

The Clean Water Sprinkled and the New Heart Given

by J.C. Philpot

The sermon explains the promise of the clean water, which represents the Holy Spirit, and how it cleanses and purifies us through the washing of regeneration and every subsequent renewing by the blessed Spirit.

Scripture: Psalm 51:7, Psalm 55:22, Psalm 110:3, Proverbs 4:18, Isaiah 1:18, Ezekiel 36:25, John 3:19, John 7:37, Acts 9:6, Titus 3:5, Hebrews 9:11

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Regeneration"

Description

J.C. Philpot preaches about the cleansing power of God's clean water, symbolizing the Holy Spirit, to wash away filthiness and idols from the hearts of believers. He highlights the deep-rooted sins of unbelief and idolatry using examples from the children of Israel's history. Philpot emphasizes the need for the clean water to be sprinkled on the understanding, will, conscience, affections, and idols of individuals to bring about regeneration, sanctification, and a new heart and spirit. The sermon focuses on the transformative effects of God's clean water in cleansing, renewing, and purifying the innermost being of believers.

Transcript

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"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean- from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." Ezekiel 36:25-26

There are two sins which are deeply embedded in the human heart. One of these is unbelief; the other is idolatry. They are indeed twin branches of that one great stem, that huge trunk of human depravity, which, having its roots deeply and firmly embedded in the soil, tosses on high its gigantic arms, as if it would bid defiance to the very lightnings of heaven. The history of the children of Israel contains very striking examples of both these sins.

View, first, their unbelief. Though they had personally witnessed all the plagues in Egypt, and had experienced a miraculous exemption from every one of them; though they had passed through the waves of the Red Sea, when the waters were a wall to them on the right hand and on the left; though they ate

daily of the manna which fell from heaven and drank of the water that gushed out of the rock; though ever before their eyes there was the spectacle of the pillar and the cloud, denoting the immediate presence of God in their midst; yet none of these mighty signs could cure them of their inveterate sin, unbelief. So that at last, God swore in his wrath, that they would not enter into his rest. Their carcasses fell in the wilderness; and they could not enter in because of unbelief.

But their idolatry was almost, if not altogether as great as their infidelity. Though from Sinai's blazing top God had revealed his law with thunder and lightning and earthquake; though he had spoken himself from heaven, "You shall not make to yourself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything which is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth;" yet, when Moses tarried for awhile upon the mountain in solemn communion with God, they must needs make to themselves a golden calf, and cry out with all the brutish ignorance of infidelity and idolatry- "These be your gods, O Israel, which brought you out of Egypt." What! a calf to be the representation of the great God who had done such mighty wonders! What brutish ignorance for them so quickly to depart from the worship of the living God- and as the Psalmist speaks, "to change their glory," (that is, their glorious God) "into the similitude of an ox that eats grass." (Psalm. 106:20.) Can we wonder that God was so provoked by this abominable idolatry, as to say unto Moses- "I have seen this people and behold it is a stiff-necked people? Now, therefore, let me alone that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them." (Exod. 32:9, 10.)

But this was only one instance of their stubborn and deep-rooted idolatry. When they got the promised land into possession, and that "not by their own sword, nor by their own arm, but by the right-hand and arm of the light of God's countenance because he had a favor unto them;" even then, instead of destroying the altars, breaking down the images, and cutting down the groves (or, as the word should be rendered, "the wooden images") of the heathen nations as they were expressly commanded, they bowed down to their false gods. As we read, "They provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their engraved images." (Psalm. 78:58.) In fact, what is their whole history down to the time of the Babylonish captivity, but one continued series of idolatrous worship, whenever they got the least opportunity to gratify that propensity of their besotted minds?

We see, then, from these examples of the children of Israel, who are set before us in the Scriptures as warning examples "to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted, nor be idolaters as were some of them," how deeply seated are the two sins of unbelief and idolatry. Similarly, wherever a missionary has penetrated, into whatever remote and dark corners of the earth he has carried his foot, there he has found idol worship as the only form of religion known and practiced. In Greece, in Rome, in their palmyest days, idolatry was the only religion of the people. Great as Athens was in learning, cultivated as was every art and science there, yet we read of that distinguished city, that while Paul waited for Silas and Timothy "his spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry," [or, as it is in the margin, "full of idols."] There was indeed an altar "To the unknown God;" but it was because the true God was an unknown God that they put an idol in his place.

