

THE RED HEIFER

NO. 527

A SERMON
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“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:
 and ye shall give her unto Eleazer the priest, that he may bring her forth outside the camp,
 and one shall slay her before his face.”*
Numbers 19:2-3

THE true heading of all the books of Moses is to be found in the words of Jesus, “Moses wrote of me.” Take the Lord Jesus Christ with you as a key, and however difficult the riddles of Leviticus or Numbers may at first sight appear, there is not one enigma in the whole collection which will not speedily open and yield instruction.

To the Israelites themselves, these rites and ceremonies must have been rather an exercise of faith, than a means of instruction. “I cannot perfectly understand why this heifer is slain, or why yonder lamb is offered,” said the pious Israelite, “but though I cannot understand, I believe there is virtue in it all, and I reverently do, even to the smallest particular, that which God, through His servant Moses, has commanded me to do.”

To us, the types are not a dark mystery to perplex our faith, but an open vision to delight our eyes. Having believed in Christ Jesus, having received Him as the Father’s Sent One, and being reconciled unto God by His death, we look back to the ceremonies of the old law as the patterns of heavenly things, to endeavor to discover some new light in which the Savior’s beauties may be set, and to behold Him from some different point of view, so that we may love Him the better, and may trust Him the more.

Now, the particular point to which the red heifer referred, concerning Christ and His work, is just this—the provision which is made in Christ Jesus for the daily sins and failings of believers.

In order to bring out our point clearly, we shall remark, first, *that even true Israelites are in daily danger of defilement.* Secondly, *that there is a provision made in the covenant of grace for the removal of the daily defilement of sin.* And thirdly, *that the red heifer most beautifully sets forth Christ as being the constant purification of His people, that they, having their consciences purged from dead works, may have power to worship acceptably the living and true God.*

I. It is undoubtedly true, that even THE TRUE ISRAELITE, THE TRUE BELIEVER IN CHRIST, IS THE SUBJECT OF DAILY DEFILEMENT.

My brethren, we who have believed in Christ are free from sin before the divine judgment seat. The moment that we believe in Christ, our sin is no longer ours. It was laid upon Christ and cannot be in two places at one time, and therefore, are we perfectly clean from sin before the eyes of a holy God. This is *justification*, full, complete, everlasting.

But we are all aware, that in the matter of sanctification, we are not, as yet, delivered from evil. Sin dwells, though it reigns not in our mortal bodies. And since there is sin within, there is the capability of the defilement of sin without. Who has lived for a single day in this base world without discovering that in all his actions he commits sin, in everything to which he puts his hand, he receives, as well as imparts, some degree of defilement? How is it, my brethren, that this is the case? The answer is easy and it is to be found in the chapter before us.

Some of our defilement arises from the fact that *we do actually come into contact with sin*, here imaged in the corruption of death. Read the eleventh verse—“He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days.” We actually touch that dead thing, sin, by overt acts of transgression. The best man living still pollutes himself with evil.

We have met with a few vain and ignorant persons who have boasted that they were perfect, but we never believed in their perfection, except as far as to concede that they were perfect in self-conceit, in boastful arrogance, and infamous impudence. “If any man say he hath no sin, he deceiveth himself, and the truth is not in him.”

The best of men are men at the best, and while they are men, they will still sin. We find the apostle Paul crying out because of corruption, and even using such strong language as this—“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” We are in close connection with sin because sin is *in* ourselves.

It has dyed us through and through, staining the very warp and woof of our nature, and until we lay aside these bodies and are admitted to the church of the first-born above, we shall never cease from very close and intimate connection with sin. Hence, my brethren, we need to be constantly cleansed, because we are always defiling ourselves. In fact, we are always defiled, because we are always touching the body of this death.

Moreover, we get defilement, not only from our own actual sins, but *from companionship with sinners*. You will read farther on in this chapter, “When a man dieth in a tent: all that come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean.” The mere being with sinners defiles us. Christ could walk with publicans and sinners and yet incur no danger. The Great Physician could walk the leper house of this world untainted by contagion, but this is not possible with us.

Even if the most honest and laudable motives shall lead us into the company of the ungodly, though our only aim may be to bring them to Jesus, yet their unhallowed conversation will not only vex but defile. It is not possible to look upon another man’s sin, even to look upon it with abhorrence, without receiving some degree of contamination, because the thought of evil is sin.

