

The Purging of the Conscience

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that only the blood of Christ can truly purge the conscience from dead works, enabling believers to serve the living God with a pure heart and living faith.

Scripture: Hebrews 9:13-14, Isaiah 6:5, Psalm 51:7, Romans 3:10, John 13:10, Revelation 3:16

Topics: "Atonement", "Conscience", "Sanctification"

Description

In 'The Purging of the Conscience,' C.H. Spurgeon expounds on Hebrews 9:13-14 to reveal the vital necessity of Christ's blood in cleansing the believer's conscience from dead works. Spurgeon contrasts the Old Testament ceremonial purifications with the true and perfect atonement of Jesus Christ, emphasizing that only through Him can believers serve the living God with a pure heart. This sermon challenges Christians to examine their worship and service, urging a living faith empowered by the Spirit. It is a profound call to holiness and heartfelt devotion.

Transcript

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

"For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh: 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?" Hebrews 9:13,14.

SOME of you may remember that six years ago I preached from this text, principally dwelling upon the type of the red heifer. "The Red Heifer," No. 1481, Vol. 25. We then tried to show how, in these ashes of the heifer, laid by in store and applied to the unclean with water, God gave to His people in the wilderness a purification of the flesh whenever they had defiled themselves by touching any dead thing. This was the great instrument by which they were delivered from a ceremonial quarantine under which they were kept apart till they had been purified. I am not going to enlarge upon that type today. I felt, when preaching upon it, that I had not reserved due space for the latter and more important part of the text—it is my purpose to make amends this morning. May we be helped by the Spirit of God to yield our earnest attention to the deeply important subject now before us. The red cow may roam out of notice and the Christ of God shall, alone, be seen!

"To serve the living God" is necessary to the happiness of a living man—for this end were we made—and we miss the design of our making if we do not honor our Maker. "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." If we miss that end, we are terrible losers. The service of God is the element in which, alone, we can fully live. If you had a fish here upon dry land, supposing it possible that it could exist, yet it would lead a very unhappy life—it would scarcely be a fish at all! You could not tell of what it was capable. It would be deprived of the opportunity of developing its true self. It is not until you put it into the stream that the fish becomes really a fish and enjoys its existence.

It is just so with man—he does exist without God, but we may not venture to call that existence, "life," for—"He shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him." If he lives in pleasure, yet he is dead while he lives. He is so constituted that to develop his manhood, perfectly, as God would have it to be, he must addict himself to fellowship with God and to the service of God! Many ways have been tried by men to make themselves perfectly content, but they cannot find satisfaction out of God. When a man gets to serve God and, in proportion as he thoroughly does so, he is peaceful, restful and happy. Man is a fallen star till he is right with Heaven! He is out of order with himself and all around him till he occupies his true place in relation to God. When he serves God, he has reached that point where he serves himself best and enjoys himself most. It is man's honor, it is man's joy, it is man's Heaven to live unto God!

God's idea of what a nation should be was set forth in the camp in the wilderness. If God's command had been fully carried out, the desert would have exhibited a scene of highest blessedness. We would have seen a holy people surrounding the central abode of the Holy God—a people, everyone of whom was a servant of God and a priest for His worship—a people whose ordinary everyday life was sanctified by the Presence of God. We would have seen a people whose shadow by day was God in the cloud and whose light by night was God in the pillar of fire—a people to whom God was Leader, for whom God was the vanguard and for whom God brought up the rear. There would have been a people who lived upon the Bread of Heaven—a people who drank of water which leaped by Divine power from the Rock—a people having God to be their glory and their defense. Happy had they been if they could have carried out the Divine ideal! It would have been well with them in the highest degree.

Alas, they were always seeking to be as the evil nations around them! They could not rest till they had descended to the level of the common mass of mankind! If only they could have risen to God's intent, so that the Divine purpose of love had been fully carried out in them, they would have been the happiest of all the sons of men! We, ourselves, as a Church, if we can fulfill the type—if we live with God in the midst of us, if He is our dwelling place throughout all generations, if we fetch our supplies from Him, if we move only at His bidding, if we intensely love Him—we shall be a people to be envied by all who know us!