But we would greatly err if we thought that idolatry was confined to graven images. These are but the outward signs and tokens of something within far deeper than setting up and bowing down to such idols made by human hands as formed heathen worship. There are heart idols, bosom idols; and though not made of wood and stone, yet, if we pay them the secret worship of devotion and affection, and inflame ourselves secretly with them, as the prophet speaks, under every green tree that grows in our bosom, they are as much idols in the sight of God who searches the heart, as if we bowed our knee to an image made with the fingers of men.

As, however, I shall have occasion to speak more upon this point when I open to you the subject of this discourse, I will not now dwell upon it. Let me then, simply read our text again, that you may more distinctly remember it; and may the Lord enable me so to bring out of it and lay before you its rich contents as shall, with his special blessing, be instructive, edifying, and comforting to your souls- "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean- from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh."

In opening up these words, I desire to bring before you chiefly three points, which I think you will find closely connected with our text.

First, I shall endeavor to show you what the "clean water" is which we find promised in it.

Secondly, how this "clean water" is sprinkled, and its effects- "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you."

Thirdly, its accomplishments- "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh."

I. What the "clean water" is. Water, all through the Scripture, is employed as a typical representation of the Holy Spirit. Thus our Lord said, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto me and drink. He who believes on me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly (or heart) shall flow rivers of living water. But this spoke he of the Spirit." (John 7:37-39.) A similar testimony we find in the language of the prophet, "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground- I will pour my Spirit upon your seed, and my blessing upon your offspring." (Isaiah 44:3.) It was of this gift of the Holy Spirit, as symbolized by water, that the Lord spoke in his conversation with the woman of Samaria, where, contrasting the water of Jacob's well with the living water which he had to give, he said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again- but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:13, 14.) And it is in this sense I understand those words of the Lord which have given rise to so much error and so much controversy- "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." By water here I do not understand the material element water at all as applied in baptism, whether by immersion or sprinkling, but water in its spiritual meaning as signifying the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. Thus, to be "born of water and of the Spirit" is to be born of the Spirit and his gracious communications and influences which are poured out or applied to the soul as water to the body.

A. But now arises the question, Why the Scriptures generally speak of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit under the figure of water? It seems to me that there are three distinct circumstances connected with water which aptly qualify it to be a representative of the blessed Spirit.

1. Water SATISFIES THE CRAVINGS OF THIRST. Physiologists tell us that water enters very largely into every liquid and solid part of our bodily frame; as therefore, there is a continual depletion and evaporation of this fluid, fresh must be supplied; and thus thirst is the demand of the body for that needful supply. So similarly the water of life, which the Holy Spirit can alone give, satisfies the cravings of that spiritual thirst which is created whenever and wherever God is pleased to communicate divine life to the soul. I need not to tell you that this thirst after God and after what he alone can give is a sure mark of being quickened into spiritual life. You will recollect in the passage I have just quoted how the Lord himself said, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto me and drink." Did not he also pronounce a blessing on those who hunger and

thirst after righteousness? (Matt. 5:6.) And is not this blessing the blessing of life for evermore? How we hear the psalmist crying out, "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." How he compares himself in his pantings after God to the deer which pants after the water brooks. (Psalm 42:1, 2.) How he cries, "O God, you are my God; early will I seek you- my soul thirsts for you, my flesh longs for you in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see your power and your glory, so as I have seen you in the sanctuary." (Psalm 63:1, 2.) And again, "I stretch forth my hands unto you; my soul thirsts after you, as a thirsty land." (Psalm 143:6.) How expressive also is that invitation in the prophet, "Ho, every one who thirsts, come to the waters, and he who has no money; come, buy and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." (Isaiah 55:1.) Does not this cloud of witnesses show that wherever there is grace, there is a thirsting after God, the living God?

Now, what can quench or satisfy this thirst but that water which the Holy Spirit brings and gives, implying thereby all that strength, support, deliverance, and consolation which he affords by his gracious visitations and divine communications, and especially by revealing Christ, taking of the things which are his, as his blood and righteousness, grace and glory, and showing them to the soul, and shedding the love of God abroad in the heart?

2. But again, water, especially as coming from heaven in the shape of dew and rain, has a FERTILIZING effect upon the soil. "I will pour water upon him who is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." And what is the consequence? "They shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the watercourses." When, then, the blessed Spirit would describe a favored people as coming and singing in the height of Zion, and flowing together to the goodness of the Lord, he says, "Their souls shall be as a watered garden." (Jer. 31:12.) Now, a watered garden was one which is irrigated, as is still the practice in the East, by a brook or river which ran near it and was thus made fruitful; for in that hot climate nothing was needed but an ample and perennial supply of water to make a garden teem with flowers and fruit.

