

Series: John

Title: Purified by Christ

Text: Jn 11: 55-57

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John 11: 55: And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves. 56: Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast? 57: Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew *it*, that they might take him.

At this time, the majority of the Jew had a vain form of religion. It was only an outward show. They did all in the letter. But few were born again of the Spirit so as to worship God in spirit—with faith to believe on Christ. So once again the Spirit moved John to call the passover “the Jews’ passover.” When God gave this ordinance, he said, “It is the LORD’s passover.” (Ex 12: 11) When their children asked what they meant by this ordinance, God commanded, “That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD’S passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses” (Ex 12: 27).

Christ said, “Moses wrote of me” (Jn 5:49). God gave the ordinance of the passover to typify, foreshadow, Christ our Passover Lamb. The Lamb that God provided is his only begotten Son. He is the Paschal Lamb which the old covenant ordinance typified. They heard John the Baptist declare he is the Lamb of God!

But the Pharisees rejected Christ the Passover for the shadow—for their works, for the ceremony that typified him. They thought that it was their outward act of observing of the law of the passover that made God pass over their sins and accept them. They did not have faith to behold and believe on Christ who the law foreshadowed.

Likewise, God commanded in the old covenant law that if any were unclean then before they could partake of the passover they must be purified by the water of separation made from the sacrifice of a red heifer. This is why they went up to purify themselves. But most believed that by their act of observing this ceremonial law, they made themselves pure before God

In the way the Spirit of God moved John to record this, we see carnal man’s backward order of purification, sanctification—

- “*And the Jews’ passover was nigh at hand; many went out of the country*”—men go out outwardly, they decide to turn over a new leaf so they leave some things behind
- “*up to Jerusalem*”—men enter a church and become religious
- “*before the passover*”—they do so before coming to Christ the Lamb
- “*to purify themselves*”—they do all this thinking they are purifying themselves by their outward acts
- “*Then sought they for Jesus*”—then after making themselves holy, they pretend to seek for Christ.

Now in the law, God commanded that the unclean must be purified before observing the passover. But everything about that law of purification typified the Spirit of God bringing us to Christ who cleanses us. It is to Christ—FIRST—that the Spirit brings us. It is to Christ—CONTINUALLY—that the Spirit bring us. He makes us willing to wash and purify our hearts by faith in Christ.

Proposition: Christ sends the Spirit and through the word he brings God’s child *to Christ who makes us pure.*

Christ is the Sanctifier and Sanctification of his people the same as he is our Righteousness. His blood applied by the Spirit purifies within. He makes us willing to believe on Christ and plunge into the fountain for cleansing. His death as our Substitute justified us so that God is just to pass over his people. And it is his cleansing us that keeps us separated unto Christ alone and keeps us from glorying in anything we have done. Concerning this purifying, we read

Hebrews 9: 13: For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: 14: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Read Numbers 19. Here we see the word concerning the red heifer and the law of purification. God is holy. A sinner cannot approach God unless we are made holy by Christ by the Spirit. This purifying work is entirely the work of God. Christ is our Sanctifier and our Sanctification. It is to Christ FIRST that he brings us and to Christ CONTINUALLY that we are brought for cleansing. It is Christ ALONE that cleanses.

THE PICTURE IN THE RED HEIFER

Numbers 19:1: And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, 2: This [is] the ordinance of the law which the LORD hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein [is] no blemish, [and] upon which never came yoke.

Why the color red? God made the first Adam out of the red earth; Adam means “red earth.” Christ is the last Adam who took flesh like unto his brethren, that “through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil and deliver his children.” (1 Cor 15:45; Heb 2:14).

This is the only offering which had to be an heifer not a bull. Christ’s purifying, sanctifying work was accomplished by Christ taking flesh like his bride. His bride, his elect, is the woman, “the weaker vessel.” So Christ was made of a woman, made under the law, made like unto his brethren so that he himself could take our infirmities. (Gal 4; Mt 8:17) The Son of God became the Son of man that our Substitute might bear the sin of his people and that he might know the weakness of our flesh. It is that he might be able to succor us in every time of need.

The red heifer had to be “*without spot.*” Our Lord Jesus Christ “*knew no sin.*” The Hebrew writer said that if the ashes of a red heifer ceremonially cleansed, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself WITHOUT SPOT TO GOD, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Heb 9: 13).

It had to be an heifer “*upon which never came a yoke.*” Christ laid down his life for his people voluntarily. He said, “No man takes my life from me, I lay it down of myself.” (Jn 10)

WITHOUT THE CAMP

Numbers 19: 3: And ye shall give her unto Eleazar the priest, that he may bring her forth without the camp, and *one* shall slay her before his face:

The red heifer was slain without the camp. Where did the Lord Jesus suffer? What did he accomplish thereby? Remember this was for purification.

Hebrews 13: 12: Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

“*Without the camp*” is where lepers—the unclean—were sent. In order to make his people clean, our spotless Substitute bore the sin of his people and was numbered with the transgressors without the camp.

