

THE CLEANSING OF THE LEPER

NO. 353

A SERMON
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AT EXETER HALL, STRAND

*“And if a leprosy break out abroad in the skin,
and the leprosy cover all the skin of him that hath the plague from his head even to his foot,
wheresoever the priest looketh; then the priest shall consider:
and, behold, if the leprosy have covered all his flesh, he shall pronounce him clean that hath the plague:
it is all turned white: he is clean.”*
Leviticus 13:12-13

THIS is a singular paradox, but not a paradox to him who understands the Gospel. We have great reason to thank God that the terrible disease, leprosy, which was one of the demons of the East, is so little known in our own land. And even in the few cases where leprosy has broken out in our climate, it has always assumed a far more mild and mitigated shape than it did with the Jews in the land of Canaan.

Yet, since they had so frightful a disease, God, in His infinite mercy, made use of it as a sort of sermon to the people. Leprosy is to be considered by us as being the type of sin. And as we read the chapters in Leviticus, which concern the shutting up or putting apart, and the purification of a cleansed leper, we are to understand every sentence as having in it a Gospel sermon to us, teaching us what is the condition of a sinner in the sight of God, how that sinner is to be cured, and how he can be restored to the privileges from which the leprosy of sin had utterly shut him out.

I shall need no preface, for the subject is deeply interesting, and will be found especially so by many of us who can use the language of David, in the psalm which we have just read. If we have come up here conscious of guilt, laden with iniquity, I am quite certain, and I speak positively and confidently, there will be somewhat in the discourse of this morning to cheer our hearts, and to send us home rejoicing in the Lord our God.

Carry in your thoughts the one key to our text, namely, that leprosy is the great type of sin. And I shall want you, first of all, to *see the leper*, and to *see in the leper the sinner*. After we have well-looked to him, we shall *bring him before the priest and stand still while the priest examines him*. This done, and the sentence being pronounced, we shall *listen attentively to the announcement of the rites and ceremonies which were necessary in order to cleanse this leper*, which were but representations of the way whereby we too must be cleansed.

And then, we shall have a little time to notice *certain after-rites which follow after cleansing*, which were not the cause of the cleansing itself, but necessary before the man could actually enjoy the privileges which the cleansing gained for him.

I. First, then, let me ask you to turn your eyes to the LOATHSOME AND GHASTLY SPECTACLE OF A LEPER.

A leper was extremely *loathsome in his person*. The leprosy broke out at first almost imperceptibly, in certain red spots which appeared in the skin. They were painless, but they gradually increased. Perhaps the man who was the subject of the complaint scarcely knew that he had it at all. But it increased, and further and further, and further it spread.

The perspiration was unable to find a vent, and the skin became dry and peeled off in scales. The withering of the skin was too true an index of what was going on within, for in the very marrow of the bones there was a most frightful rotteness, which in due time would utterly consume the victim.

The man would eat and drink. He would perform what is called by the physician, the *naturalia*, all the functions would be discharged as if in health. All things would go on as before, and he would be subject to very little pain. But by degrees the bones would rot, in many cases the fingers would drop off, and yet without any surgical operation, the rest of the body was healed, so that there was no bleeding.

When it came to its very worst phase, the body would drop together, all the strings being loosened, the whole house of manhood would become a horrible mass of animated rubbish, rather than the stately temple which God originally made it. I could not in your presence this morning describe all the loathsomeness and ghastliness of the aggravated cases of Jewish leprosy. It would be too sickening, if not disgusting.

But let me remind you that this, fearful as it seems to be, is a very poor portrait of the loathsomeness of sin. If God could tell, or rather, if we could bear to hear what God could tell us of the exceeding wickedness and uncleanness of sin, I am sure we should die. God hides from all eyes but His own the blackness of sin. There is no creature, not even an angel before the throne, that ever knew the intolerable wickedness of rebellion against God. Yet that little of it which God the Holy Ghost taught you and me when we were under conviction of sin was enough to make us feel that we wished we had never been born.

Ah! well must I confess, though my life was kept and preserved as a child from outward immorality, when I first saw myself as I was by nature, and in the thoughts, and intents, and imaginations of my heart, I thought that even devils in hell could not be baser than myself. Certain I am that, whenever the Spirit of God comes into the soul, our good opinion of ourselves soon vanishes.