"But blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they go right on producing delicious fruit." Jeremiah 17:7-8. It is only then as the blessed Spirit is pleased to bedew the soul by his grace, and water it with his divine influences and operations that we can bring forth any fruit unto God.

3. But water, thirdly, as representing the operations and influences of the blessed Spirit, has another distinguishing quality. It WASHES, it CLEANSSES, it PURIFIES. With water we wash our bodies, with water cleanse our houses. It may seem strange to tell you so, but it is an established fact that the very air itself is defiled by smoke, dust, and exhalations from the earth, and needs to be continually washed and cleansed by showers from heaven. The rain, as it falls from the upper regions of the sky, catches hold as it were in its descent of these particles, and straining them out of the air carries them down to the earth. How fresh and sweet the air smells after a heavy shower, as if it had just been newly washed. Nor do the cleansing effects of rain cease here. How, after heavy rain we see the whole aspect of nature smile as with a fresh washed face. How on every side the dusty leaves upon the trees and hedges, and the soiled productions of the field and garden, lift up their faces clean and fresh as if, like children, they all rejoiced in a good washing from God's shower, and to be dressed in a new suit of clothes. How clearly does our text speak of the cleansing effects of this pure water, for it is clean and pure as coming straight from heaven unmixed with anything of the creature. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you."

We thus see that water, as representing that which quenches thirst, as representing that which washes, cleanses, and purifies; clearly and beautifully sets forth in type and figure the operations and influences of the blessed Spirit. There can be no doubt, therefore, that "the clean water" spoken of in our text which God promises to sprinkle upon his people represents the Holy Spirit as poured out upon the family of God. This we know was the grand promise of the New Testament, the special fruit of our Lord's resurrection, ascension, and glorification. We therefore read that when our Lord promised that rivers of living water should flow out of the heart of him who believed in his name, "But this spoke he of the Spirit, which those who believe on him should receive- for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." (John 7:39.)

We see therefore that the gift of the Holy Spirit was dependent upon the glorification of Jesus; and therefore he said to his disciples, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away- for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." (John 16:7.) And what should this blessed Spirit do when he came? "He will bring me glory by revealing to you whatever he receives from me. All that the Father has is mine; this is what I mean when I say that the Spirit will reveal to you whatever he receives from me." (John 16:14, 15.)

B. But now I wish to show you in what way the blessed Spirit comes and acts; for we must not suppose that there is anything visionary, wild, or enthusiastic in his divine operations. No! there is a most blessed, sober, and solid reality in them. His teachings, influences, and operations are not a mere matter of feelings which might be right or wrong, real or visionary, from God or Satan transformed into an angel of light, but are of substantial reality and power. Now, what makes the teachings, influences, and operations of the blessed Spirit so solid and so real is that he acts by and through the written word. We find this point blessedly opened by the apostle (Eph. 5.), and his words afford us a striking key to the waters spoken of in our text- "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish." Observe the expression the "washing of water by the word." It is not merely the "washing of water," that is, the Spirit's influences and operations as represented by water, but it is "by the word."

This corresponds also with the language of James, "Of his own will he begat us with the word of truth" (James 1:18); and with that of Peter, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever." (1 Peter 1:23.)

The waters then spoken of in our text we may consider to mean 1st, the washing of regeneration, and secondly, every subsequent renewing by the blessed Spirit of the work of grace. We find these two brought together by the apostle in Titus 3, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior." We have also in that beautiful and striking parable of our gracious Lord, the parable of the vine, another key to the interpretation of the clean water spoken of in our text; "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that bears not fruit he takes away; and every branch that bears fruit he purges it." The word "purge" here is the old English word for purify or cleanse; and I have often wished that our excellent translators had used the word "cleanse," because they would then have preserved the beautiful connection which there is in the original between the cleansing and the mode of cleansing.

Let me show this by adopting the word "cleansed." "And every branch that bears fruit he cleanses it that it may bring forth more fruit. Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." How clearly and beautifully does this connection between cleansing and clean show the way whereby God cleanses the fruitful branch. It is by the word. This word he had applied to the hearts of the disciples, and by the power of this word he had washed and cleansed them from their unbelief. The Lord, therefore said, "It is the Spirit who quickens; the flesh profits nothing- the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63.) And it was the power of this word upon the heart which made Peter answer when Jesus said unto the twelve, "Will you also go away?" "Lord to whom shall we go, you have the words of eternal life." Bear then, in mind that it is the word in the hands of the blessed Spirit which does everything set forth in the Scriptures, and therefore in our text is set forth under the figure of water.

