 2.

Have you ever felt the joy of knowing that the eternal life given to you is the eternal life of that risen Man in the glory of God? Oh, how safe your life, hid with Christ in God! and because He lives, we live also. Can He die again? Once He died to put away our sins; but now He lives evermore.

THE WASHING OF WATER BY THE WORD (2)

We will now consider the washing with water after the blood. We have seen the washing of water before the blood was put upon the leper or the priest, showing the absolute need of purification from all defilement. But after this, and the blood was put upon the priest, and the holy anointing oil was put upon the blood, then, even after this holy consecration, the sanctified priest, or priests, had to wash their hands and feet whenever they went into the tabernacle or approached the altar ('they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not', Ex. 30:17-20). The purification must be maintained or continued; and is not this the washing of the feet as we find it in John 13?

And if we read through Leviticus, we find that for every possible defilement there must be washing with water. Most profitable would it be to examine all this in detail, but this would require a volume instead of a tract. Now what is the voice of the Spirit to us in this washing by water after the precious blood of Christ has for ever perfected us; our sins transferred to Him; and the infinite value of His blood transferred to us, put upon us; and we sealed, anointed, by the Holy Spirit?

You will find, that just as there was the appointed washing, from every variety of uncleanness, to Israel; so there is a precept for every possible failure or defilement of the Christian. What water is to the body, the Word is to our spiritual walk. Israel were called to this ceremonial cleansing and holiness, as the redeemed of Jehovah, from Egypt, because He was holy (Lev. 11:44,45). But in the same way the Word tells us: 'But as he which has called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation: because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy' (1 Pet. 1:5, quoting this very text from Lev. 11).

Thus sanctification by the Word, washing of water by the Word, is to be to us what literal water was to them. What simple

figures our God has been pleased to give us! What a marked difference the use of water makes! You see a poor neglected child, washed, perhaps, once a month, and poorly fed. See another one clean, and well nourished with food. What a difference frequent washing and nutritious food make!

Have you seen the photograph of a lost child, taken from the streets, before and after a couple of years' washing, and feeding? It scarcely looks like the same. Are you aware there would be as striking a difference in many a Christian if he were brought to the constant application of the water of the Word, at the same time the soul feeding on Christ in the Word?

You see a Christian plunged in business, worldliness, and politics — perhaps once a month a little washing for a sacrament — so full of the world, that there is little room for Christ. He gets more and more wretched, hardly knows whether he is saved or not. Suppose the Word of Christ comes with power to his soul. He does not doubt the atonement. He does rest in Christ. But all the spiritual life is stunted and drooping.

Let the Spirit of Christ apply such a word as this — 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 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' (1 John 2:15). He awakes to the fact that he is loving the world, and linking himself with it: and all the while that world hates Christ! Ah never did a London Arab need water more than he finds he needs the Word.

Thus the water of the Word sanctifies him, cleanses him, from the inconsistent associations and spirit of this world. 'He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked' (1 John 2:6). How we all need this long-forgotten washing of water by the Word! To be clean every whit, may we now yield our feet to be washed with water by the precious Lord.

The blood can never lose its efficacy, can never be repeated, or freshly applied. Such a thought is Judaism. But for practical righteousness, for consistency of walk, we need the water of the Word at every step. There is no holiness of walk without it.

And yet many who teach a kind of holiness seem to know nothing of the washing of water. They even put the blood in the place of the water of the Word, and so deny the finished work of Christ, the full value of that one offering by which He has for ever perfected them that are sanctified. It is because we are for ever perfected by that one offering, that we are now called to walk as He walked. The priest had to wash his own feet; the Lord of glory is girded to wash ours. Shall we refuse Him? Lord, apply the Word to our walk and ways. When we read that Word in His presence, every verse is as water to cleanse us from the defilements by the way.

I thank God our Father that many are yearning more after holiness; but let them seek to be sanctified by the Word of truth. Satan will take care to bring false teachers into that holiness-movement, teachers that will call sin holiness. Mark also, much that is highly esteemed is condemned by the Word. I would note sectarianism (See 1 Cor. 3:1-3). Yet it is not long since a teacher of holiness rejoiced that his teaching had never led a single soul to give up this carnality — the sin of sectarianism. Not one through his teaching had given up the sin or his sect.

No one can conceive the rubbish and defilement that needs washing away by the water of the Word. The blood is still before God; the believer is accepted in Christ. Nothing can touch that. But our practical ways! Fellow Christians, awake! awake! Let everything be tried and cleansed by the water of the Word. Remember the yearning claim of Christ: 'Sanctify them by thy word; thy word is truth' (John 17:17). Is anything more needed at this moment than the washing of water by the Word?

I press this on my own soul, I press it on my brethren in Christ. Whilst rejoicing in the one offering by which we are forever perfected, are we not in danger of neglecting the precepts of the Word? The Lord bring every line with power to our souls, and to Him be all praise!