We thought we were all that heart could wish, but when once taught of God the Holy Ghost, we think that we are vile and full of sin, that there is no good thing whatsoever in us. Loathsome, I say, as was the leper, it is not more so in the type than is sin in the estimation of every enlightened mind.

Think again. The leper was not only loathsome in his person, but was *defiled in all his acts*. If he drank out of a vessel, the vessel was defiled. If he lay upon a bed, the bed became unclean, and whosoever sat upon the bed afterwards became unclean too. If he touched but the wall of a house, the wall became unclean and must be purged. Wherever he went, he tainted the atmosphere. His breath was as dangerous as the pestilence. He shot baneful glances from his eyes. All that he did was full of the same loathsomeness as was himself.

Now, this may seem to be a very humiliating truth, but faithfulness requires us to say it, all the actions of the natural man are tainted with sin. Whether he eats, or drinks, or whatsoever he does, he continues to sin against his God. Nay, if he should come up to God's house and sing and pray, there is sin in his songs, for they are but hypocrisy. There is guilt in his prayers, for the prayers of the wicked are an abomination unto the Lord. Let him attempt to perform holy actions, he is like Uzziah, who laid hold upon the censer of the priest while the leprosy was on his brow, till he was glad enough to retire from the sacred place, lest he should be struck dead.

Oh! when we saw or thought we saw the sinfulness of sin, this was one of the darkest parts of it that we discovered, all our actions were stained and tainted with evil. I know not whether I have any in this congregation who are prepared to deny what I assert. If there are, it is my duty to solemnly assure them that they are unclean and covered with an incurable leprosy. They are hopeless lepers who cannot be cleansed, for no man can be cleansed of sin till he is ready to confess that he is all unholly and unclean.

Submission to this truth is absolutely necessary to salvation. I am not to condemn any man, but still I must speak God's Word, and speak it in loving faithfulness. If you do not confess that all your actions before you were regenerate were full of sin and abominable in the sight of God, you have not yet learned what you are and it is not likely that you will wish to know what a Savior is.

Think of the leper yet again. Being thus the medium of contagion and defilement wherever he went, the Lord demanded that he should be *shut out from the society of Israel*. There was a spot outside the camp, barren, solitary, where lepers were confined. They were commanded to wear a covering over the mouth and upon the upper lip, and if any passed by, they were compelled to cry, "Unclean! Unclean!"

Unclean!” A sound which being muffled by reason of the covering which they wore, must have sounded more ghastly and deathlike than any other human cry.

Some of the Rabbi translate the cry, “Avoid! Avoid! Avoid!” One of the American poets has put it, “Room for the leper! Room!” But certainly, the sense of it is generally understood to be, “Unclean! Unclean! Unclean!”

Living apart from their dearest friends, shut out from all the pleasures of society, they were required never to drink of a running stream of water of which others might drink. Nor might they sit down on any stone by the roadside upon which it was probable any other person might rest. They were to all intents and purposes, dead to all the enjoyments of life, dead to all the endearments and society of their friends.

Ay, and such is the case with the sinner with regard to the people of God. Do you not feel, poor convicted sinner, that you are unfit to join Christ’s church? You can go and find such mirth as the company of your fellow lepers can afford. But where God’s people are, you are out of place. You feel in yourself that you are shut out from the communion of saints. You cannot pray their prayer nor sing their hymns. You know not their joys. You have never tasted of their perfect peace. You have never entered into the rest which remains for them, but which remains not for you while you are such a one as you are now.

This, however, is the fearful part of the leprosy of sin, that many who are shut out from goodness become contented with the exclusion. There be some who even pretend to despise the privileges which they cannot enjoy. Since they cannot be holy, they make holiness the theme of ridicule. Since they must not envy the delights of piety, they turn their heel upon them and say, “There are no joys in religion, nor bliss in love to Christ.”

This is perhaps one of the most fearful parts of this leprosy of sin, that it deceives the man himself, makes him think himself to be healthy whilst he is full of disease, makes him imagine the healthy ones to be diseased, whilst he who is the true leper, thinks himself to be the only sane person in the camp.

Once more, the leper was *wholly unable to come up to the house of God*. Other men might offer sacrifices, but not the leper. Others had a share in the great high priest’s sacrifice, and when he went within the veil, he appeared for all others. But the leper had neither part nor lot in this matter. He was shut out from God, as well as shut out from man. He was no partaker of the sacred things of Israel and all the ordinances of the tabernacle were as nothing to him.

