

Subject: *Christ Cleanses Us from Sin*

Scripture: *1 John 1:1-10*

We begin this message with a very familiar passage of Scripture and then we're going to refer to a passage of Scripture that is probably unfamiliar to most of us that illustrates this familiar text. There's an old saying that cleanliness is next to godliness. We all need to clean up, and to do that most people have access to soap and water and it just takes a little time and effort. But for spiritual cleansing, that won't work. We need something more, something better. Nothing can cleanse our sin except the blood of Christ.

1. THE NEED FOR CLEANSING

Every person has a need for inner cleansing of the soul. Sin is a debt that only Christ can pay. Sin is a disease that only Christ can cure. Sin is a defilement that only Christ can cleanse.

Psalms 51:2 *Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.*

Psalms 51:7 *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*

Psalms 51:10 *Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.*

These verses remind us that the affects of sin are deep and devastating. We call it total depravity or radical depravity. Only Christ can make us clean.

In ***Numbers 19:1-9*** we find a powerful object lesson on how God cleanses sin. This text is about ceremonial cleansing, so that people can stay near to God and be allowed to worship Him. But it is a picture of the deeper, more important cleansing of the soul.

A. God makes a distinction between “clean” and “unclean”

Both of these words appear many times in this chapter. God is teaching his people to be healthy and to be holy. There is a concern for hygiene, but an even greater emphasis on holiness. God says “You shall be holy, even as I am holy” eight times in the Bible. The specific problem that is addressed in Numbers 19 is defilement by contact with a dead body. Consider the situation of Israel. God told Moses that the people would all die in the wilderness because of their unbelief and rebellion. Over 600,000 people would die in a 40-year period. That's about 40 people dying every day. Who could avoid contact with a dead person in a situation like that?

B. The people could become “unclean” in many ways.

Some were contaminated by the premeditated action of touching a dead body (vs. 11). Others were contaminated by association with a dead body (vs. 14). Others were contaminated by accidental contact (vs. 16). Years later, tombs were whitewashed so people would not be contaminated by accidental contact. An application to us today is the fact that this world is polluted by sin and death and we can become “unclean” in many different ways, sometimes by deliberate choice and often by incidental contact.

Haggai 2:11-14 *Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying, If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or*

pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the LORD; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean.

A holy object cannot transfer its holiness to another object, but an unclean object contaminates everything it touches. Common sense teaches us the same lesson. A healthy person cannot give good health to a sick person, but a sick person can spread disease to a healthy person. Sin is highly contagious. Everybody is concerned about the corona virus because it is contagious and deadly. But sin is far worse. The death rate for sin is 100%.

2. THE SOURCE OF CLEANSING

In Numbers 19 God gave His people a special way to become “clean.” They were to kill a red heifer and burn it as a sacrifice on the altar. Then they were to keep the ashes of the red heifer and take some of them along with running water as purification for sin (vs. 9, 17-19).

Although there were many ways to become “unclean,” there was only one way to become clean. God used the “water of separation” (vs. 9) to cleanse people from their uncleanness. Two things were important about the ashes and the water of separation:

A. This cleansing was acceptable to God

B. This cleansing was available to all

The only requirement was for a person to simply trust and obey what God said. In the same way we must trust in the blood sacrifice of Jesus as we confess our sins and trust God to cleanse us. This is the only “purification for sin.”

3. THE COMPLETENESS OF CLEANSING

A. The depth of cleansing

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Hebrews 9:13-14 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?*

B. The duration of cleansing

1 John 1:7 *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

The blood of Christ has the power to keep on cleansing us from all sin.

In the song “Rock of Ages” – *Let the water and the blood from thy wounded side which flowed be of sin the double cure save from wrath and make me pure.*