Our hatred of evil always lacks in intensity—we do not detest it as we ought and a failure here is a sin of omission which pollutes. You may say, you can go into evil company and get no defilement—my brother, I doubt it. It may be absolutely necessary for you in your calling, and more especially in your desire to bless others, to mingle with the ungodly, but you might as well attempt to carry fire in your bosom and not be burnt, or handle pitch and not be blackened therewith, as to dwell in the tents of Kedar without receiving uncleanness.

This dusty world must leave some mark upon our white garments—let us travel as carefully as we may. “I am black because the sun hath looked upon me,” must ever be the confession of the bride of Christ. This world is full of the spiritually dead, and since we live, we must often be rendered unclean among the sinful and hence we need a daily cleansing to fit us for daily fellowship with a holy God.

Reflect, dear brethren, again, that one reason why we are so constantly defiled, is *our want of watchfulness*. You will observe that everything in the tent of a dead man was defiled, except vessels that were covered over. Any vessel which was left open was at once unclean.

You and I ought to cover up our hearts from the contamination of sin. It were well for us if we kept our heart with all diligence, since out of it are the issues of life. Good Mr. Dyer says, “The Christian should lock up his heart in the morning, and give God the key, lest any evil should come in. And then when he unlocks it at night, a sweet perfume of prayer will rise at eventide.”

But alas! we forget to lock up our hearts. We do not keep our graces covered up. I believe that a man might go into the most sinful places under heaven without receiving defilement, if he exercised a sufficient degree of watchfulness. But it is because we do not watch that the poisoned arrow wounds us.

I noticed the other day an allegory of a candle in a lantern, with the motto, “One weak point is too much.” An enemy outside the lantern tried to blow out the candle. He blew all around, but it was well-

secured, until, at last, he found a single crack, and then through it he sent the destroying breath, and soon the flame of the candle was extinguished.

This is what the devil does with us. We may be guarded in nine points out of ten, but our strength is to be measured, mark you, by the strength of the weakest point, and the devil will find out, sooner or later, some crack through which he will attack us to our soul's evil. Watch, my brethren, watch carefully. It is because you and I fail here that we acquire this daily defilement and need daily to be purified.

A yet more striking thought is suggested by this chapter—sin is so desperately evil that *the very slightest sin defiles us*. He who touched a bone was unclean. It was not necessary to put your hand upon the clay-cold corpse to be defiled. The accidentally touching with the foot a bone carelessly thrown up by the grave digger. Even the touching it by the ploughman as he turned up his furrow, even this was sufficient to make him unclean.

Sin is such an immeasurably vile and pestilent a thing, that the slightest iniquity makes the Christian foul—a thought, an imagination, the glancing of an eye. We may have shut out all the world from our closet and yet find we have not shut out sin. We may make a covenant with our eyes, and with our hands, and with our feet, and with our lips, but still our wanton hearts will go after evil.

We have heard of some perfumes of which it is said that the thousandth part of a grain would leave a scent for ages in the place where it had been. And certainly it is so with sin—about its merest bone there is an eternal pest—one sin of thought would be enough to destroy forever all communion with God. Therefore, brethren, we are defiled and need to be daily cleansed.

I must not fail to remind you, also, that *sin, even when it is not seen, defiles*, for you will observe in the chapter that a man was defiled who touched a grave. The bones might be buried deep down so that he could not discern them, and over those bones the grass might have grown in green hillocks, decked with a few sweet flowers, and yet, if the Israelite did but touch that grave with his foot or with his hand, he was defiled.

Oh, how many graves there are of sin—things that are fair to look upon, externally admirable, and internally abominable! Such a custom is tolerated, nay, it has become fast fixed in society, and who shall find fault with it? Yet, many of our customs are but the graves of sin, and many of our actions, which we think so admirable, have loathsome rottenness within.

Too much, even of our sanctuary service, is comparable to a whitewashed sepulchre. Those sweet hymns, the unanimous and hearty shout of praise, the earnest prayer, the reverent deportment—all those, I say, may be but the whitewashed sepulchre. For our thoughts may be going abroad after all sorts of mischief, and so our very sanctuary services may be but the green sods which conceal the loathsomeness of sin.