Think of that, sinner! As a sinner full of guilt, you are shut out from all communion with God. True, He gives you the mercies of this life as the leper had his bread and water, but you have none of the spiritual joys which God affords to His people. You cannot stand in His presence, for He is a devouring fire and would consume you. Your prayers are shut out from Him, your words are unheard.

You are a prodigal son, and your father is far from you. You have spent your substance in riotous living and no man will give to you. You have become the companion of the swine, and you would fain fill your belly with the husks which the swine eat. No father’s eye greets you. At no father’s table do you sit. Your father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but you do perish with hunger.

Oh, sinner! you who do not feel yourself to be what I describe you as you are now, you will one day find it to be a very awful thing to be denied all fellowship with God, for at last you may seek in vain to cross your father’s threshold. After death you will long to enter within the pearly gates, and you shall be thrust back, for lepers and defiling ones can never stand in the sanctified presence of the holy God.

Where angels veil their faces, lepers shall not exhale their putrid breath. God drove Satan out of paradise because he sinned, and will He suffer sin a second time to intrude into His presence? No, you shall find that as long as you and your sins are one, God will always be at war with you. As long as you are at peace with your guilt, the Eternal God draws His sword and vows eternal warfare with you.

Now, I wish I could more forcibly put the position of a sinner in God’s sight this morning. Let me just recapitulate for a moment. Every man by nature is like a leper—loathsome in his person, infected in all his actions, and in all that he does. He is incapable of fellowship with God’s people, and he is shut out utterly and entirely by his sin from the presence and acceptance of God.

II. Having thus described the leper and the sinner, I shall now BRING THE LEPER UP TO THE HIGH PRIEST.

Here he stands. The priest has come out to meet him. Mark, whenever a leper was cleansed under the Jewish law—the leper did nothing—the priest did all. I invite you to read over this chapter when you are at home, and you will see that previous to his being pronounced clean, the leper was passive—the priest did everything.

Well, the priest comes out from the sanctuary, comes to the place of the lepers, where no other man might go, but he in his priestly office. He calls up one leper before him. He looks at him, and there is a spot on that leper which is not leprous—quick, raw, healthy flesh. The priest puts him aside, he is an unclean leper. Here is another, and he has but one or two red spots appearing beneath the skin, all the rest of his body is perfectly sound, the priest puts him aside, he is an unclean leper.

Here is another, he is from head to foot covered with a scaly whiteness of the filthy disease. The hair is all turned white, owing to the decay of the powers of nature, which are unable now to nourish the roots of the hair. There is not a single speck of health in him from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, but all is pollution and filth.

But hark! the high priest says to him, “Thou art clean.” And after certain necessary ceremonies, he is admitted into the camp, and afterwards into the very sanctuary of God. My text asserts that if there was found any sound place in him, he was unclean. But when the leprosy had covered him, wheresoever the priest looked, then the man became by sacrificial rights a clean leper.

Now, let me bring up the sinner before the Great High Priest this morning. How many there are, who, as they come up hither, are ready to confess that they have done many things which are wrong, but they say, “Though we have done much which we cannot justify, yet there have been many good actions which might almost counter balance the sin. Have we not been charitable to the poor, have we not sought to instruct the ignorant, to help those who are out of the way? We have some sins, we do confess, but there is much at the bottom which is still right and good, and we therefore hope that we shall be delivered.” I put you aside in God’s name, this morning, as unclean lepers. For you, there is no hope and no promise of salvation whatever.

Here comes a second. He admits with candor that he has a very great measure of guilt—perhaps not open immorality, but he confesses that his thoughts, and the imaginations of his heart have been evil, and evil frequently. “But still,” says he, “though I have not one good work of which to boast, nor any righteousness in which to glory, yet I do hope that by repentance I may amend. I trust that by a resolute persistence in good works I may yet blot out my past life, and so may enter into heaven.”

I set him aside again as being an unclean leper, for whom cleansing rites are not provided. He is one who must still be kept without the camp. He has not arrived at that stage in which it is possible for him to be made clean.

But here comes another. Probably he is really a better man than either of the other two, but not in his own opinion. He stands before us, and with many a sigh and tear, confesses that he is utterly ruined and undone. “Sir, a month or two ago I would have claimed a righteousness with the very best of them. I, too, could have boasted of what I have done, but now I see my righteousness to be as filthy rags, and all my goodness is as an unclean thing. I count all these things but dross and dung. I tread upon them and despise them.