Hebrews 13: 13: Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

We see how self-made religious men reproached Christ. Even in John 11, Christ went into the wilderness to Ephraim. Then at last he was crucified without the camp. Sinners hate for Christ to have ALL the glory. They would steal his glory. So if we preach the truth that Christ is our only Sanctification and only Sanctifier, as well as our Righteousness, proud religionists will reproach us. But “Let us go forth unto him therefore without the camp, bearing his reproach.”

NECESSITY OF BLOOD

Numbers 19: 4: And Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle of her blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times:

Scripture says “without shedding of blood is no remission of sins” (Heb 9: 22). Blood is always necessary in order for the sin of God’s people to be put away and for us to be purified. Scripture says, “The life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul” (Lev 17:11). The blood of Christ is his life. His blood shed was Christ laying down his life upon the Altar of his Deity in place of his people by which he made atonement for our souls.

But the blood must be applied to us to sanctify us. Eleazar the priest was to take the blood and sprinkle the blood with his finger directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times. The tabernacle of the congregation represents all the elect of God. It represents each and every one of God’s elect in particular. Christ our High Priest, through the Holy Spirit, applies his precious blood to his people. He shall sprinkle his blood in each and every one for whom he died. In order to cleanse us, to make us pure within, the Spirit of God brings us “to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of Abel*” (Heb 12: 24).

He sprinkled the blood *seven times*—the number of perfection. When the Spirit purges our conscious with Christ’s blood and as Christ continues to renew us and grow us in the knowledge of Christ, he makes us behold that his work is complete. He is our perfection.

Hebrews 10: 14: For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. 15: *Whereof* the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, 16: This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; 17: And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. 18: Now where remission of these *is*, *there is* no more offering for sin.

If those ceremonies had purged their conscious then would they not have ceased to be offered? But when Christ purges our conscious he makes us know the work is finished. Christ has made us perfect. So there is no there is more offering for sin. Be sure to get this. Self-sanctifying religionist accuse us of confusing justification with sanctification. But Hebrews 10 shows us that when the Spirit sanctifies us within, the fruit of true holiness, is that we behold Christ is our Justification and our Sanctification in whom and by whom we are perfected. When truly sanctified—made pure—within, the believer ceases to boast of his self-sanctifying works because now we know Christ is our Sanctifier and our Sanctification. We have nothing to boast about. The blood of Christ has purged our conscious from dead, self-sanctifying works.

THE BURNING

Numbers 19: 5: And *one* shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn: 6: And the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast *it* into the midst of the burning of the heifer.

The Spirit makes us behold Christ bearing the fire of God’s justice in our place. Christ is our cleansing when the Spirit makes us see Christ bearing the fire of God’s justice in place of his people. This is how he continues to cleanse us from daily defilements. He keeps us beholding how awful our sins are by making us behold Christ bearing what we deserved. The red heifer was burned entirely in the fire. Christ suffered entirely beyond our comprehension bearing what his people would have borne for eternity.

Cedar wood is fragrant. By Christ honoring the Father and his holy law, establishing his people in Christ’s righteousness, his offering was fragrant to God like cedar wood.

Hyssop was used to sprinkle the blood upon lepers. Later it used to apply this water of purification. It represents faith. Here it is Christ’s perfect faithfulness to God, even as he endured the fire of God’s wrath in place of his people. He never ceased looking to the Father. He had a perfect holy heart. In perfect faith under perfect fire enduring perfect suffering, Christ never ceased depending upon the Father. That is why he is our Sanctification and our Righteousness. It is the Spirit making us behold him that sanctifies and purifies us, granting us repentance and faith continually to rest in Christ alone. It is Christ’s perfection that separates us unto him and keeps us following him in holiness.

DEFILING SIN

Numbers 19: 7: Then the priest shall wash his clothes, and he shall bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp, and the priest shall be unclean until the even. 8: And he that burneth her shall wash his clothes in water, and bathe his flesh in water, and shall be unclean until the even. 9: And a man *that is* clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay *them* up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it *is* a purification for sin. 10: And he that gathereth the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: and it shall be unto the children of Israel, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among them, for a statute for ever.

We see here how defiling our sin is. This is why Christ alone must make us clean. This is why Christ must continue to cleanse us and keep our new hearts pure from the defilement of our sin-nature. We see it in that even the men who did this, exactly as God commanded, were unclean and had to be made clean. Even the three men who did this service for God were all made unclean and had to be washed and made clean. Our very best works—works done for God—must be made clean by Christ alone. They were defiled because they touched death, even gathering up the ashes. We are unclean because our old nature is sin and its death defiles even our best works.

This is why Christ alone must be our continual Sanctifier and Sanctification. There is a sin-nature in all God's people that defiles us constantly. Also, all about us are sinners and death. We come into contact with sin and death daily. He shows us how easily we are defiled, so that we see our need of Christ to continually cleanse us.