Now, having given you this simple interpretation of the clean water, having shown you that it signifies first regeneration, and then every subsequent renewing of the Holy Spirit, I shall pass on to open what I proposed to lay before you as the second branch of my subject.

II. I come now, therefore, to my second point- the sprinkling of the clean water, and its EFFECTS as sprinkled upon the souls of God's people, for it is to them that the promise is made.

I have pointed out that the main reason why the "clean water" is sprinkled is to cleanse and purify those to whom it is applied. Now, we find two main washings spoken of in the word of truth, for I need not dwell upon the washings prescribed by the ceremonial law, which were merely typical and figurative. The washings which claim our attention are those spoken of in the New Testament, which are not typical and figurative, but real and spiritual. One, then, of these washings is the washing of our persons, and the other is the washing of our souls. There is the washing, to speak plainly, of our outsides, and there is the washing of our insides.

A. Justification. Let us consider for a moment the first washing which I have mentioned, that is, the washing of our PERSONS. What is the song of the redeemed? "Unto him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood." This washing is the washing of our persons in the blood of the Lamb, whereby we are washed from all the guilt, filth, pollution, imputation, and consequences of all our sins and crimes in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. John saw a great multitude who no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands. Whence came those white robes, and why were they so white? It was because those who wore them had washed them, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Rev. 7:9-14.) David, therefore cried, when laden with the guilt and burden of sin, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." (Psalm 51:7.)

If we are indeed washed in this fountain, we shall stand before God at the great day without spot or wrinkle; for the fountain opened in the Redeemer's pierced hands and feet and side was a fountain appointed by God himself for all sin, and all uncleanness, and every soul washed therein stands before God as white as snow. He therefore says to his people, "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord- though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be white as wool." (Isaiah 1:18.) This is the blood of the New Testament which was shed for many for the remission of sins; this is the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanses from all sin; this is the blood which purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God; this is the blood of sprinkling which speaks better things than the blood of Abel.

The apostle therefore says, "So Christ has now become the High Priest over all the good things that have come. He has entered that great, perfect sanctuary in heaven, not made by human hands and not part of this created world. Once for all time he took blood into that Most Holy Place, but not the blood of goats and calves. He took his own blood, and with it he secured eternal redemption." (Heb. 9:11, 12.) From this precious blood flows all our salvation, all our reconciliation to God, all our pardon, all our peace, and all our hope of eternal life. Here, then, we cast anchor as our only hope of our weary soul; and to this precious, atoning blood do we look as the only sacrifice for all our sins, the only balm for a guilty conscience, the only foundation of peace with God by faith in his dear Son; for it is by this one offering that he has perfected forever those who are sanctified.

B. Sanctification. But there is another washing of which I have just struck the key note in the word "sanctified." We have not only to be washed in the blood of the Lamb that all our sins and crimes may be forever put away from the eyes of Him who is of purer eyes than to behold sin, and cannot look on iniquity; but we need to be made fit for the inheritance of the saints in light. We need to be sanctified as well as justified. And observe how the apostle brings together in the compass of one verse, three of the choicest blessings of the gospel- pardon, justification, and sanctification. "And such were some of you; but you are WASHED, but you are SANCTIFIED, but you are JUSTIFIED in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." It is in Christ's blood that we are washed. It is by Christ's righteousness that we are justified; it is by Christ's Spirit that we are sanctified.

As I have just observed, we not only need a title to heaven; we need a fitness for heaven. We not only need pardon for the acceptance of our persons, but we need regeneration for the sanctification of our souls. For if, as the Lord declares, none can see or enter into the kingdom of God except he is born again, the work of the Holy Spirit upon our conscience is as needful for our entrance into heaven as the work of Christ upon the cross, when he bore our sins in his own body on the tree. How clear, how decisive upon this point are those words of the Holy Spirit- "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God." And again- "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." Paul, therefore, bids us to follow after holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

Now, it is of this work of the Spirit on the soul which we briefly call in one word "sanctification" that our text speaks in the gracious promise- "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean." The allusion here is mainly to a remarkable rite under the Levitical law, of which we have a detailed description in Numbers 19. You will recollect, perhaps, how in that chapter God commanded Moses to take a red heifer without spot or blemish, on which never came yoke. This heifer, which was a type of Christ, the priest was to bring forth outside the camp, where she was to be slain before his face. He was then to take of her blood with his fingers, and sprinkle it directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times. The next step was for one to burn the heifer in his sight, just as she was, with her skin, her flesh, and her blood; and then the priest was to take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, all which things had a typical reference to the blood of the one great sacrifice, as pointing to its durability and fragrance, its being sprinkled on the conscience; and to cast them into the midst of the burning of the heifer.