“I have done no good thing. I have sinned and come short of the glory of God. If ever there was a sinner that deserved to be damned, sir, that soul am I. If ever there was one who had not any excuse to make, but who must plead guilty, without any extenuating circumstances, that man am I.

“As for the future, I can make no promise. I have often promised and so often lied. I have so often trusted in myself to reform, so often have I hoped the energy of my nature might yet heal my disease, that I renounce, because I cannot help renouncing all such desires.

“Lord, if ever I am made whole, Your grace must make me so. I do desire to be rid of sin, but I can no more rid myself of sin than I can pluck the sun from the firmament, or scoop the waters from the

depth of the sea. I would be perfect, even as You are perfect, but I cannot change my heart. As well might the viper lose his will to poison, the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots, as I cease to do evil. Lord, at Your feet I fall, full of leprosy from head to foot. Nothing have I to boast of, nothing to trust to except Your mercy.”

My brother, you are a clean leper. Your sins are forgiven you, your iniquities are put away. Through the blood of Jesus Christ, who died upon the tree, you are saved. As soon as ever the leprosy had come right out, the man was clean, and as soon as ever your sin is fully manifest, so that in your conscience you feel yourself to be really a sinner, there is a way of salvation for you. Then, by the sprinkling of blood and the washing of water, you may be made clean.

As long as a man has anything to boast of, there is no Christ for him, but the moment he has nothing of his own, Christ is his. Whilst you are anything, Christ is nothing to you, but when you are nothing, Christ is everything. All the warrant that a sinner needs in coming to Christ is to know that he is a sinner. For “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

Do I know myself to be a sinner? Then He came to save me, and there I rest, and there I trust. If I have any good feelings or good works which take away from me the power to call myself a sinner, or if they diminish the force and emphasis which I put upon the word when I use it, then may I fear that I have no right to come to Christ.

Christ died, “The just for the unjust, to bring us to God.” Am I unjust! Must I honestly declare I am? “Christ died for the ungodly.” Am I ungodly, is this my grief and sorrow that I am ungodly? Then Christ died for me. “I do not know,” said Martin Luther, “when men will ever believe that text in which it is written, *Christ died for our sins*. They will think that Christ died for our righteousness, whereas He died for our sins. Christ had no eye to our goodness when He came to save us, but to our badness.”

A physician, when he comes to my house, has not an eye to my present health. He does not come there because I am healthy, but because I am sick, and the more sick I am, the more call for the physician’s skill and the more argument does my sickness yield why he should exercise all his craft, and use his best medicines on my behalf.

Your only plea with Christ is your guilt. Use it, sinner, use it as David did when he said, “Lord have mercy upon my iniquity, for it is great!” If he had said, “Have mercy upon my iniquity, for it is little,” he would have been a legalist, and would have missed his mark. But when he said, “Have mercy, for it is great!” he understood the Gospel riddle, that strange paradox at which Pharisees always kick, and which worldlings always hate—the glorious fact that Jesus Christ came into the world, “not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”

III. Having thus brought the man before the priest, we shall now briefly turn our attention to THE CEREMONIES WHICH THE PRIEST USED IN THE CLEANSING OF THE LEPER.

I will read the verses quickly, and expound them briefly. “And the priest shall go forth out of the camp; and the priest shall look, and behold, if the plague of leprosy be healed in the leper; then shall the priest command to take for him that is to be cleansed, two birds alive and clean, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop: and the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water: as for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water: and he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose into the open field.”

You will perceive, first, that *the priest went to the leper*, not the leper to the priest. We go not up to heaven, first, till Christ comes down from His Father’s glory to the place where we as lepers are shut out from God. Oh! glorious High Priest, methinks I see You this morning coming out from the tabernacle of the Most High, where You have offered Your complete sacrifice, and You come down to us loathsome and abhorred sinners. You do take upon Yourself the form of man. You do not disdain the Virgin’s womb. You come to sinners, You eat and drink with them!

But the coming of the priest was not enough, *there must be a sacrifice*, and on this occasion, in order to set out the two ways by which a sinner is saved, there was *sacrifice mingled with resurrection*. First, there was sacrifice. One of the birds was taken, and its blood was shed in a vessel which was full, as the Hebrew has it, of “living water,”—of water which had not been stagnant, but which was clean.