Numbers 19: 11: He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days. 12: He shall purify himself with it [the water of separation without the camp] on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean: but if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean. 13: Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness *is* yet upon him. 14: This *is* the law, when a man dieth in a tent: all that come into the tent, and all that *is* in the tent, shall be unclean seven days. 15: And every open vessel, which hath no covering bound upon it, *is* unclean. 16: And whosoever toucheth one that is slain with a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days.

The point of this law was that everything makes us unclean. If they entered a room where a dead man was they were unclean. If they drank water in which was a tiny, unseen, dead gnat then they were unclean because they touched death--“how much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water” (Job 15: 16). If they walked over a grave they were unclean. We do not comprehend how holy God is and how sinful we are. Even when doing that which God commands we become defiled because we are in constant contact with our dead sin-nature.

Isaiah 64:6: But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

CHRIST IS THE CLEAN MAN WHO PURIFIES

Numbers 19: 17: And for an unclean *person* they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and RUNNING WATER shall be put thereto in a vessel: 18 And a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip *it* in the water, and sprinkle *it* upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave: 19 And the clean *person* shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day: and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even. 20: But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the LORD: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he *is* unclean. 21: And it shall be a perpetual statute unto them, that he that sprinkleth the water of separation shall wash his clothes;

and he that toucheth the water of separation shall be unclean until even. 22: And whatsoever the unclean *person* toucheth shall be unclean; and the soul that toucheth *it* shall be unclean until even.

Christ must be, and is, the only purifier. Like the water of separation, Christ is laid up for the children of Israel in a clean place without the camp at God's right hand. The ashes were put in water *verse 9*, "And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin." Christ is for the children of Israel and for the stranger—for God's elect Jew and Gentile. He is laid up at God's right hand in the clean place. Go to Christ.

Hebrews 9: 12: With his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us

In John 11 they went up to purify themselves *then* they looked for the Lord Jesus. They thought they were pure by the act of this ceremony. It is Christ who purifies. He creates in us a clean heart, giving us faith to look to him alone. "He shall sit *as a*... purifier...and he shall purify the sons of Levi,...that they may offering to God an offering in righteousness" (Mal 3:3). Christ sends the Spirit to turns us to Christ at God's right hand. He turns us in heart. He sprinkles the water of separation and purges our conscious. He keeps renewing us by bringing us to Christ who *cleanseth us of all our sin*. He is the only offering we bring to God.

The clean man applying the ashes with the running water pictures Christ through the Holy Spirit applying his merits to our hearts. It typifies "the washing of regeneration" and the on-going "renewing of the Holy Spirit", "the washing of the water by the Word" (Ti 3: 5; Eph 5: 25-26).

The ashes, if not mixed with the running water were not used, nor could be efficacious. Neither does the righteousness of Christ operate upon our heart unless applied by the HOLY GHOST. It shows how we need the Spirit to take the things of Christ JESUS, and show them unto us. He brings us to Christ in the first hour and continues to bring us to Christ for cleansing.

John 16:13:...when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth:...4 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew [it] unto you."

Christ purifies us through the Spirit by making us behold Christ crucified for us.

Zechariah 12:10: And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for *his* only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for *his* firstborn.

The clean man purged the unclean sprinkling the water on him using *hyssop*. Here the hyssop is a picture of God giving us faith. It pictures the Spirit continuing to renew a believer in faith and repentance. When a believer beholds our sin and begins crying out to God to cleanse us, it is because Christ has cleansed us and renewed us in faith and repentance. When the Spirit had cleansed David and brought him to repentance then David prayed, "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean, wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Ps 51: 7). Once the water was sprinkled on David, David plunged into the sin-cleansing fountain by faith. Christ is that fountain for cleansing.

Zechariah 13:1: In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.

A sure mark of true sanctification is a man ceases boasting that he contributed. He gives Christ all the glory. David could not make himself repent and purify himself until the Spirit did this work in his heart. Neither can we glory in cleansing ourselves. No believer can glory in our sanctification in the least bit.

We cannot glory in regeneration nor can we boast in sanctification. The Spirit of God regenerates us and sanctifies us by creating a new, holy man within. In that new man he makes us behold Christ. The new man is created in righteousness and true holiness, the righteousness and holiness of Christ. Our new man is "born of God". The new man "does not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin,

because he is born of God.” (1 Jn 3:9) Christ made us holy in the new man—“meet to be partaker of the inheritance with the saints in light” (Col 1: 12). Being made holy is all of God and is not progressive. When we are born of God we are made holy right then. Right then we are fit to enter heaven like the thief on the cross the hour when Christ gave him a new heart.

And it is Christ who grows us in that state of holiness by the Spirit. He keeps bringing us to Christ continually. In the first hour, he cleanses us from our defiling sin, making us willing to plunge into Christ the fountain for cleansing. And he continues renewing, granting repentance, growing us in faith by continuing to make us wash in this fountain. It is Christ First, Christ continually, Christ alone, Christ to the end!

Amen!