O dear friends, this is enough to startle us. We sin enough to our own knowledge, but how much of sin we commit of which we are not aware, who shall possibly tell? Sins unknown! I have often reminded you of the expression in the Greek liturgy, “thine unknown sufferings.” It is such a blessing that there are unknown sufferings for these unknown sins. We are ignorant of the heights and depths of Jesus’ love. Thank God that there is a vast atonement whose vast efficacy we must leave in ignorance, just as there are sins of ignorance utterly undiscoverable by us.

Only one more thought here. I would have you notice, dear friends, that the Jew was not only in danger of defilement in his tent and when he walked the roads, but he was in *danger in the open fields*. For you will observe that it says, that if he touched a body that had been slain in the open fields, or a bone, he should be unclean.

For aught he knew, there might have been a battle there. Perhaps he thought, “Well, this is out of the way of men. I see no footprints, no tracks here,” and he walks carelessly across the green fields, but though he knows it not, there lies in his way the corpse of one who had been killed by misadventure or murdered by his fellow in strife.

He stumbles upon the body and lo, he is unclean. You may go where you will, but you cannot escape from sin. If you take the wings of the morning, and fly unto the uttermost parts of the sea, sin is there. If you make your bed in hell, it is there it reigns. If you seek the cover of midnight, is not midnight the very noon and carnival of evil? If you enter the church of God, you shall find it there—high and low, rich and poor, polite and uncivilized—you shall search all ranks and positions of men, but sin is everywhere. And until we mount with eagles' wings to dwell before the eternal throne, we shall have to complain that we are daily in danger of defilement.

II. This brings us now to change the subject, by observing THAT A PURIFICATION HAS BEEN PROVIDED.

A constant expiation is prepared. As Hart puts it—

*“If guilt remov’d, return and remain,
Its power may be proved again and again.”*

The ransomed church of God need daily to be washed in the fountain, and the mercy is that the precious blood shall never lose its power, but its constant efficacy shall abide till they are, everyone of them, “Saved to sin no more.”

Beloved, there is a propitiation provided for daily defilement, for first of all, *if it were not so, how melancholy were your case and mine.* Suppose us to be Israelites, to be true believers, and then to have sinned, as we certainly should do. Then, beloved, at once we should be cut off from all privileges. The unclean person had no right to go up to the house of the Lord. He had no participation in its solemn worship. For him, there was no glory of sacred praise and no prevalence of earnest prayer.

You and I would have no right to Christ, no adoption, no justification, no sanctification—for the unclean person has no right to any of these. And as we would have no privileges, so we could have no communion with God. God cannot immediately commune except with perfectly holy beings. He does now commune with the imperfect—but then, it is through a perfect Savior—and He cannot commune directly with you and me while sin abides in us.

He has to look upon us as purified through Christ Jesus, and being therefore wholly clean—or else it were not possible for Him to walk with us, and to manifest Himself to us. The ultimate result in the Israelites' case would have been death. You observe that he who did not purify himself was cut off from Israel.

First, cut off by excommunication, so as no longer to be a sharer in the citizenship of Israel, and then probably cut off either by the executioner, or else by the sudden judgment of God through plague, or fiery serpent, or some other terrible means. And certainly if you and I, though believers, could live for a season without being purified, carrying about with us still the daily defilement of sin—ere long it must end in spiritual death and in utter destruction. But thanks be unto God, He has provided against these terrible consequences.

But think again, beloved, the Lord must have provide a daily cleansing for our daily defilement, for *if not, where were His wisdom, where His love?* He has provided for everything else. There is not a lack a saint can know, but God has furnished a supply. Out of the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus, our necessities are all supplied.

But if this, this glaring, this soul-destroying need had not been provided for, how could we call Him our Father and trust in Him? How could we know Him to be the only wise God, our Savior. A failure would have occurred in a most important point. Beloved, the love, the wisdom, the complete wisdom of God demands that there should be such a purification supplied.

The work of our Lord Jesus Christ assures us of this. What is there opened for the house of David, for sin and for uncleanness? A cistern? A cistern that might be emptied, a water pot, such as that which stood at Cana's marriage feast and might be drained? No, there is a *fountain* open for sin and for uncleanness.