Just as when Jesus Christ was put to death, blood and water flowed from His side to be “of sin a double cure,” so in the earthen vessel there was received, first, the “living water,” and then the blood of the bird which had just been slain. If sin is put away, it must be by blood. There is no way of putting sin from before the presence of God except by the streams which flow from the open veins of Christ.

It was nothing that the leper did. You notice he does nothing whatever in the whole affair, but stand still and humbly partake of the benefits which are given to him through the mission of the priest and through the slaughter of the bird.

And then the second bird was dipped into the blood until all its feathers were red and dropping with gore. It was doubtless tied round the cedar stick at the end of which was the hyssop to make a kind of brush. The bird’s wings were tied along the stick, and the whole was dipped in the blood of the bird that was slain. And when this had been done seven times, the strings were cut and the living bird allowed to fly away.

This is a lively picture of Christ. As a living bird, He ascends on high after being slain for us—scattering the red drops of atonement, He rises above the clouds, which receive Him out of our sight, and there before His Father’s throne, He pleads the full merit of the sacrifice which He offered for us once for all.

The leper was made clean by sacrifice and by resurrection, but he was not clean till the blood was sprinkled on him. Christians, the cross does not save us till Christ’s blood is sprinkled on our conscience. Yet, the virtual salvation was accomplished for all the elect when Christ died for them upon the tree.

It is the joy of every Christian to stand here saved by another. He knows that he is full of leprosy, that in himself there is no reason whatever why he should be cleansed, but that the reasons are all the other way, for there is every reason why he should continue to be shut out forever from the presence of God.

But there stands the High Priest, the great Melchisedec, the Son of the Virgin, and the Son of God. He has offered His own blood for us. He who offered it, applies it to the conscience, and with this application—

*“The Christian walks at large,
His Saviour’s blood, his full discharge,
At His dear feet his soul he’ll lay,
A sinner saved and homage pay.”*

But the saving of your soul rests not with yourself, but with Christ Jesus, just as the cleansing of the leper was not with the leper, but with the priest. How many there are among God’s people, who say, “I know that Christ died for sinners, but I don’t get any comfort from it because I do not *feel* as if I were saved.” That is self-righteousness in a very deceitful shape. You will not be saved by feeling that Christ died for you, but by His dying for you. If He died for you, you were saved when He died. If He took your sins, He took them in very deed, and they are not yours.

If Christ was your substitute at all, then God can never punish two for one offense—first the substitute and then the sinner himself. If Christ really died for you, then your sins are pardoned, whether you feel that they are pardoned or not. “Yes,” says one, “but I want to realize that.” It is a very blessed thing to realize it, but it is not the realizing that saves. It is the death of Christ that saves, not your realizing the death.

If there is a lifeboat and some poor man be ready to drown, and some strong hand rescues him, when he comes to himself, he realizes that he is in the boat. But it is not the realizing that he is in the boat that saves him, it is the lifeboat. So it is Christ that saves the sinner, not the sinner's feelings, or willings, or doings. And in heaven the whole glory of salvation will be to the wounds of Jesus, and nothing else.

“But” says one, “how am I to know that Christ died for me?” You will never know it until you are willing to stand in the leper's place full of leprosy. If you know this day that you are full of sin, if you are conscious that in you, that is, in your flesh, there dwells no good thing, then it is written that Christ died for our sins, *according to the Scriptures*—not according to our feelings, but according to the Scriptures.

How do I know that I am full of sin? Because I believe I am, because God tells me so—not merely because I feel it, but because God tells me so. How do I know that Christ died for me? Not because I feel it, but because God tells me so. He says Christ came into the world to save sinners. I am a sinner, I feel it, I know it. God forbid that I should be such a liar to myself as to deny it. *Then He came to save me.* “Come now, let us reason together. Though your sin be as scarlet”—that is my case, “*they shall be as wool*, though they be red like crimson”—that is my case—“*they shall be as snow.*”

It is just this—if you are willing to stand today condemned as a sinner, and nothing more than a sinner, then Christ died for you. Your business is to trust your soul on the fact that Christ did hang on the tree for sinners. For mark—faith is trusting Christ, and having done with self. Put your finger on any sound place in your flesh, you are a lost man. Point to any good thing that you can trust to, and there is no heaven for you. Rely on anything that you have felt, or thought, or said, or done, and you rely on a broken reed.