But, alas, a great difficulty comes in the way—and of that I am going to speak this morning—in order to the removal of it. Our text very plainly points out the sad hindrance in the way of our service—we need that our conscience be purged from dead works or else we cannot serve the living God. Secondly, our text leads us to consider the true purgation from this evil—if the blood of bulls and of goats purged the flesh of men so that they could draw near to the visible Tabernacle of God, much more shall the blood of Christ purge our conscience from all that spiritual defilement which prevents our heart-worship of God! When these two things are spoken of, I shall ask you, in the last place, if time does not fail us, to consider the kind of service which we ought to render if we have been cleansed by such a costly purification and purged from all conscience of dead works. Oh, living Spirit, help us, now, to think living thoughts and so to carry on the worship of the living God while we are hearing Your Word!

I. First, then, let us briefly consider THE SAD HINDRANCE WHICH LIES IN THE WAY OF THE SERVICE OF GOD. In the camp in the wilderness, the Law was that if a man touched a dead body, he was made unclean by that touch. No, if he only stepped upon a dead bone in his daily walks, he was polluted by his accidental contact with death. If any person died in his tent, all the family and the tent, itself, became at once defiled—and they must undergo purgation before the inhabitants could mingle with the rest of the congregation, much less could go up to the holy place of assembly. My Brothers and Sisters, we are all under the ban by coming into contact with spiritual death. The Apostle does not say, purge your conscience from evil works, because he wanted to turn our minds to the type of defilement by death and, therefore, he said, "dead works." I think he had a further motive, for he was not altogether indicating willful transgressions of the Law, but those acts which are faulty because they are not performed as the result of spiritual life. I see a difference between sinful works and dead works which we may, perhaps, be able to bring into light as we go on. Suffice it to say, for the moment, that sin is the corruption which follows necessarily upon spiritual death. First, the work is dead, and soon it rots into actual sin.

Upon our consciences there rests, first of all, a sense of past sin. Even if a man wishes to serve God, until his conscience is purged, he feels a dread and terror of God which prevent his doing so. He has sinned and God is just and, therefore, he is ill at ease. The Law is not to be trifled with—it is sent into the world armed with terrible sanctions—and the conscience, when awakened, makes us know that we cannot sin with impunity. "God is angry with the wicked every day, if he turns not, He will whet His sword; He has bent His bow and made it ready." The sinner, knowing this, asks, "How can I serve this terrible God?" He is alarmed when he thinks of the Judge of all the earth, for it is before that Judge that he will soon have to take his trial. He is as a man in chains, reserved unto the hour of terrible execution—how can we serve this dreadful God?

We tremble in the Presence of an angry God, for that anger threatens us with destruction! Sin, like a dark cloud, darkens our spirit and shuts us out from joy. It is impossible for any man to rightly serve God with a living, loving worship while he is conscious of guilt. Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, we need the atoning Sacrifice of Christ to purge the conscience, for the Lord will not be served by convicted criminals, neither can condemned rebels wish to serve Him. He cannot look upon the rebellious with any pleasure till their iniquity is put away and their sin is covered. You see, then, that the first hindrance to holy service is our sense of guilt and from this we must be wholly delivered—we must receive a new consciousness—a consciousness of perfect pardon and complete reconciliation, or else we cannot serve the living

God.

On the back of this comes the consciousness that we, ourselves, are sinful and inclined to evil. We say, and say rightly, "Who shall bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." How can we, whose will is obstinate, whose judgment is darkened, whose affections are depraved, whose desires are selfish, whose thoughts are evil—how can we stand in the Presence of Him before whom angels veil their faces as they cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty"? Men who know that they are forgiven, are yet, nevertheless, seized with trembling in the Presence of the Divine purity. They cry,

"Woe is me! For I am a man of unclean lips!" How shall we bear the vessels of the Lord if we are not clean? And we are not clean by nature. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in His Holy Place?"

We feel that we have not that perfect purity of heart and cleanness of hands which would fit us for the Holy Place. Nor can we ever be saved from this fear so as to take up our heavenly priesthood and serve God till the precious blood of Christ shall be applied to the conscience—nor until we feel that in Christ we are accounted righteous. Happy are we if we are Believers in Jesus, for He has washed us and we are clean every whit! Even our feet, though travel-stained, are now made clean because He has taken the ewer and the basin and has washed our feet and has said to us, "you are clean." We may now enter into the Most Holy Place without the slightest fear, since the Great High Priest of our profession has, Himself, purified us! We are accepted in the Beloved—"Christ is made of God unto us righteousness."

