

Moments *for* You

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Theme: Clean



WASH AND BE CLEAN

“If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?” (2 Kings 5:13).

The Bible tells us that Naaman was “captain of the host of the king of Syria ... a great man ... honourable ... a mighty man in valour ... but he was a leper” (2 Kings 5:1). What a sad addition to a wonderful depiction. But when we consider that the Bible often uses leprosy to illustrate sin, we realize that this sad condition may be truly added to the description of anyone—regardless of how honorable, refined, powerful, or prosperous.

THE DISEASE OF SIN

What a dreadful thing sin is! It was not part of man’s creation, for we are told that God made man upright (Ecclesiastes 7:29). But since the fall of Adam, all of mankind is sinful by nature and by practice: “there is none righteous, no, not one ... all have sinned” (Romans 3:10,23). Man’s sins come from a heart infected by evil (Matthew 15:19).

All of this, leprosy remarkably illustrates. The deadly disease was incurable in Naaman’s day, and lepers in Israel were required to live in isolation, calling out “Unclean! Unclean!” if approached. Man has no cure for sin. He may try to cover it up or wash off some of its unclean effects, but he cannot cleanse a conscience from sin’s guilt, or deliver anyone from its power. God alone can do that.

HOPE FOR A CURE

Naaman was told that there was hope of healing through the power of the God of Israel. But, like many

today who desire salvation from the wrath to come, he set about it in a wrong way. Instead of coming at once to the source of healing, he looked to human aid and interest. He took letters to the king of Israel from the king of Syria. There are so many people who, when first awakened to a real sense of their guilt and danger as sinners in the sight of God, turn to men—ministers, priests, some form of religion or ordinances—instead of coming at once, by faith, to the Lord Jesus Christ who alone can cleanse them from the leprosy of sin!

Hearing of Naaman’s need, God’s prophet Elisha invited him to come for healing. Like a person of self-importance, Naaman drove with his horses and his chariot to the door of the prophet’s house, only to be terribly disappointed not to see the prophet’s face. However, he heard the remedy: “Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.” What words of comfort for a leprous man! But how does the great and honorable man treat these gracious words? Does he go at once to Jordan? No, he is not yet content to be blessed and cleansed in God’s way.

BOWING TO GOD’S WAY

Proud reasoning comes in to hinder and delay the blessing. Why, he thought, must I wash in Jordan? Why not dip in one of our own beautiful rivers, if all I must do is “wash and be clean?” Likewise, we prefer anything over simple subjection to God’s word. Naaman “turned and went away in a rage” (2 Kings 5:11,12).

His servants then reason with him on the simplicity of the remedy, reminding him that it is only “Wash

and be clean.” The only remedy is now so pressed upon his soul that he humbles himself, and acts on the word of the man of God. He dips himself in Jordan seven times. What a beautiful example of faith, and the blessing which followed was exactly what Jehovah’s prophet had said. He was not only cleansed, but his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child.

CLEAN AND NEW

In like manner, all who turn from their own efforts, bowing in simple faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, are cleansed from all sin. On the cross, God laid upon Jesus the iniquity of us all. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. He died for our sins. Jesus “suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18). Had God not judged sins on the cross, there could have been no cleansing, for “without shedding of blood is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22). But because of His sacrifice, all who put their trust in Christ are assured that their sins have already been judged, that God has forgiven them, and will not remember their sins any more. “To [Christ] give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43).

Naaman’s restoration reminds us of the new birth, for “whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” (1 John 5:1). The burdened, sin-stricken soul that has fled to Jesus for salvation, not only has a purged conscience by the blood of Jesus, but he also has a new life in Christ, a new nature. Under the teaching of the Holy Ghost, he is now capable of knowing God, entering into the deep things of God, and of enjoying His presence forever. What

a marvelous change! What a deliverance and recovery!

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

Now, what do you say to these things? Are you conscious of being a sinner in the sight of God? Do you tremble at the thought of death and judgment being immediately before you? Does it sometimes occur to your mind that you must either be cleansed from sin, or forever suffer in your sins? Did not Jesus the Son of God die for sinners? Does not His blood cleanse from all sin? Then why go to the lake of fire forever? Why not “Wash and be clean?” Why not now?