We wash, the fountain flows. We wash again, the fountain flows still. From the great depths of the deity of Christ, the eternal merit of His passion comes everlastingly welling up. Wash! Wash! It is inexhaustible, for it is fountain-fulness. Is it not said in Scripture, “If any man sins, we have an advocate”? Why is Christ an advocate today? Only because we want an advocate every day.

Does He not constantly intercede yonder before the eternal throne? Why does He do that? Because we want daily intercession. And it is because we are constantly sinning that He is constantly an advocate—constantly an intercessor. He Himself has beautifully set forth this in the case of Peter.

After supper the Lord took a towel and girded Himself, and then, taking His basin and His ewer, He went to Peter, and Peter said, “Thou shalt never wash my feet.” But Jesus told him, “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me.” He had been washed once. Peter was free from sin in the high sense of justification, but he needs the washing of purification.

When Peter said, “Lord, wash not my feet only, but also my head and my hands,” then Jesus replied, “He who *is washed*”—that he is who is pardoned—“needeth not, save to wash his feet, for he is clean every whit.” The *feet* want constant washing. The daily defilement of our daily walk through an ungodly world brings upon us the daily necessity of being cleaned from fresh sin, and that the mighty Master supplies to us.

Methinks I see Him at this very day still girded with that towel, still with that basin and flowing water, going round to all His saints, coming round to us, brothers and sisters, and saying, “I have washed your feet, I, your Master and your Lord, and ye are clean every whit.” There is a provision then. The work of Jesus Christ meets the case.

Moreover, beloved, *the work of the Holy Spirit also meets the case*, for what is His business but constantly to take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto us—constantly to quicken, to enlighten, and to comfort? Why all this, but because we are constantly in need, perpetually being defiled, and therefore wanting perpetually to have the purification applied?

Best of all, *facts show that there is a purification for present guilt*. The saints of old fell into sin, but they did not remain there. David cries, “Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” Peter denies his Master, but he does not always remain a blaspheming, ungrateful coward. No, he comes back again to his Lord and Master, and makes the avowal, “Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.”

You and I, I hope, can give a better proof still that *we have tried it ourselves*. We remember that dear hour when first we came to Christ. Oh, it was no fiction, no dream. We were weighed down with a thousand sins, but one look at Jesus took them all away. And since that time we have often been cast down. There may be some of you who escape from doubts and fears—if you do, I greatly envy you, but I think that most of us get at times in such a position that we cry with David, “My soul lies cleaving unto the dust.”

You feel as if you dare not come into the Lord’s presence. You cannot hope that He will hear your prayer. You cannot grasp the promises, they seem too good for such as you. You cannot look up to Christ to call Him brother. “Abba, Father,” falters on your tongue. But have you not known what it is to look to your Redeemer again just as you did at first? And then, your love and joy have come back to you again once more, as if it had been a new conversion, and you have gone on your way rejoicing—you that yesterday were hanging your harps upon the willows and refusing to sing to the praise of your Lord.

My dear friends, if this were not a great truth, some of us would die in despair. I am sure if I might not still come to Jesus as a sinner, and still rest in Him, expecting to be cleansed from all defilement, I do not know that there would be anything in the Bible which could yield comfort to me. I must have a remedy as broad as the disease. I must have a supply as deep, as wide, as constant as my needs, and thanks be unto God, here is just such a supply, for the foulest sin Jesus does takes away, and when our hearts have backslidden from God He does bring us back.

Why, some of us have appeared in our own consciences to have gone into the very belly of hell and yet the Lord has brought us up again to the gates of heaven. Ah, it does not take many minutes to work

this change. Sometimes I have felt all God's waves and billows rolling over me till I was ready to despair under a sense of my own unworthiness, and yet the next moment I have been able to read my title clear to mansions in the skies.

And believing on Christ, I have had full fellowship with Him. This is the power of purification—thus is it that the application of the precious blood of sprinkling always works, when faith, through the Holy Spirit, brings it to the conscience. May you and I know this by our daily constant experience of it—that there is a daily purification for daily defilement.

III. But now, beloved, I bring you to the chapter itself. THE RED HEIFER SETS FORTH, IN A MOST ADMIRABLE MANNER, THE DAILY PURIFICATION FOR DAILY SIN.

