

CHRIST'S CLEANSING BLOOD

"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." I John 1:7.

No writer in the New Testament more perfectly combines depth of meaning with simplicity of statement than does John. He says, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." That statement reminds one of the beautiful Silver Springs in Florida, a great depth of clear water bubbling from the earth, but very small objects are clearly visible on its bottom. John, in this figure of speech, means that in God is perfect purity, and that without real and growing purity in ourselves we cannot have fellowship with God.

Our text teaches the defilement of sin. Sin! What a word that is! What a history it has! In what anguish it has been written. Sin is the worst word in any man's vocabulary. We cannot think of any other word that is quite so ruinous, devastating, blackening and diabolical as sin. It has crept into every life that has ever been lived, except that of Christ, and left its fingerprints of shame and remorse. The word "sin" has in it the hiss of a serpent, and many would rather not have it mentioned. Many prefer to call sin by some less objectionable name and regard it merely as an error, mistake, infirmity or failure. But sin is something to be feared, hated and avoided.

Sin is the most tragic fact in human life, the blackest page in human history. The saddest day in the history of the human race was when sin entered the world. Sin wrecked the Garden of Eden. Sin caused Cain to slay Abel. Sin made it necessary for God to send the terrible flood that destroyed most of the human family. Sin brought the wholesale murder of war. Sin crucified the Lord of glory. Sin is the masked enemy lurking in the shadow of the night, sowing seeds of discord among friends and transforming faith into suspicion and love into hate. Sin robs human life of everything that is really worth while.

Who is the painted temptress that steals virtue from the pure, the fair siren who, seated on the rock by a deadly pool, smiles to deceive, sings to lure, kisses to betray, and flings her arms around our necks to leap with us into perdition? Sin! Who transforms homes into hell, fathers into fiends, mothers into monsters, brothers into brutes, and sisters into sirens, and then gathering them into its arms flings them weeping and wailing into perdition? Sin!

Name me, if you can, a sorrow that sin has not caused, a defilement it has not made. Every anguish that rends the brow, every pain that pierces the body, every shame that shadows life, every tear that scalds the cheek, every guilt that pollutes the soul; the maniac's chain, the felon's cell, the coffin, the hearse, the grave, hell itself, are the fruits of sin. Sin is pollution and death.

Seth Joshua was talking to a man one day, and the man said to him: "You know, I can't swallow all that you preachers say about original sin." Joshua said: "My friend, you need not swallow it, it is inside you already!" That, then is the plain truth of the matter. There is an old proverb that says: "We all come from the same mould, only some of us are more mouldy than others!" At any rate we know that is true. All of us are up against the same problem, which is sin. Sin is a transgression of the law, missing the mark, disobedience, knowing to do good and doing it not. The Bible teaches that sin is cosmopolitan, cunning, deceptive, poisonous, loathsome, bitter, deathly and satanic.

Sin is the most destructive thing in the world. It brings disease and physical suffering and destroys human bodies. It brings many to untimely graves. It destroys human minds. "The wages of sin is death" to everything that is worthwhile in life. It is death to both character and happiness. In the light of these facts, it is certainly wonderful that God's Word tells us the good news that "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Corinthians 5:21).

Our text declares the way of pardon and forgiveness to be by the blood of Christ. It reminds us that the Bible is the book of the blood. The one theme out of which all its other themes grow is the blood. The blood is the scarlet thread that binds its parts together in unbroken unity. Take it out and the great book falls apart, a confused and dismembered mass without the power to bless or to save.

The blood of Christ gives to the Bible its highest value. It gives to its types and shadows the substance; to its symbols their sign; to its prophecies their promise; and to the gospel its good news. Take the blood out and the star of human hope, eclipsed by an impenetrable cloud of despair, drops into an eternal hell. Take it out, and God is a terror, and heaven a mockery of our misery. Without His blood we can do nothing but despair and die and be damned.

Yea, the blood of Christ that makes atonement for the sins of the whole world is the foundation of our faith, the inspiration of our hope, and the ground of our confidence. Not Christ, but Christ crucified is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin. If sin shuts us up to death and hell, His blood opens the gates to eternal life and heaven. If sin has polluted and defiled us, His blood can make us white and clean. If sin has enslaved us, it is His blood that redeems us and makes us free. If sin condemns us under the law and alienates us from God, His blood justifies us before the law and reconciles us to God.

The Bible uses many illustrations to show how completely the blood of Christ delivers us from the power and penalty of sin; it gives life, justification, redemption, reconciliation, peace, pardon, purity, and sanctification. No one of these illustrations gives a complete idea of what Christ does for those who lovingly believe in Him. Each one of them shows some phase of His work, and all of them emphasize the fact of complete salvation, of how the blood of Christ removes every obstacle between God and our salvation.