The Son of God still delights to save sinners. He calls, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Can you refuse such love? It is no use to conceal your leprous spots, when in the sight of God you are utterly unclean. Listen then to the Savior’s solemn words: “except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). Think, dear reader, of the awful possibility of dying in your sins. Bow at once to the sinner-loving Savior. Fall now, as a leprous sinner, into His open arms. He will save you, for today is the day of salvation. He will receive you, welcome you, and never cast you out. He will wash you in His blood, cleanse away all your guilt, and forgive all your sins.

—Adapted from *Things New and Old*.

CLEAN HOUSE

Some of the ancient cliff-dwellers of Arizona had an interesting way of cleaning house. The smoke of their fires filled their dwellings and covered their walls with a black layer of soot. When this became intolerable they did not wash or scrape it off, but plastered over it with a fresh coat of mortar. Researchers have found no

fewer than eleven such coats of soot and mortar—one above the other.

How we shrink from facing the dirt—the sin—within us! It seems so much easier to apply another layer of morality and respectability and self-righteousness. Outwardly, it leaves the soul a bright white, but scratch it anywhere and the truth is revealed.

Someday, in the white light of the holiness of God, all this whitewash will peel off and all will be revealed. When God says, “Wash you, make you clean” (Isaiah 1:16), He does not mean a little cosmetic polishing up of outward appearances, nor a little more socially-acceptable behavior. God desires “truth in the inward parts,” but “who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?” (Psalm 51:6; Proverbs 20:9).

It is only through faith in Jesus Christ that we can be washed and cleansed and made fit for the presence of God. No effort of our own can make us so, but believing and receiving His cleansing makes us “clean every whit” (John 13:10).

“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).
—*Echoes of Grace*

FELLOWSHIP IN LIGHT

“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” (1 John 1:7).

God does not want anyone to live in the dark or die in the dark. He wants all people to come into the light. Notice that the cleansing of the blood depends on our walking in the light. What is the apostle telling us? For many years I was very confused

about this. I thought it meant that if I was very careful about obeying every command of God—that if I walked according to all the light I might have—He would cleanse me. But we find that the worst sinner may have this cleansing. When do we get it? When we turn away from the darkness and come to the light.

It is *where* we walk, not *how* we walk—it is to walk in the presence of God. By nature we do not want to come into the presence of God. But when the Holy Spirit has done His convicting work in my soul, I come to the light, face it, and let it fully shine on me. What does it reveal? It reveals my sin and my iniquity. But I am not alone there, for “we have fellowship one with another” (1 John 1:7). I find that I am simply one of a great group of people who by nature are all just as bad as I am.

The first time you come into God’s presence, you must come with all your sins, either in this life or in the day of judgment. If you come into His presence with your sins in the day of judgment, you will be lost forever. But if you bring your sins before Him in this life, then you will find that “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

REPEATED CLEANSINGS?

The word *cleanseth* suggests to many a continual cleansing, but I do not think that is the meaning. The marvelous thing about salvation is that when you put your trust in the Lord Jesus, the blood of Christ cleanses eternally and completely in the sight of God. There is never a moment that the blood is not there before God. I may fail in words, actions, and thoughts, but the blood abides and it cleanseth from all sin.

As a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, I stand before God on the

grounds of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Can we then go on living in sin? No, not at all. But “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). You see, I come to God not only wanting my evil record omitted from the books of eternity, but also wanting practical deliverance by His power. I want to know what it is to have actual cleansing in my life in word, thought, and deed. This is our practical cleansing by the washing of water by the Word (Ephesians 5:26).

As the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to reveal the failures in my life, I must come to God acknowledging the wrong I have done. Oh, dear friends, if you want blessing, do not be vague in your confession. Go into the presence of God and tell Him all about your sins. Tell Him about all the things you do that grieve His Holy Spirit. He will cleanse you by the washing of the Word and give victory in your life.

May God enable us to be real with Him and with one another. Then we will know the blessing of fellowship in the light.

—Adapted from *The Epistles of John and Jude* by H. A. Ironside.

TOTALLY CLEAN

A friend was updating me on his past year—a year in which he had been receiving ongoing medical treatment for cancer. The smile on his face was a powerful testimony to the good news he had just received. He said that at his one-year checkup the doctor announced that the test results all pointed to one thing: “You are totally clean!” What a difference two words can make!