It was a *heifer*—an unusual thing for a sacrifice to be a female, and we scarcely know why it should be in this case, unless indeed, to make the substitution more evident. This red heifer stood for all the house of Israel—for the whole church of God. And the church is always looked upon and considered in Scripture as being the spouse—the bride—always feminine. Perhaps, to make the substitution obvious and complete, to show that this heifer stood in the stead and place of the whole seed of Israel, it was chosen rather than the customary bullock.

It was a *red* heifer. Some think because of its rarity, for it was very difficult to find one that was red without a single spot—for if there were one white or black hair it was always rejected. It must be wholly and entirely red—some think that this was to signify how unique and unrivalled is the person of Christ. How extraordinary—the only one of His Father—the only Redeemer of souls.

Of such matchless virtue, and of such glorious pedigree, that no angel can match with Him, neither any of the sons of men for a moment be compared with Him. Probably, however, the red was chosen only from its bringing to the mind of the Israelites the idea of blood, which was always associated with atonement and putting away of sin.

Surely, my brethren, when we think of Christ, we always associate Him with the streaming gore, when we are under a sense of sin. At other times, we think of Him as white and ruddy, as perfection itself. But there is no point about Jesus which the trembling conscience loves to rest upon so much as that red crimson blood of His.

We have heard complaints sometimes made of our theology, that there is too much blood in it. “The blood is the life thereof.” If there were no blood in our preaching, there were no life in it, no joy, no true power. But it is just because we love to extol that precious blood, that God is pleased to honor the Word, and make it comfortable to saints, and make it the word of quickening to sinners.

I am sure, dear brethren, sometimes when we have sung that verse—

*“His dying crimson, like a robe,
Spreads o'er His body on the tree,”*

in the presence of that blood-red mantle, we have felt the next lines to be no imagination, but sober fact—

*“Then am I dead to all the globe,
And all the globe is dead to me.”*

My Master, covered as to His face, with bloody sweat, with ruby drops of blood around His head. My Lord with His back like a river of gore, where the accursed whips have beaten Him, His hands streaming with founts of crimson, and His feet flowing with rills of scarlet, and His side giving forth a rich cataract of His heart's blood—He never seems so lovely as when thus I see him arrayed in “a vesture dipped in blood.”

“Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?” This is the glorious Savior, *mighty to save*, and never seen so mighty to save as when He is robed in crimson.

Let it be the *red* heifer. It shall always bring to the mind of the pious believer the remembrance of Him who trod the winepress alone.

It was a heifer *without spot*. This denotes the perfection of Christ's character—"Not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Born without any human defilement, conceived immaculately through the Holy Ghost—"That holy thing which is conceived in thee," said the angel to the Virgin. Without any natural defilement such as we receive, He felt not the taint of original sin.

Then the heifer must be without blemish. Our Christ, as He had no spot of original sin, has no blemish of actual sin. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." He became like unto us in all points, but always with this exception—"yet without sin."

Observe that this red heifer was one *whereon never came yoke*. Perhaps this sets forth how willingly Christ came to die for us—not forced from heaven, but freely delivering Himself for us all. "Lo, I come to do thy will; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O God." Not dragged to His death. "I lay down my life of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. No man taketh it from me." The free Son of God wears no yoke, except that yoke which was easy to Him, and that burden which was light, the yoke of love which constrained Him to lay down His life for His people.

An interesting circumstance about this red heifer is that it was not provided by the priests. It was not provided out of the usual funds of the sanctuary, nor yet by the princes, nor by any one person. *The children of Israel provided it*. What for? Why, that as they came out of their tents in the desert, or their houses in Jerusalem, and saw the priests leading the red heifer, every man, and every woman, and every child might say, "I have a share in that heifer. I have a share in that victim which is being lead out of the city to be consumed."

Brethren, I wish—oh! I would to God, I dare *hope* that every man, and every woman here could say, "I have a share in Jesus Christ," for that is the meaning of this national provision—to let us see how Christ shed His blood for all His people, and they have all a part and all an interest in Him. If you believe in Him, though you are the weakest of all His children, you have as good a share as the strongest. He is as much your Christ as He is the Christ of an apostle or of a martyr who went to heaven in a chariot of fire. I hope, brother, that you see this and are assured that you have an interest in Him.

As we noted what this victim was, there is yet to be observed *what was done with it*. Again, let me beg you to refer to your Bibles, to see what became of this red heifer.