But trust in Christ, and Christ alone, cast your arms around His cross, and cling to that, you are saved. Yet it will not be *your clinging*, it will be the cross that will save you. Do not trust your clinging. Trust to the cross. Still to the cross flee away, you poor, lost, ruined ones. For under its shadow there is safety for the defenseless. There is hope even for the despairing.

IV. But pardon me while I keep you a minute or two longer to observe that AFTER THE LEPER WAS CLEANSED, THERE WERE CERTAIN THINGS WHICH HE HAD TO DO.

Yet, until he is cleansed, he is to do nothing. The sinner can do nothing towards his own salvation. His place is the place of death. Christ must be his life. The sinner is so lost that Christ must begin, and carry on, and finish all, but when the sinner is saved, then he begins to work in right good earnest. When once he is no more a leper, but a leper cleansed, then for the love he bears his Master's name, there is no trial too arduous, no service too hard, but he spends his whole strength in magnifying and glorifying his Lord.

I want to call your attention to the further cleansing of the leper. Mark, he was wholly cleansed by the priest, and what was done afterwards, was done by a cleansed man. “He that is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water.” Blood first, water afterwards. No cleansing from evil habits until there has been cleansing from sin. There is no making the nature clean till the guilt is put away.

“He shall wash his clothes, and shave off his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean, and after that he shall come into the camp, and shall tarry abroad out of his tent seven days.” He did not tell him to wash, first. It would have been of no use to him whatever. He did not tell him to wash his clothes, and shave his hair first.

*“No outward forms could make him clean,
The leprosy lay deep within.”*

No, the priest must do all the work first. After that, then the leper must be washed.

So sinner, if you are to be saved, Christ must do it all. But when once you have faith in Christ, you must be washed, then must you cease from sin and then by the Holy Spirit's power you shall be enabled

to do so. What was ineffective before shall become mighty enough now, through the life which God has put into you. The washing with water by the Word, and the cleansing of yourself from dead works shall become an effectual and mighty duty.

You shall be made holy and walk in white, in the purity wherewith Christ has endowed you. The shaving off of his hair was fitly to represent how all the old things were to pass away and everything was to become new. All the white hair was to be cut off, as you read in the ninth verse, “He shall shave all the hair off his head, and his beard, and his eyebrows.” There was not a remnant or relic left of the old state in which the hair was white—all was to be given up.

So it is with the sinner. When he is once pardoned, once cleansed, then he begins to cut off the old habits, his old prides, his old joys. The beard on which the hoary Jew prided himself was to come off, and the eyebrows which seem to be necessary to make the countenance look decent, were all to be taken away.

So it is with the pardoned man. He did nothing before, he does everything now. He knew that good works were of no benefit to him in his carnal state, but now he becomes so strict that he will shave off every hair of his old state. Not one darling lust shall be left, not one iniquity shall be spared, all must be cut away.

“He shall wash his clothes also, he shall wash his flesh in water, and he shall be clean.” There is one thing I want you to notice in the eighth verse, namely, that he was not allowed to go into his own tent. He might go in with the people, but he might not go into his “tent.” Now though the sinner has to trust in Christ just as he is, yet that sinner will not at once be able to go into his own tent, that is, he will never be able to realize that Christ is personally his own, until there has been something more than faith, namely, the cleansing purification of the Spirit’s power.

As to full assurance, I do not think that is to be attained by immediate faith in Christ. Full assurance is an after-result. Faith grows by the influence of the Spirit till it comes to assurance. Yet, mark, though for seven days the man might not go into his own house, he was clean, and so, if you as a sinner full of sin, trust Christ to be your all, though no joy may follow for seven days, yet you are a pardoned man.

Though you may not be able to go into your house and say, “I know I am forgiven,” yet you are forgiven. The very hour when sin abounds is the hour when grace abounds. When sin has cut the throat of all your hopes, then Jesus Christ, the great hope and solace of His people, comes into your heart, and though you may scarcely be able to see Him, yet He is there and you are a saved man. What a glorious salvation is this, and its after-results, how pure and how heavenly!