King David, after his moral failure with Bathsheba, longed for the stains

of his sin to be washed away. He cried out, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10). The good news for him and for us is that our sins can be taken care of. When we need cleansing, John’s familiar words bring hope: “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).

We can’t cleanse our own hearts; only God can do that. If we confess our sins to Him, He promises to make us totally clean!

—Bill Crowder, *Our Daily Bread*, condensed.

CLEAN = GODLY?

“*The voice spake unto [Peter] ... What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common*” (Acts 10:15).

Is cleanliness considered to be next to godliness? It certainly was in the minds of many Jews, not only in Peter’s day, but through much of Israel’s history. The difference between that which was “clean” and that which was “unclean” was vital to the devout Jew. It was obviously vitally important to Peter. In Acts 10, when God commanded Peter to “kill and eat,” Peter quickly responded, “No way!”

AVOIDING UNCLEANNESS

Like Peter, many Israelites prided themselves in abstaining from anything “unclean” and disdained the Gentiles as “sinners,” as “unclean.” This provided them with the opportunity not only to look down on the Gentiles, but to avoid contact with them—all in the name of holiness.

The roots of this problem of Jewish separatism go very deep into the Old Testament. They begin in the distinctions which God drew between the “clean” and “unclean” animals which were to be put on Noah’s ark (Genesis 7:2). Then, in Genesis chap-

ter 12 we are told that God chose Abraham, and especially his “seed” to become a source of blessing to “all the nations of the earth” (Genesis 12:1-3). For Israel, being God’s chosen people was a place of privilege, but also one of great responsibility.

THE ATTITUDE OF JESUS

If the Jews of Jesus’ day felt that holiness was measured in terms of the distance one kept from “sinners,” then you can imagine the impact that Jesus’ words and teaching had on them. These Jews looked for a Messiah who would bless Israel and who would overthrow the Gentiles. Yet Jesus taught that He had come to bring blessings on the Gentiles, too.

And if this were not enough, Jesus actually sought out and fellowshiped with “sinners” at the meal table. Defilement, Jesus taught, was not a ceremonial thing, but a matter of the heart. Sin begins in the heart and works outward. Thus, Jesus made it clear that foods cannot defile a person. What one eats does not make one sinful or holy. In teaching this, Jesus declared all foods “clean.”

PETER’S VISION

God’s timing is always perfect. Just before three men arrived to invite Peter to share the Gospel with a group of Gentiles, Peter had a vision. Peter “saw heaven opened, and a ... great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common” (Acts 10:11-15).

The scene was repeated three times, so that its certainly was underscored. Peter was contemplating what he had experienced when the three men arrived. It was only then that the Holy Spirit told Peter what to do. He was to go with these Gentiles, to the home of a Gentile, without agonizing over the “defilement” which such an act had formerly implied to Peter.

EQUALS IN CHRIST

Peter now understood that Jews and Gentiles are equal. They are equally sinful, and worthy of God’s wrath. They are equally lost. They are equally undeserving. But when they have trusted in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, they are equally saved because their cleansing and worth are based upon the work of Christ, not on their own good works. When one’s righteousness is based upon God’s work, through Christ, there is no room for self-righteousness, and thus no basis for superiority or pride.

THE LESSON FOR US

The primary lesson for Peter—and for us—is that the gospel must be preached to all men. Further, we are taught that even though God wants His people to be distinct from the world, they are not to be distant and removed from it. They are to be lights in the world, and salt, as Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:13-16). Light that is hidden and salt that is tasteless has no value. God’s people are “in the world” but not “of the world” (John 17:14-19) so that His salvation may be proclaimed, and His holiness may be demonstrated.

—Adapted from “Is Cleanliness Next to Godliness?” by Bob Deffinbaugh, Copyright ©2016 Bible.org, reprinted with permission.

A CLEAN WAY

“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy word” (Psalm 119:9)

On the day of our conversion, we are cleansed from all our sins. This washing never needs to be repeated: it is “once for all” (Hebrews 10:10). But between the day of conversion and the day of the believer’s entrance to heaven we walk through a world filled with defilement and corruption.

In order that our walk may be pure, God has given us His Word. The plain path in which the Father desires His children to walk is marked out there, and warning is given concerning the snares and pitfalls that lie alongside the path. By carefully following God’s path, the child of God is preserved from danger and defilement.