All these rites and ceremonies were intended to invest the ashes of the heifer thus burnt with a peculiar efficacy and power, for they were to be gathered up by a man who was clean, and laid up outside the camp in a clean place, that they might be preserved for a special use. Now, this use was, that when a person had become ceremonially unclean, some of the ashes of this burnt heifer, together with running water, were to be put into a vessel, and this water became a water of purification for sin; for hyssop was to be dipped into it, and sprinkled upon the unclean person on the third day and the seventh day.

My explanation has been rather long, but every part of this typical ceremony carries with it a gospel meaning. I cannot go through these various meanings, but I will direct our minds to one as having a special connection with our text. There was a particular provision that the water in which the ashes were dipped should be "running water," that is, not stagnant, like that of a pool, but clear and clean, like that of a river. And I may observe that there is a very sweet marginal reading- "Living waters shall be given," which connects it with the words of the blessed Lord to the woman of Samaria, where he tells her if she had known the gift of God, and who it was that said to her- "Give me to drink, she would have asked of him and he would have given her living water." And he tells her why it was "living water," for it would be in him to whom it was given "a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Now, in the type of the red heifer there is a connection, and a very beautiful and significant connection between the two washings of which I have spoken. The killing, burning, and reducing to ashes of the red heifer all point to the atoning sacrifice of Jesus; and the mixture of the ashes with the living water shows the connection between the blood of the Lamb sprinkled upon the conscience and the washing of regeneration by the power of the Spirit.

C. But now, observe the EFFECTS. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean." There is a certain effect to be produced by the sprinkling of the clean water. It will not, it cannot fall in vain; it will have, it must have a certain effect, for it is sprinkled as clean water to produce a certain effect, which must follow; not only because it is sprinkled by the very hand of God himself, but because it is specially promised as an effect. It is "I will" and "you shall." "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean."

You will observe that there is an application of this clean water, or the effects could not be produced; and as the clean water is sprinkled to remove defilement, wherever it falls, that effect must necessarily follow.

Now, there are four things in us which need the application of this clean water, that they may be washed from their defilement- There is the understanding; there is the will; there is the conscience; and there are the affections. All these are, so to speak, sadly filthy, and being filthy need to be cleansed by the sprinkling of the clean water upon them to make them pure and clean. Let me show you this more fully and distinctly in detail.

1. First, there is the UNDERSTANDING, and this has to be cleansed from its filth by clean water being sprinkled upon it. The filth of the understanding is, so to speak, ignorance. The understanding we may compare to the 'window of the soul', for through our understanding, as through an open window, comes all light into our soul. We find a contrast in the word between those in whom "the understanding is darkened" (Eph. 4:18) and those who have "the eyes of their understanding enlightened." (Eph. 1:18.) The one may be represented by a house without windows, or with windows and the shutters up, and the other with windows, or the shutters taken down.

When God created man in his own image he gave him an understanding; in other words, he put a 'window into his soul'. Now, this window of the soul has become, through the fall, encrusted with mud. It is like the window of a house not inhabited and standing by the road side. What with neglect to keep it clean on the inside, and what with the mud cast upon it by passing vehicles on the outside, the whole of that window has become encrusted with a thick coat of mud. Now while the window is so encrusted, however clearly the sun may shine, not a single ray will shine into the room. It is effectually obstructed by the crust of mud over the window.

So it is with man's understanding. God gave man a good and righteous understanding of himself, and a knowledge of his will; but sin, through the fall, spread, so to speak, a crust of dirt over man's understanding. This I have called the defilement of the understanding; for a darkened understanding is always attended with deeds of darkness; as the apostle points out so clearly in the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans, that when men's "foolish heart was darkened," they were judicially "given up to vile affections," and dark deeds followed upon dark minds. Until, then, this darkened understanding is cleansed by the clean water sprinkled upon it, not a ray of divine light can enter into the mind, so as to illuminate it with the light of the living. But the clean water, in God's own time and way, is sprinkled upon the understanding. This is "the washing of water by the word" which I have already mentioned, and chiefly the washing of regeneration, for that is the first work of God upon the soul.

Look at the process. Here is a soul which has to be made alive unto God. He himself, in infinite mercy, sprinkles from heaven (his dwelling place) a few drops of this clean water on the understanding. What is the effect? So miraculous is its operation on a man's understanding, that it washes away at once that thick, deep-rooted crust which had gathered over the window of his soul. I have called it a "thick, deep-rooted crust." And have we not daily proof of it, in observing what inveterate prejudice, what obstinate determination not to come to the light, what willful blindness to the word of God, and what resistance to every conviction which would tend to open the eyes are daily displayed by those by whom we are surrounded, and was once as much displayed by us? How truly did the Lord say- "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." (John 3:19, 20.) The first thing needed, then, is to wash away this thick crust.