But, besides this consciousness of sin and sinfulness, we are conscious of a measure of deficient life. About us there is a body of death. Dead works are the things we most require to be purged from. Dead works need not be, in themselves, works of willful sin. As the renowned Dr. John Owen has said, there were many things that the Jews would have to do about the dead which could not be censured, but, on the contrary, were to be praised—and yet, even these acts brought ceremonial defilement. A person is dead. Someone must lay out the corpse. Someone must array it for the funeral. Someone must lift it into the coffin. Someone must dig the grave and cover up the poor clay with its fellow clay. These last offices must be attended to, yet they defiled all who performed them! Although they were works of humanity and of necessity, yet, according to the Law, all who performed them were, thereby, rendered unclean.

Without going into what the world calls actual sin, you and I may come into contact with spiritual death, no, we carry death about us, from which we daily cry to be delivered! For instance, in prayer. Our prayer, in its form and fashion, may be right enough, but if it lacks earnestness and importunity, it will be a dead work. A sermon may be orthodox and correct, but if it is devoid of that holy passion, that Divine inspiration without which sermons are but mere pomp— it is a dead work! An alms given to the poor is good as a work of humanity, but it will be only a dead work if a desire to be seen of men is found at the bottom of it. Like the almsgiving of the Pharisee, it will be a mockery of God! Without a spiritual motive, the best work is dead! I confess that I never appear before you without a fear that my preaching may be a dead work among you. It must be so, as it comes from myself—its life must depend upon the spiritual power with which the Lord clothes it.

Do you not think that very much of common Christian conversation is dead, or very near to it? You stand and sing, but your hearts do not sing! You bow your heads in prayer, but you are not praying! You read the Scripture, but it is not inspired to you, so as to breathe its own life into you! Even our meditations and thoughts about God's work may be mere intellectual exercises and so may be devoid of that power which, alone, can make them living works, fit for the service of the living God. Beloved Friends, we need the precious blood of Christ to purge our consciences from this death and its working—and to lift us into holy and heavenly life! God is not the God of the dead, but of the living! God accepts not the dead sacrifice, but the living sacrifice. Even of old there were no fish presented on His altar because they could not come there, alive—the victim must be brought alive to the horns of the altar, or God could not receive it. We must not bring our dead faith or our dead words as an offering to God! Our prayers without emotion; our praises without gratitude; our testimonies without sincerity; our gifts without love—all these will be dead and, consequently, unacceptable. We must present a living sacrifice to the living God, or we cannot hope to be accepted—and for this reason we greatly need the blood of Christ to purge our conscience from dead works.

Do you not, sometimes, fear concerning your services that they have been altogether dead? When we are lukewarm, we hold the golden cup to our God, but He receives it not when our service is dead and chill.

Indeed, He says of us when we are lukewarm, "I will spue you out of My mouth." The Lord cannot endure a worship which is half dead! All worship must be presented at blood heat—the warmth of life must be there. Do you not fear that even when, as a whole, it is alive, large parts of our service may be dead? Even in the living body of our prayers, may there not be a dead bone? Even in the living body of our praise, may there not be mortification in parts? God help us! What poor creatures we are! Is there one good thing about us? Are we not imperfect in our best works? Are not the sins of our holy things glaring before our consciences this day? Unless we are purged of this, by the blood of Christ, who offered up Himself without spot to God, how can we serve this living God and be as priests and kings unto Him?

Once more—I told you that the Israelites were defiled by even touching a dead bone—and this teaches us the easiness of being polluted. We have to come into contact with evil in our daily dealings with ungodly men. Can we think of them, can we speak to them, can we trade with them without incurring defilement? Even if we grow indignant with evil practices, may there not be sin in our indignation? And when we reprove the custom of the trade, may we not become Pharisees in that very act? We are seldom exactly right. In avoiding one sin we drop into another—we flee from the lion and a bear meets us! To keep the middle path of perfect holiness is difficult!

No, I go farther—do we, as Christian men and women washed by Christ, ever associate with one another without a measure of defilement? Can we meet together at our homes and feel, when we separate, that everything we have said was seasoned with salt and ministered to edification? Is there not some taint about our purest friends and does not the touch of that corruption which still remains, even in the regenerate, tend to defile us? Can we walk through such a morgue as this world without being defiled, even unconsciously? Remember, under the Jewish Law, the man who was defiled and knew it not was still under penalty! And when he did discover it, he was made to bring his sacrifice. He needed the blood of bulls and of goats and the ashes of an heifer even for his sin of ignorance. If we have heard an evil thing, or read an evil thing, it has probably left some stain upon us though we perceive it not. All the more surely it may be so because we do not see it, for that may but prove that the judgment has been depraved and the heart infected. The water of purification and the blood of Atonement are needed day by day. Without these, we cannot hope to minister before the Lord our God with acceptance.