Remember that it is not enough to *know* the Lord’s way; it must be *followed*. Follow wherever it leads you. Keep clear of all it warns you about. In this manner shall our way be cleansed.

—*Young Christian*

CLEANSING & HOLINESS

“Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Holiness is more than cleansing, though cleansing must come first. This is taught in more than one passage of the New Testament. “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” (Ephesians 5:25-26). “If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified” (2 Timothy 2:21).

Cleansing is the negative side: the removal of impurity, being separate, and not touching the unclean thing.

Sanctifying is the positive union and fellowship with God: participation in the divine life and holiness (2 Corinthians 6:17-18).

LET US CLEANSE OURSELVES

Cleansing is sometimes spoken of as the work of God (Acts 15:8-9; 1 John 1:9), and sometimes as that of Christ (John 15:3; Ephesians 5:26; Titus 2:13-14). In our verse, we are commanded to cleanse ourselves. How is this cleansing to be done?

When Hezekiah called the priests to sanctify the temple that had been defiled, we read, “the priests went into the inner part of the house of the Lord, to cleanse it, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found” (2 Chronicles 29:16). Only then could God’s service be restored.

In this way, all that is unclean in us must be searched out, brought to light, and utterly cast out. The Holy Spirit stirs us up and enables us to accomplish this difficult work. The Spirit is the strength of the new life; in that strength we must set ourselves determinedly to cast out whatever is unclean.

PERFECTING HOLINESS

We are called to the careful exercise of perfecting holiness. Holiness must be carried out into the whole of life, and carried on even to its end. Let us not be afraid of the word “perfect.” Our blessed Lord used it when He gave us the command, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). A student striving after perfection in knowledge is told by his teacher that the way to the perfection he hopes for at the end of his training is to be perfect in the lessons of each day. To be perfect in the small portion of the work that each hour brings is the path to the perfection that will crown the whole.

As teachable students, let us in every act of worship or obedience, in every temptation and trial, do the very best which God's Spirit can enable us to do. "Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James 1:4). "Now the God of peace ... make you perfect in every good work to do His will" (Hebrews 13:20-21).

—Condensed from *The Believer's Secret of Holiness* by Andrew Murray.

CLEANSING EACH OTHER

"He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel" (John 13:5).

This is what is meant by Jesus taking upon Himself the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7). Christ did not wash His disciples's feet for show or pretense, but to meet a need and set an example: "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14).

At the moment we trust Christ for salvation, we are washed—once, definitely and irrevocably. But we need a daily cleansing to maintain happy fellowship with God. Our spiritual feet become soiled with dirt, our hands become grimy, and our lips and ears are fouled by an endless stream of idle, ungracious, and faithless words.

It is important that we come often to Christ for cleaning. But we should also care for our fellow believers, humbly working to restore them to purity as well. Sadly, while we are conscious of the imperfections of Christians around us, we are too often content to note, criticize, and discuss them. But we dare not attempt to remove them. This failure arises partly because we do not love with a love like Christ's—a love which will brave resentment, annoyance,

and rebuke—and partly because we are not willing to stoop low enough.

None can remove the mote of another, so long as the beam is left in the eye, and the sin unjudged in the life (Matthew 7:1-5). None can cleanse the stain, who is not willing to take the form of a servant, and humble himself for the task at hand. None is able to restore those that are overtaken in a fault, who does not count himself the chief of sinners and the least of saints.

We need more of this lowly, loving spirit. Let us therefore watch for each other's souls: let us consider one another to provoke to love and good works. Let us in all sincerity do as Christ has done, washing each other's feet in all humility and tender love.

—F. B. Meyer, adapted.

UNCLEAN LIPS

"Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5).

The gleaming beauty of God's holiness was like a mirror held up before the prophet Isaiah. He saw his own filth and need. Notice, it is his lips which he especially perceives as unclean. What we say reveals what is in our hearts, and Isaiah clearly perceived the heart of man in himself.

Did the prophet frantically hurry to cleanse himself? No! Confessing his ruined condition to God was all he needed to do. God did the cleansing.

Now, humbled and cleansed, Isaiah is ready for commitment. "Send me," he pleads with God. And God sent him. His mission was to tell Israel about his vision of the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man.

Does our understanding of God's message cause our lips, once cleansed, to cry out, "Send me"?

—Adapted from *The Wells of Salvation* by Charles and Norma Ellis.