Now, observe its effects. As the clean water, then, comes falling from heaven's gracious courts in all its divine purity, it drops upon the understanding. I hardly like to pursue the figure lest I debase it, but it is like the application of water to a dirty window- it cleanses. Now a few drops can do to the window of the soul what scarcely buckets of water could do to the window of the room. But mark the effect of the sprinkled drops! A ray of heavenly light now shines through that window of the soul, and we see light in God's light.

Before the Lord was pleased to sprinkle this clean water on your understanding, how dark was your mind. You heard the word, but you understood it not. One of the first things you can now look back to as indicating a gracious work of God upon your soul was, that it seemed as if you had for the first time in your life, at a certain season, some understanding of the things that you heard under a preached gospel. You did not sit as before upon your seat, ignorant and willfully ignorant, blind and willfully blind, as if you would pull your very ears away from the truth, and either sat stupidly mindless, or tried to amuse your mind by thinking of something else. But it seemed as if a ray of divine light had penetrated your mind, and you felt as if you understood what the preacher meant, and that he was preaching to you, so as to fasten conviction upon your conscience.

I cannot dwell further upon this point- but this understanding seemed to gradually increase, for it is, as the wise man speaks- "The path of the just is as the shining light that shines more and more unto the perfect day." (Prov. 4:18.) You now began to read the Scriptures with this divine light shining upon them; and the more you read the word and the more you heard the truth, the more you seemed to understand, believe, and feel it. Here was the clean water sprinkled upon your understanding.

2. But there is, next, the sprinkling of the clean water upon the WILL. God created man with a will in harmony with his own. What God bade him do, man did. God's will was his will. But sin came in and

perverted this pure will. Man was determined to have a will of his own; and this obstinacy of the will we may call the filth of the will, for filth in the sight of God is much what filth is in ours, if we are naturally clean in habit and person. As a clean person is disgusted with filth; as there is something loathsome in it to his natural eye; so sin in the sight of God is loathsome, disgusting, and an abomination on which his pure eyes cannot bear to rest. Thus the obstinacy of man's will, his stubborn determination to have his own way, his unwillingness to submit to the will of God, may be considered as the filth of the will, because it is the sin of the will.

It is a great sin to have a will not in harmony with the will of God. "Your will be done," the Lord taught his disciples to pray. To have a will of our own is to have a filthy will. Why? Not only because it is filthiness in the sight of God, but because our natural will is ever bent upon sinful objects, and the gratification of those sensual, proud, or ambitious desires which are contrary to the will of God.

But God sprinkles clean water upon the will; and when the clean water comes, what is the consequence? It removes that obstinacy of the will to please itself; that determination to have our own way and gratify our selfish desires, come what may; and by its gracious operation, brings our will to lie in harmony with the will of God. The gracious promise made to Christ by his heavenly Father was, "Your people shall be willing in the day of your power." (Psalm. 110:3.) And how blessedly do we see this exemplified in the case of Paul at Damascus' gate, when the clean water was sprinkled upon his will, and he all trembling and astonished at its effects, said- "Lord what will you have me to do?" (Acts 9:6.)

3. But again, our CONSCIENCE needs the clean water to be sprinkled upon it, as well as the understanding and the will.

There are two things that our conscience needs to be cleansed from- one is the guilt of sin, the other is the filth. The guilt of sin is felt first. Now, nothing can cleanse the conscience from this guilt but the application of atoning blood. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge (or cleanse) your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." Nothing but blood applied with power will cleanse the conscience from the burden of sin and the guilt which sin charged home brings. It is therefore called, "the blood of sprinkling which speaks better things than the blood of Abel."

But our conscience is filthy as well as guilty. O, what loathsome monsters of iniquity; how polluted, filthy, and vile do we feel ourselves to be, when the guilt of our sin is charged home upon our conscience! Have you not loathed yourselves sometimes in your own sight on account of your abominations? Has not the filth of sin sometimes disgusted you- the opening up of that horrible, that ever running sewer, which you daily carry about with you? We complain, and justly complain, of a reeking sewer that runs through a street, or of a ditch filled with everything disgusting, such as is seen sometimes in the outskirts of a town. But do we feel as much, do we complain as often of the foul sewer which is ever running in our soul, of the filthy ditch in our own bosom? We can cover up the one with a drain, and hide from view its hideous sights and restrain its reeking stench. The other lies naked before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do; and as the sight of this open sewer meets our eyes too, and its stench enters our nostrils, it fills us with self-loathing and self-aborrence before the eyes of a holy God.

