

The Cleansing of the Leper

Streams of Refreshing · Luke 17; Mark 1

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Leviticus 14:1-8. The ordinance in Israel of the cleansing of the leper gives us a touching picture of God's way of cleansing a sinner, and bringing him back into His own blessed presence to worship and serve before Him. Leprosy was a remarkable type of sin. It entirely unfitted a man for the presence of God. His place was without the camp {Lev. 13:46}.

Whether he had few spots or many, he was pronounced utterly unclean {Lev. 13:44}.

All that he could therefore truly say of himself was, Unclean, unclean {Lev. 13:45}.

The disease was most defiling. God alone could make a leper clean, and fit to come into the camp. The true place therefore of a leper was outside the camp of Israel, outside every thing of God -- His presence, His service, His worship; with rent garments, head uncovered, and upper lip tied up, calling out, Unclean!

lest any coming near should contract defilement. It is well for any now who take this self-loathing place, as without God, unclean, and undone before Him, unfit for His presence. Surely it is the only true place; for we are told, that they that are in the flesh cannot please God {Rom. 8:8},

that all are guilty before Him {see Rom. 3:19}.

God, however, could meet the leper in this foul and hopeless condition, and bring him back into the camp cleansed, and fit for His presence. And in this ordinance we see great principles shadowed forth, as to the way in which God has met us in our sin and guilt, fitted us for His own blessed presence, and made us to find rest and peace before Him in love. 1st. THE LEPER WAS BROUGHT UNTO THE PRIEST (Lev. 13:2). Wherever else he went, or to whatever person, it would be wholly unavailing. Out of all the people in the world, this one, and he only, had power from God to deal with the leprosy, and pronounce him clean. So we know that there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ. Jesus only is the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Him. The sinner must have to do with the Lord Jesus about his sins, or be outside God's presence for ever. There is salvation in no other. Jesus says, Come {Matt. 11:28}! Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out {John 6:37}.

How clear and encouraging this is! 2ndly. HE WAS EXAMINED BY THE PRIEST --

The priest shall look and behold if the plague of leprosy be healed {Lev. 14:3}.

The leper stood with his leprous spots exposed to the scrutinizing eye of God's priest. Dealing with God, through Christ, about our sin is no light matter. It is a deeply solemn experience, to fall under the searching eye of God in His infinitely holy presence. To feel oneself a sinner before a sin-hating God,

can only be endured by the knowledge of the fact that He is a sinner-loving God; for all things are naked and open before Him. There is not a secret thing which is not wholly uncovered before His eye. 3rd. **CLEANSING ONLY BY THE DEATH OF ANOTHER.** The leper had to learn at this solemn moment, that he could be cleansed only by a sacrifice being offered. A live bird was therefore taken, and killed over running or living water; for the death of Christ is connected with the outflowing of eternal life. And surely God teaches the soul that is exercised about his sins before Him, that it is only by the death of Christ that he can be brought to stand in acceptance with Him; for without blood-shedding there is no remission {Heb. 9:22}.

The leper saw, in the suffering and death of the bird, God's way of meeting him in order to cleanse him from his uncleanness. So it is only by the death of Jesus, the Son of God, that the sinner finds peace with God, and cleansing of sin; for Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God (1 Pet. 3:18).

Then he saw the living bird, with cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop, dipped into the blood of the dead bird: thus in a figure the dead bird is identified with the living bird, in order to be a type of Him who was dead and is alive again, and that for evermore. The dignity or majesty, incorruptibility, perfect humility, and other characteristics of Christ, may be typified by the scarlet, and cedar wood, and hyssop, to show us the infinite power and efficacy of His precious blood. 4th. **THE SPRINKLING OF BLOOD.** There the leper stood looking at God's work for him, and then receiving God's remedy, and hearing God's sentence. He did nothing to merit any good, but received all from the God of Israel. Feeling his utter uncleanness and unfitness for God's presence, his mouth was stopped, while the priest sprinkled the blood upon him seven times, and pronounced him clean {see Lev. 14:7}.

This is most blessed. It touchingly shows us that salvation is of the Lord. It gave perfect assurance to the leper, and left no room for a question. Whatever he felt, or others suggested, he had the consciousness that he was under the power of the blood; and, through that alone, God's Priest had pronounced him clean.

And so the believer now, who simply has to do with Christ -God's only Savior -- about his sins, is entitled to perfect peace, entirely on the ground that Christ died for our sins, and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; for God's word declares we are now justified by His blood (Rom. 5:9). We are thus pronounced clean. 5th. **THE LIVING BIRD IS THEN LET LOOSE**, to prefigure a risen Savior. After he had purged our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high {see Heb. 1:3}.

So that the resurrection and ascension of Christ give perfect assurance that God was fully satisfied with Christ's atoning work, and that He saw in His death upon the cross an answer to every claim of Divine holiness and justice, and the complete blotting out of the sins of His people. It was not possible that He should be holden {held by} of death -- His flesh saw no corruption; but he was counted worthy of all glory, because he had so fully glorified the Father on the earth, and finished, the work that He gave Him to do. Until the leper was cleansed, the living bird was detained; but the efficacy of the dead one being fully attested by the leper being pronounced clean, it was let loose into the open field {see

Lev. 14:7}.

What peace and comfort this must have ministered to the poor leper! and what perfect rest of soul the knowledge of Christ risen from the dead and gone into heaven gives us! Surely we can sing -“Clean every whit,” Thou saidst it, Lord; Shall one suspicion lurk? Thine surely is a faithful word, And Thine a finished work.”

6th. THE LEPER CLEANSED HIMSELF. After he was pronounced clean, he cleansed himself and came into the camp. He washed his clothes, shaved off all his hair, and washed himself, and in this way came into the camp. So the believer that has had to do with God about his sins, and has the enjoyment of present forgiveness and cleansing by the blood of Jesus, has no confidence in the flesh; he sees that he himself in the flesh is thoroughly unclean, that every thing connected with him naturally is unclean also, and that all his natural comeliness, all that he formerly gloried in, cannot bear the light of God's presence. But he acknowledges it unclean and unfit for God's eye, and sees it all cleansed by the word of God, which testifies to the everlasting efficacy of the blood of Jesus. Now,

said Jesus, ye are clean, through the word which I have spoken unto you {John 15:3}.

Made nigh in Christ Jesus, and through His blood, we can, by the Spirit, enjoy God's presence, worship the Father, and serve Him acceptably.