In recent years medical science has discovered many remarkable things about blood and is continually finding new uses for it in the treatment of patients. Many lives have been prolonged through blood transfusions.

Blood is a subject which occurs many times in both the Old and New Testaments. The Holy Spirit has led Bible writers to emphasize the subject of blood. Men may cavil at it, call it old-fashioned and regard it as a relic of the dark ages, yet it stands out upon the pages of Holy Writ claiming attention.

Somebody might say, "Why all this talk about blood when there are so many beautiful things about the life of Christ? Why not talk about His boyhood, His youth and His manhood rather than the ignominious death which He died? Why not sit at His feet and listen to His parables which are so interesting and instructive?" I would remind you that the text does not say, "The life of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin," but rather, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." With no thought of minimizing His glorious life, the Holy Spirit informs us that it is the blood which counts.

Close attention to the context makes it clear that the reference here is not to forgiveness but to purifying. We do get forgiveness through His blood, but John is writing about the cleansing that comes through the power of His blood. "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." He is stressing the cleansing from sin that follows forgiveness.

I have seen the men who work in the coal mines come out of the mines with the grime and soot of the coal upon them. Their faces, necks, arms and hands were as grimy and black as could be. So discolored were they that one could scarcely recognize them. But after they had gone to the bathhouse and had taken a good bath and been thoroughly cleansed, then the old smiles returned to the kindly faces, and the same eyes beamed upon their friends, and the same honest hands gripped yours.

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins:
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains."

During the Civil War a chaplain went among the soldiers in a hospital and preached unto them the way of salvation through Christ. He found one man whose eyes were closed and who was muttering something about blood, blood. The chaplain thought he was thinking of the carnage of the battlefield, and going to him he tried to divert his mind; but the young man looked up and said: "Oh, doctor, it was not that that I was thinking of; I was thinking how precious the blood of Christ is to me now that I am dying. It covers all my sins."

One day Queen Victoria visited a paper mill, and when she saw the filthy rags, exclaimed, "How can those be made white?" "Ah, your majesty," was the reply: "I have a powerful chemical process by which I take the color even out of those red rags." Some days after, the Queen found on her writing-desk a lot of the most beautifully polished writing-paper she had ever seen; on each sheet were the letters of her own name and likeness. There was also this accompanying note: "Will the Queen be pleased to accept a specimen of my paper with the assurance that every sheet was made from the dirty rags she saw on the back of the poor rag-picker? Will the Queen allow me to say I have had many a good sermon preached to me in my mill? I can understand how the Lord Jesus can take the poor heathen and the vilest of the vile and make them clean and white. And I can see how He can put His own name upon them; and just as these rags transformed may go into a royal palace and be admired, so poor sinners can be received into the palace of the Great King."

Christ's blood cleanses from all sin--original sin, inherited sin and actual sin; sins of thought, word and deed; sins of presumption and of ignorance, sins of thought and of desire, sins of omission and of commission, sins of words and of deeds, sins of childhoods and of youth, sins of adulthood and of old age.

Note that the Apostle John did not write "hath cleansed" or "will cleanse," but "cleanseth" --present tense, meaning "is cleansing." The cleansing is something that is going on all the time. The precious blood of Christ exerts its purifying influence constantly and continuously, and always in the present. This is a provision of divine grace which we need every day. In our daily tasks the clothes we wear become soiled, so they must be cleaned or laundered. If we could look at our souls, as we look at our clothes, we would find that our souls also become soiled in the wear and tear and dust and grime of life. Who is not conscious of this fact? We rub up against the dirty things of this world and come away with the stain of it on our souls. We need cleansing daily.

This daily cleansing has been provided for us in the work of Christ. Day by day, and hour by hour, if we "walk in the light as He is in the light," the stains of sin we pick up, in the process of living, are washed by the blood of Christ. All who "walk in the light" are being cleansed daily. Cleansing from sin means deliverance from the pollution of it. It is wonderful to know that the blood is ceaselessly operative.

No matter how long you have continued in sin or how deeply you have gone into it, you can be forgiven and saved from it by the Lord Jesus Christ if you will trust Him as your Saviour. Not only can you be forgiven and cleansed by Him, but you can become

"Near, so very near to God,
Nearer I cannot be;
For in the person of His Son,
I'm just as near as He.

"Dear, so very dear to God,
Dearer I cannot be;
For in the person of His Son,
I am just as dear as He."