We have then to be cleansed, not only from the guilt of sin by the application of atoning blood, but from the filth of sin by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. And I will show you how. Our blessed Lord said to his disciples- "Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you."

When the word then of pardoning mercy comes, or the word of promise, or the word of truth in its unction and power, it carries with it a cleansing, purifying efficacy. John saw the side of the Redeemer pierced, and what met his astonished gaze? "Forthwith there came out blood and water." The blood came to wash away the guilt of sin; the water to wash away the filth of sin. As Deer says-

"This fountain so dear, he'll freely impart:

Unlocked by the spear, it gushed from his heart;

With blood and with water, the first to atone,

To cleanse us the latter; the fountain's but one."

And I may also observe, though I have not time to dwell upon it, that the sprinkling of this clean water makes the conscience not only clean, but tender, submissive, and obedient to the will and word of God, so as to take his part against sin and self.

4. But the AFFECTIONS also need cleansing, as well as the understanding, the will and the conscience. For O, how our affections cleave naturally to earth and the things of time and sense; and this creature love, in all its shapes and forms, defiles our affections. Creature love does not leave room in our soul for the love of God to come in and dwell there. And though creature love in some respects is necessary, and therefore may seem innocent, yet we may be sure as long as earthly affections are indulged, sin is loved, carnal things delighted in, and the fancied joys of earth pursued- to the dislike of everything which would interfere with them. There are no heavenly affections kindled in the soul, no mountings up of love toward him who sits at the right hand of God.

But the clean water which is sprinkled upon the understanding to enlighten it, upon the will to change it, and upon the conscience to cleanse it, comes upon the affections to renew them and fix them on heavenly things. God sprinkles them with the clean water; they are washed by the word; and the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit.

Have you never had the sprinkling of this clean water- a sweet word of promise, a kind invitation, a gracious testimony, a heavenly look, a soft whisper, a gentle touch? Here was the clean water sprinkled upon the affections. And what was the effect? It purified them, and washed away that defilement and filth which they had contracted by earthly loves.

What a blessed thing it is to have the clean water sprinkled, to have the word of God in our heart as well as on our lips, and to feel the power and efficacy of the truth of God in our soul. Have we an enlightened understanding? Have we a renewed will? Have we a purged conscience? Have we heavenly affections? What has produced it? The washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit; the washing of water by the word; the power of God's truth in the soul, according to the promise- "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean."

D. But I pass on to show another effect of the sprinkling of the clean water. God says- "You shall be CLEAN" and with the word of a King there is power. Peter said to our gracious Lord, when he said to him- "If I wash you not, you have no part with me;" "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." But the Lord graciously answered- "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean" So if you have had the clean water sprinkled upon you, you are clean every whit. It is true that you need a daily washing. We need sometimes our eyes to be washed- they are heavy with sleep, or

bleared with looking so much to the things of time and sense. We need our ears washed, for they are sometimes dull and cannot hear the word of truth with life, feeling, and power. We need our hands washed and cleansed from every defilement of covetousness, and made more open and liberal to the family of God. We need our feet washed, because as we travel through this muddy world, we often get defiled by the mire of the streets.

Therefore we need to be washed not only in the fountain of Christ's blood, and washed by the washing of regeneration; we need to be washed also by the renewing of the Spirit day by day- to have again and again the sprinkling of the clean water upon us, to keep us clean as well as to make us so; for it is with our souls as with our bodies, they need to be washed continually to keep them clean.

Now, godly people love this clean water on account of its cleansing effects. Filthy people love their filthiness; clean people love their cleanliness. What is the greatest punishment you can inflict upon one of those dirty tramps that are such pests and nuisances wherever they go? Cut off his matted locks; give him a thorough good wash; put him into the work-house bath; wash away the accumulated filth of weeks and months. Cleanliness is a martyrdom to him. But we who know what it is to be continually washing our bodies to keep them clean, love cleanliness; for we cannot bear the least dirt upon us. So it is in the figure. Sinners love their sins. How many a drunken drunkard would sooner sit this morning in some nook of the public-house smoking his pipe and guzzling his beer, rather than meet with us in the house of prayer. But would you like to be found there? Would you choose such a place and such a company for any day of the week, much more the Lord's day? What is a heaven to him is a hell to you, and what is a heaven to you is hell to him. He would be as much out of his place in the house of prayer, as you would be out of your place were you sitting in the corner of a public-house drinking beer and smoking a pipe. If ever a drop of that clean water has been sprinkled upon you, to enlighten your understanding, renew your will, cleanse your conscience, and purge your affections, you love to be clean. You cannot bear to step into the dirty puddles of the street.