I will not detain you further than to notice that this man, before he might further enjoy the privileges of his healed estate, was to bring an offering, and the priest was to take him to the very door of the tabernacle. He never dare come there before, but he may come now. So the pardoned man may come right up to God’s mercy seat, and may bring the offering of holiness and good works. He is a pardoned man now. You ask me how? Not by anything *he* did, but by what the *priest* did, and that alone.

Read the fourteenth verse, “The priest shall take some of the blood of the trespass offering, and the priest shall put it upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed.” Here the Lord puts away the sins of the ear, which are very many. The sins of the ear—when you used to hear lascivious songs, malignant words, and idle talk.

“He shall put it upon the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand.” Have you read that? How many times has the right hand sinned against God! How have your actions defiled you! “He shall put it upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot.” How have your feet run after wickedness! How greatly you need to be cleansed!

But mark, when this blood had been put on, the priest did more for he anointed him. Read the seventeenth verse, “And of the rest of the oil that is in his hand, shall the priest put upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of

his right foot, upon the blood of the trespass offering.” This was telling him again very plainly that which he might have seen already in the type of the two birds.

As soon as ever a man is pardoned, there elapses a time before he completely understands the plan of salvation. When he does, he perceives that he is first cleansed with blood, all his sins, of ear, of hand, of foot, or whatever they may be, are all put away by blood. But next, that he may become God’s servant, he is anointed by the influence of the Holy Spirit with the sanctifying oil.

That oil is put on his ear, so that his ear hears his Master’s voice, and listens to the Word of God. Then oil is put upon his hand that he may be a consecrated man to serve his God. That oil is put upon his foot that his feet may run in the way of God’s commands, even to the end. But do mark, for I fear lest I should spoil that which I want to convey. All this was an after-piece, after the leper was cleansed. He could not have done any of this himself until the first part had been done for him.

To sum up the whole sermon in one or two short sentences. Sinner, if you are this day unrenewed and unregenerate, you are loathsome to yourself. You are incapable of fellowship with God. You are preparing yourself for the pit of hell. But the way of salvation is simply this—if you are today full of sin, laden with iniquity, if you are ready to confess there is no good thing in you, if you are willing to take the place of a prisoner who has been tried, condemned and cast, then Christ has died for you. Christ has shed the blood, Christ has risen up on high, and your salvation is finished.

Say not in your heart, “I do not *feel this*, I do not *feel that*.” It is not your feeling or doing, it is what Christ has done. He must do all for you, and all He asks of you is simply to stand in the place of the unjust that He may come to you in the place of the just, while He stands in your room and stead. Is this too easy for you? Are you too proud to be saved by such a system as this? Then, what can I say to you, but that you deserve to die if you neglect a plan of salvation so simple and so admirably adapted to your case?

But instead thereof, if you say, “That suits me, for I have nothing to trust to, I am lost.” Why, man, do you not see that inasmuch as it suits you, it is yours? For whom was the wedding garment made—for those who had fine robes of their own? No—for the naked. For whom was the bath open? for the clean? No—for the filthy. Step in, filthy man, your filth is your warrant. For whom is medicine provided? for the healthy? No, it were an insult. For the sick. Your sickness is your warrant. Come to Mercy’s hospital and be you healed.

Whom do you think Christ came to carry on His shoulders to heaven? Those who can walk there themselves? No, let them trudge their weary way, if they think they can go to heaven with their good works let them do so. One of two things, either you must be saved without deserving to be saved—saved by the works of another—or else you must keep the whole law, and so inherit heaven of your own right and patent.

If, then, you are willing to come to Christ, just as you are without any preparation, but just simply as a sinner, then Christ has made atonement for you. Your guilt is put away. God accepts you. You are a pardoned man. You may go out at yonder door and say in your heart, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we now have received the atonement.”

As for holiness and good works, these shall come afterwards. Having believed in Christ, His Spirit shall be given, and you shall be zealous for good works. While the legalist is talking about them, you shall do them. What you could not do before, you shall do now. When you have given up all trust in yourself, you shall become holy and pure, and the Spirit of God shall enter into you and shall renew you. You shall be kept by the power of God till, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, you shall be presented before your Father’s face saved—saved eternally.

God add His blessing! I have sought to preach to you the Gospel as plainly as possible. I may still have been misunderstood. If so, I trust that it is not my fault. I have repeated myself over and over again, that the sinner, near despairing, may now come and put his trust in Christ, and find life in Jesu’s death, and healing in Jesu’s wounds.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.