II. Now, I want to show, in the second place, WHAT IS THE TRUE PURGATION FROM THIS EVIL. Under the

Law there were several methods of purification, but the Apostle was not of a mind, on this occasion, to speak particularly of any one of them and, therefore, he summed them all up in these words—"The blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh." These things did purify the flesh, so that the man who had formerly contracted impurity might mix with his fellow men in the congregation of the Lord. Now, if these matters were so effectual for the purifying of the flesh, well does the Apostle ask, "How much more shall the blood of Christ purge our conscience from dead works?" Why does he say, "How much more?"

First, because it is more truly purifying. There was not really and truly anything of purification about the blood of bulls and of goats. Speaking very literally, the blood of bulls and of goats might defile a person! Falling upon any man, it splattered his garments. Who cared to have a smear of blood upon his brow, or on his hands? It was not, in itself, a thing that could actually purify. All the prescribed purifications were types and shadows of the true Propitiation for sin. Now, when the Lord Jesus Christ took upon Himself our human nature and lived a life of perfection—and then made an offering of Himself in death, as the Just for

the unjust—then there was a real Sacrifice made unto the Most High God. When the Lord Jesus gave His body, soul and spirit. When, in His entire Nature, He made Himself a Sacrifice for sin, "being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree"—then in that deed there was a real Atonement made—a true and effectual Expiation was offered. Therefore James says, "How much more?" If the shadow cleansed the flesh, how much more shall the Substance cleanse the spirit?

Moreover, our Lord Christ offered a much greater Sacrifice. Why does the text, here, show the term, "Christ"? The Apostle Paul uses the name of our Lord with considerable variety. It is sometimes, "Christ," sometimes, "Jesus," sometimes, "our Lord Jesus," sometimes, "our Lord Jesus Christ," sometimes, "Christ Jesus." But there is a reason for the use of each name wherever it occurs. It would be an instructive study for you to try to find out why, in such a place, our Lord is called, "Christ," and not, "Jesus," or, "Jesus," and not, "Christ." In this passage the name used is, "Christ." One reason why the precious blood has such power to put away sin is because it is the blood of Christ, that is, of God's Anointed—God's Messiah—the Sent One of the Most High. Our Lord came not as an amateur, but He came with a commission. He came with an appointment and unction from the Holy One! If, therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ is offered as a Sacrifice for us, He is appointed to that end by God Himself and, therefore, He must be accepted of God. There is no will worship about Christ. He says, "Lo, I come to do Your will." He did not come to do His own will, but the will of Him who sent Him and, therefore, there is a peculiar purifying power about all that He did because He did it as Christ, the Anointed of God.

Notice, it is not put concerning Christ that His life is purifying, though it had a wonderful relation thereto—nor is it said that His prayers are purifying, albeit everything is ascribable unto the intercession of our risen Lord—nor is it

said that His Resurrection is purifying. The whole stress is laid upon "the blood of Christ," signifying thereby death—death with pain, death as a victim, death with reference to sin. "The blood is the life thereof" and, "without shedding of blood there is no remission." It is by the blood of Christ that you and I have our consciences purged from dead works! Rejoice in Christ in Glory, but put your trust in Christ Crucified! Look with longing hope to His Second Coming, but for your purification, rest upon His first coming! See in His agony and His death your joy and life! It is the blood of Christ that, alone, can make you fit to serve the living and true God!

Note what it was that Christ offered and be sure that you lay great stress upon it. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself!" What a splendid word that is! Did He offer His blood? Yes,

but He offered "Himself." Did He offer His life? Yes, but He specially offered "Himself." Now, what is "Christ"? The

"Anointed of God." In His wondrous complex Nature, He is God and Man. He is Prophet, Priest and King. He is—but time would fail me to tell you what He is—whatever He is, He offered Himself. The entire Christ was offered by Christ! "He offered Himself" You cannot put it so strongly by the use of any other word. "He, His own Self, bore our sins in His own body on the tree." "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it." Not His life on earth; not His life in Heaven; nor His abilities and His thoughts and His works—but He gave Himself. This is the alabaster box which was broken, the precious ointment of which perfumes both Heaven and earth and makes the saints sweet unto the Lord their God—who smells upon them a sweet savor of rest in the offering up of Christ. He offered "Himself"! Dwell much upon that word.