First, *it was taken out of the camp*. Herein it was a picture of Christ. That He might sanctify His people with His own blood, He suffered without the camp. Without the camp was the place of uncleanness. There the lepers dwelt. There every defiled person was put in quarantine. Jesus Christ must be numbered with the transgressors, and must suffer upon Mount Calvary, outside the city gates, upon that general Tyburn of criminals, "The place of a skull."

The people of God are to be a separate people from all the rest of the world. They are not to be numbered with the dwellers in this world's city. They are to be strangers, and pilgrims, and sojourners, as all their fathers were. Therefore, Christ, to set them an example of separation, suffers Himself without the camp.

When taken without the camp, the red cow *was slain*. A *dying* Savior that takes away our sin. Brethren, we love Christ the risen one, we bless Christ the living, pleading Intercessor, but after all the purification to your conscience and to mine comes from the bleeding sacrifice. See Him slain before our eyes. Let us sing with Watts—

*"My soul looks back to see
The burdens Thou didst bear
When hanging on the cursed tree,
And hopes her guilt was there."*

When the heifer was slain, *Eleazar dipped his finger in the blood* as it flowed gurgling forth. He dipped his finger in the warm blood and sprinkled it seven times before the door of the tabernacle. Seven is the number of perfection—to show that there was a perfect offering made by the sprinkling of the blood. Even so, Jesus has perfectly presented His bloody sacrifice.

Now mark, all this does not purify. I am not yet come to that point. Atonement precedes purification—Christ must die and offer Himself a victim or else He cannot be the purifier. All this is necessary, but the vital part of the purification comes presently.

They then took the body of the slain heifer, which was an unclean thing, and made everybody unclean who touched it, and laid it upon a pile prepared for its burning. They utterly consumed it—its skin, its flesh, its blood, even to its dung—not a single thing must be left. This sets forth the pangs of the Savior, His great and terrible agony upon the cross, His real death, His real forsaking by God.

It sets forth how God accounted Him unclean, how He was compelled to say, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” The heifer does not burn on the altar, it never smoked within the holy place as did the bullock which was God’s offering. This was a foul and guilty thing. The man who killed it became foul. He that gathered the ashes was unclean, and even the priest himself had to wash his garments.

This sets forth how Christ was numbered with the transgressors, how the iniquity of His people was laid upon Him, and how the Lord “made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” You will say, “A strange thing that those who touched the *sacrifice* should be made unclean.” Yes, but types like other emblems do not run upon all fours.

Therefore, you must look at it in the light intended—save that I may ask here who was it that put Christ to death? Were they not unclean? Were not the Roman soldiers unclean? That ribald mob who shouted, “Crucify him, crucify him”—those eyes that gloated themselves with the agonies of His tortured body? And are not you and I, who helped to put Him to death—are not we ourselves unclean?

Nay, I go farther. If I today gather the ashes and bring them before you—if I seek today to be as the man who sprinkled that purifying water, yet am I not unclean? Do I not feel that even when I am speaking best of my Master, I am sinning still, for I cannot speak of Him as I would?

And my brethren, what makes you feel so unclean as contact with Christ? Is it not true that the very same Christ who takes your sins away, first makes you feel your sins? “They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and they shall weep and mourn for their sins.” The same Savior who takes tears away when we look to Him by faith, first brings those tears to our eyes when we look and see Him die. It was right, therefore, that He should first make those unclean who touched Him, and then afterwards should make them clean through another touch of His purifying power.

When the whole was fully burnt, or while burning, we find *the priest threw in cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet*. What was this? According to Maimonides, the cedar wood was taken in logs and bound round with hyssop, and then afterwards the whole enveloped in scarlet. So what was seen by the people was the scarlet which was at once the emblem of sin and its punishment—“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

Everything you see still continues of the red color, to set forth atonement for sin. Inside this scarlet, there is the hyssop of faith, which gives efficacy to the offering in each individual, and still within this is the cedar wood that sent forth a sweet and fragrant smell, a perfect righteousness, giving acceptance to the whole.

One delights to think of this—in connection with Christ—that, as there is a daily witness of our defilement, so there is a daily imputation of His perfect righteousness to us, so that we stand every day accepted in the Beloved by a daily imputation, by which not only is daily sin covered, but daily righteousness given to us. We are, therefore, every day as much accepted as we shall be in that last great day when He shall receive us to His everlasting glory.