It is said in our text that this offering of Himself was "without spot." The sacrificial act by which He presented Himself was a faultless one, without spot. There was nothing in what Christ was, Himself, and nothing in the way in which He offered Himself that could be objectionable to of God—it was "without spot." Now you see, Brothers and Sisters, why it is that it has such purifying power for us. God sent the Christ—this Christ offered up Himself—and He offered Himself without spot. And so we, for whom this wondrous Christ was sent, for whom He made this matchless offering, for whom He made that offering without spot, we, I say, are accepted in the Beloved made perfect in His perfection!

Further, it is added that He did this, "by the Eternal Spirit." This does not refer to the Holy Spirit, otherwise the Apostle would have said, "by the Holy Spirit." It says, "By the Eternal Spirit"—and the meaning is this—that His eternal Godhead gave to His offering of Himself an extreme value which otherwise could not have been attached to it. He, by the power of His Godhead, offered up Himself without spot!

Observe, then, the Sacrifice was a spiritual one. You must never look at Christ's Sacrifice in a carnal way, as though the mere drops of literal blood, as a material substance, could have virtue in them for the purging of sin. Do not know Christ after the flesh. Be no longer children, but understand spiritual things. It is true that our Lord had a material body and poured forth material blood, but the essence of His Sacrifice lay in His will, intent, motive and spirit. I once heard a dissertation upon what became of those drops of blood which fell to the ground on Calvary. I felt that it was foolish talk! By the blood of Christ, we mean His suffering unto death, the obedience which made Him yield His life—and especially the will of His soul to suffer—and the object of His mind in suffering. When the bullock was brought up, its blood was poured out. But the bullock could not be a sacrifice in spirit—the bullock had no intention to die and no understanding of the reason of its death. The bullock was not willing to die and, therefore, it presented no sacrifice by the spirit. But Christ knew what He was and why He was there—and why He must die. And He gave His willing assent. He entered with His whole heart into the Substitution which involved obedience unto death. "For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross." It was by His spirit that He offered up a true and real sacrifice, for He says, "I delight to do Your will, O My God; yes, Your Law is within My heart."

But then you must not forget that this spirit was Divine—"by the Eternal Spirit." The spirit of Christ was an Eternal Spirit, for it was the Godhead. There was, conjoined with His Deity, the natural life of a perfect Man, but the Eternal Spirit was His highest Self. His Godhead willed that He should die and concurred in the death of the Manhood, so that, by the Eternal Spirit, He offered Himself. The blood which He shed was the blood of God, for thus we read—"Feed the Church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood." Of course, "blood," as a physical, material thing cannot be the blood of God. But viewing it as what it means—His suffering, His grief, His woe—these were consented to by the Divine Spirit of Christ and so, by the Eternal Spirit, He offered Himself to God.

Because He is the Second Person of the adorable Trinity in Unity, the suffering and death of His humanity had in them a potency of purgation by which He cleanses our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Brothers and

Sisters, I never feel it hard to trust my sinful soul with the great Sacrifice of Christ. I feel, on the contrary, that if I had all your souls within my body and all your sins heaped upon me—and all the sins of all the redeemed blackening my con-science—I could now readily trust to that Divine Sacrifice for the taking away of all that guilt! What limit can you set to the merit of One who, by the Eternal Spirit, offered up Himself? What limits can there be to a Divine Sacrifice? You can no more set a limit to our Lord's Sacrifice

than to the Godhead, itself!

Once more, I must call to your notice the use of that word, "eternal"—"who by the Eternal Spirit"—for it gives to the offering of Christ an endless value. It can never cease to operate, for He offered up Himself by the "Eternal Spirit." There is as much purging power in the death of our Lord, today, as in that hour when, for the first time, He appeared in the Presence of God for us. The blood of the bullock was a temporary thing. The "ashes of an heifer" could not last forever. But the merits of Christ are the merits of One who always lives! His merits always abide, for they are the merits of an Eternal Person who, by His own Spirit, offered Himself up as a Sacrifice for sin.

Now, all this tends to make us feel how clean they are who are purged by this Sacrifice which our Lord offered once and for all to God. Need I call your attention to the fact that He offered Himself, "to God"? Yes, I must, for of late some have blasphemously said that the Sacrifice was made to the devil! To mention such profanity is to condemn it!

Once more upon this point—as I have shown you that the Sacrifice of Christ was more real and greater, so I want you to notice that it was better applied, for the ashes of an heifer mixed with water were sprinkled on the bodies of the unclean and the blood of bulls and of goats was sprinkled upon the flesh—but neither of them could reach the heart. It is not possible for a material thing to touch that which is immaterial! But the sufferings of Christ, as I have explained them, offered up through His Eternal Spirit, were not only of a corporeal but of a spiritual kind—and they reach, therefore, to the cleansing of our spirit!

That precious blood comes home to us in this way. First, we understand somewhat of it. The Israelite, when he was purged by the ashes of the red cow, could only say to himself, "I am made clean by these ashes because God has appointed that I shall be, but I do not know why." But you and I can say that we are made clean through the blood of Christ because there is, in that blood, an inherent efficacy—there is in the vicarious suffering of Christ on our behalf, an inherent power to honor the Law of God and to put away sin. Because we can somewhat understand the cleansing given us in Christ, it has a greater power upon our conscience—and that better prepares us to serve God.

Then again, we appreciate and approve of this way of cleansing. The Israelite could not tell why the ashes of a red heifer purified him. He did not object to it, but he could not express any great appreciation of the method. We, as we see our Lord suffering in our place, fall at His feet in reverent wonder. We love the method of salvation by Substitution! We approve of expiation by the Mediator. No Truth of God charms my own spirit like the Truth of Atonement by vicarious suffering, that suffering presented together with His death by our Lord Jesus Christ. I feel my conscience is quieted by every drop of that blood! The method of Federal Headship commends itself to me! I see righteousness and Grace commingled in it and thus I am helped to serve the living God.

Further, Brothers and Sisters, it comes home to us this way—we read in the Word of God that, "He that believes in Him has everlasting life," and we say to ourselves, "Then we have everlasting life, for we have believed in Him!" We read, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin," and our conscience whispers, "We are cleansed from all sin!" Conscience finds rest and peace and our whole consciousness becomes that of a forgiven and accepted person with whom God is well pleased! Our conscience, instead of condemning us, perceives the justice of the way by which we are absolved and leads up our peace of heart into full assurance of faith. So you see, Brothers and Sisters, that what the blood of bulls and of goats could not do, the blood of Christ has done! It has passed beyond the flesh,

which, indeed, it has never touched in our case—and it has sanctified the heart and calmed the spirit—thus preparing us to serve the Lord. The blood of Christ has purified us to the center! It has purged the core of the heart! It has cleansed our spirit, our mind, our memory, our thought, our intellect, our affections—and we are clean! And, therefore, we are meet to exercise a holy priesthood before the living God!

III. This brings me to my last head, which is this—consider THE KIND OF SERVICE WHICH WE NOW RENDER. After so much preparing, how shall we behave ourselves in the House of God?

I am not speaking to you who have never been purged from dead works by the application of the precious blood of Christ, for you cannot serve God—you are forbidden to come into His Presence or to stand among His saints. You are in

quarantine, even as lepers put forth from the camp. Go home and set a red cross upon your door and write over it, "Lord have mercy upon us." That would best befit your unclean condition! As Joshua said to Israel, even so say I unto you, "You cannot serve the Lord: for He is an holy God; He is a jealous God." You must be born again before you can be acceptable unto Him, for as you are, an infection is upon all your works and you may not hope that He will accept anything at your hands.

But to you who have had that blood applied to your conscience by the Spirit of God, to you I speak. You should present unto the Lord the constant worship of living men. You see it is written, "Purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." You are not, at this day, likely to die in order to prove your love to God. But if you are ever called to it, you must be prepared to lose your lives for Christ's sake! But what you have to do is to "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." Now, a living sacrifice is much more difficult of presentation than a slain one. I believe there are thousands of men who could go to the stake and die, or lay their necks on the block to perish with a stroke, for Christ, who, nevertheless, find it hard work to live a holy, consecrated life. The act of one moment, however painful, must be much easier than that service which is to run through a series of years until life, itself, shall close. But if the Lord Jesus gave Himself for you, will you not give yourselves for Him? If He died for you by His Eternal Spirit, will you not live for Him by that new Spirit with which He has quickened you? Are you not under bonds to serve Him? From this time, forth, you should not have a pulse that does not beat to His praise, nor a hair on your head that is unconsecrated to His name, nor a single moment of your time which is not used for His Glory! Yes, Brothers, Sisters, it must be a lifelong sacrifice that we now present unto Him that lives forever!