The pith of the matter lies in the last act, with the remains of the red cow. The *cinders of the wood, the ashes of the bones, and dung, and flesh of the heifer, were all gathered together, and carried away,*

and laid by in a clean place. According to the Jews, there was not another heifer killed for this purpose for a thousand years. They say, but then we have no reason to believe them, that there have never been but nine red heifers offered at all. One in the days of Moses, the next in Ezra's time, and the other seven afterwards, and that when Messiah comes, He is to offer the tenth, by which they let out the secret that they do look upon the Messiah as coming in His own time to complete the type.

Our own belief is that a red heifer was always found when ashes were wanted, and as there were hundreds and thousands of persons defiling themselves, the place where the ashes were kept was much frequented, and much of the purifying matter required. The ashes were to be put in a vessel with running water, and the water was sprinkled over the unclean person who touched a body or a bone.

By this process, the ashes would require to be renewed much oftener than once in a thousand years, in order that every one might have his portion. Does not this storing up suggest that there is a store of merit in Christ Jesus? There was not only enough to make us free from sin by justification, but there is a store of merit laid up that daily defilement may be removed as often as it comes

*“Here’s pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast;
And O my soul, with wonder view,
For sins to come here’s pardon too.”*

From all the sins I ever shall commit there is a purification laid by to cleanse me. The seven times sprinkled blood has put these sins away before the judgment seat of God, and the ashes which are laid by shall put my sin away from my conscience, purging it from dead works.

The ashes were to be *put with running water*. Running water is ever the sweet picture of the Holy Spirit—“He leadeth me beside still waters.” The Holy Spirit must take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto us. Purification is made in heaven by the finger of Christ—seven times He sprinkled His own blood—but on earth in our conscience it is made by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Ghost must make Christ precious and efficacious to us. What is Christ on the cross? What is Christ in the grave? Nothing to any man till the Holy Spirit makes Him Christ in the heart. You will hear many complain that there is no beauty in Christ that they should desire Him—it is to them dull work to hear of Jesus.

Ah! beloved, and well it may be—but when the running water comes, when the Spirit of God gives quickening and cleansing to the heart, and makes us love things divine, then there is nothing so precious, so inexpressibly desirable as the ashes of a slaughtered Savior.

Observe that it was applied *by hyssop*. The hyssop was dipped in water and then the unclean was sprinkled. Hyssop is always a type of faith. “Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean.” Our faith, like a little sprig of hyssop, is dipped into the blood, or dipped into this cleansing water which flowed from the side of Jesus, and so the remedy is applied.

Brother, believe in Jesus more fully than you have done and you will feel the power of His propitiation. He is God. He became Man. He suffered—those sufferings are able to take away sin. You need have no guilt on your conscience, but be clean, rejoicing in Him, and accepted in the Beloved. May the Lord give us to know more fully the mysteries of this red heifer and the joy of pardoned sin.

I will close by remarking that if there be any believer here who has fallen into sin, if there be one who has lost the presence of the Lord—if you have grown cold and dead, if you are conscious of having backslidden, if you have begun to doubt whether you are a child of God at all—here is in Christ just what you want.

Ah! but you say, you have fallen so often, sinned so constantly. Ay, but here are ashes for every day, cleansing for every hour, for every moment. Look upon your Lord and Savior. God is intending to forgive you not once only, but to cleanse you every day. He has taught you to forgive your brother not seven times, but seventy times seven—and do you think He will not do what He tells *you* to do?

Ah! He will forgive you a countless number of times, yea, every day. If you will seek daily cleansing in Christ, you shall have communion with Him, you shall stand in His presence, and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. This is no privilege reserved for the few, for all of us have—every child of God has—an interest in this. Let us come therefore, boldly, and pray the Master now to apply again this purification of Christ, that we may again live near to God and delight ourselves in His society.

And as for you that have never believed in Jesus, let me remind you that this is not for you. You need to be washed for the first time in the blood. O soul! what a loathsome being you are out of Christ! Why, you are all over black from head to foot, and black within as well as without. What you want first is washing in the blood, you shall have the washing of water, of which we speak, another day. The blood of Jesus can cleanse you from all sin. Trust to Him and He shall save you. Trust Him now.

Come now. May the Spirit help you to come that you may be saved, both now and forever. Amen.

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.