Should not our service be rendered in the full strength of our new life? Let us have no more dead works, no more dead singing, no more dead praying, no more dead preaching, no more dead hearing! "Oh," said one, when he heard a sermon, "it was very good, if it had been alive." Dead-and-alive Christianity is poor stuff! No dish ever comes to table which is so nauseous as cold religion! Put it away! Neither God nor man can endure it! Let us have cakes hot from the oven, manna fresh from Heaven, Living Waters leaping from the Rock! Stale godliness is ungodliness. Let our religion be as warm, constant and natural as the flow of the blood in our veins. A living God must be served in a living way.

Are we, therefore, to be excited,? Yes, if need be. What can excite a man like the grand sublimities of eternity? But if you are not excited with any carnal excitement—if principle rules rather than passion—it will be so much the better. Yet let it be living principle—principle alive with love. There is such a thing as an excitement which is spiritually dead. The fury of the flesh is not the life of God. Energy of mind is a

distinct thing from being strong in the Lord. We need a steady, healthy pulsation of spiritual life to keep us to such service of the Lord as becomes saints and is worthy of our high calling. This comes only from having our conscience purged from dead works.

And, dear Friends, keep in mind that you are, henceforth, to "serve the living God." You that are acquainted with the Greek will find that the kind of service here mentioned is not that which the slave or servant renders to his master, but a worshipful service such as priests render unto God. We that have been purged by Christ are to render to God the worship of a royal priesthood! It is ours to present prayers, thanksgivings and sacrifices. It is ours to offer the incense of intercession. It is ours to light the lamp of testimony and furnish the table of showbread. You that are the sons of God are all the sons of Levi this day—yes, you are the true seed of Aaron! The priesthood is with you, even with you who worship God in the spirit and have no confidence in the flesh. You that believe in Christ and are made pure by His blood, it is for you to live as if you wore the snow-white robes of the priests of the house of Aaron—your garments should be vestments and your conversation a perpetual priesthood unto God!

I close by noticing how this precious blood of Christ will work all this in us. It will operate upon us thus—when our conscience is perfectly pure from sin and we know that we are forgiven and accepted in the Beloved, then how happy we shall be! And there is no service so acceptable to God as that which is joyfully rendered. When it is a joy to us to serve Him, then it is a joy to Him to be served! When it is a delight to us to honor God, then God delights in such honor. He seeks not slaves to grace His Throne! When we know that we are perfectly forgiven, then we are full of gratitude—we then feel that we must serve God, not because of anything we are to get for it, but because we long to do so. This unselfish service He gladly accepts! To give play to our emotions, we feel that we must glorify Him—then we truly serve God, for that which is born of love is living! Loving works are living works! When His glorious name is honey in the mouth and music in the ear—and Heaven in the heart—then we worship Him in the manner which He accepts, even in the same

manner as the angels in Glory who see His face and do His commandments. It is the cleansing blood which brings us near enough to do this.

This precious blood of Christ has now given us perfect peace with God and, therefore, we can serve Him without fear. You cannot serve an enemy—while you hate him, you cannot please him. But our enmity to God is slain—He is our Friend, our Father and our God. His will is our will, His designs are our designs. As far as the little can keep pace with the great and the minute with the infinite, we run parallel with God! And if we ever quit the lines, for a moment, we are in misery till we get back again! What the Lord aims at we aim at. What He desires we desire. Is Christ's coming God's ultimatum? So it is ours and we cry, "Even so, come Lord Jesus!" Shall "the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ"? It is our last, best, highest prayer! Thus are we truly serving the Lord.

See you not, then, how the washing of the precious blood has made us partakers of the service of Heaven? How close it has brought us to God! In what amity and accord we walk with Him! With what sympathy we enter into all that He does! With what intense delight we joy in Him through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we also have received the Atonement! How I wish that every soul here believed in Jesus! O that you would do so at once. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews 9:1-28; 10:1-22.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ch-spurgeon/the-purging-of-the-conscience/>

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