I have no doubt if some of you clean females in coming to chapel this morning, had unawares put your foot into a dirty puddle, you would sit upon your seat very uncomfortable all the time of service, and would get no rest until you had taken off your dirty shoe and stocking, and well washed your foot. So it is with the child of God. He may unawares put his foot in a puddle, but he is not like the street arabs, whose choice place of amusement is a dirty. One who knows anything of regenerating grace by the power of God, cannot bear even to soil his feet, for he knows it makes him thoroughly miserable until the clean water comes again to wash them from all their filthiness. And thus I might add a fifth place in us to be sprinkled, as well as the four which I have mentioned, and that is our feet, meaning thereby life, conduct, and conversation.

E. But God has promised in our text, that he will cleanse us "from all our IDOLS," as well as from all our filthiness.

Idolatry takes a wide range. It is astonishing what the invention of men has created in the shape of actual, material idols; and what a range they take, from the beautiful statues of Greece and Rome to those caricatures of humanity which are found in the South Sea islands. And yet all are idols. Whether it be a statue of the most consummate beauty- "The statue which enchants the world," or whether it be a ritualistic fetish- a monstrous object which the poor benighted African worships, it is an idol still. And all the skill of art and all the refinement bestowed upon the production of a statue by a Greek sculptor, leave it as much an idol as if it were Mumbo Jumbo or an African fetish.

But idolatry, that is, the idolatry of the heart, takes as wide a range as those which I have mentioned as made by human fingers. There are respectable idols and vulgar idols, as there are marble statues and such objects of worship made up of shells and feathers, as you may see in the British Museum brought over by Captain Cook; and yet each will still be an idol. We can bear with respectable idols, as we can look with pleasure upon a Greek statue; but we are very virtuously indignant against vulgar idols. We see a man in the street reeling with intoxication- we turn away with disgust; he is drunk with common beer. But a peer may get drunk with champagne, and nobody think the worse of him. A poor miserable creature, a thief, a pickpocket, a common prostitute will draw down universal reprobation. There may be another equally bad in the sight of God; but whose beauty or wealth, rank and titles, draw down universal admiration. Respectable idols we can admire, as men admire beautiful statuary; vulgar idols we detest. But an idol is an idol, however respectable or however vulgar, however admired, or however despised they may be.

But O how numerous are these respectable idols! Love of money, ambition, craving after human applause, desire to rise in the world, wanting to be what is called respectable- all these we may think are natural desires that may be lawfully gratified. But O, what idols may they turn out to be.

But there are more secret and not less dangerous idols than these respectable idols. You may have a husband, or wife, or child, whom you love almost as much as yourself; you bestow upon this idol of yours all the affections of your heart. Nothing is too good for it, nothing too dear for it. You don't see how this is an idol. Now, God has said, "From all your filthiness, find from all your idols will I cleanse you." Whatever you love more than God, whatever you worship more than God, whatever you crave for more than God, is an idol. It may lurk in the chambers of imagery; you may scarcely know how fondly you love it. Let God take that idol out of your breast, let him pluck that idol from its niche, you will find then how you have allowed your affections to wander after that idol and loved it more than God himself.

It is when the idol is taken away, removed, dethroned, that we learn what an idol it has been. Our good name, our reputation, our character, our respectability, any little property we may have, how we hug and embrace these idols; how we cleave to them; delight in them; bow down to them, and seek gratification from them. How little are we aware what affections entwine round them; how little are we aware that they claim what God has reserved for himself when he said, "My son, give me your heart."

Many a weeping widow learns for the first time that her husband was an idol; many a mourning husband learns for the first time how too dearly, how too fondly, how too idolatrously he loved his wife; many a man does not know how dearly he loves money until he incurs some serious loss; many do not know how dearly they hold name, fame, and reputation until some slanderous blight seems to touch that tender spot. Few indeed seem to know how dear SELF is until God takes it out of its niche and sets himself there in its room.

Now God has said- "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." Could you go into the courts of heaven with any spot or speck of filth upon you? Would God's eye rest upon you with holy approbation, if it were possible for you to creep into the gates of heaven, and he saw a spot or wrinkle upon your face or your garments? No; his frown would meet your horrified countenance, and that frown would hurl you from the very battlements of heaven into the dismal depths of hell.

And as you cannot go into the presence of God with any speck or spot upon you, you cannot take your idols into the courts of heavenly bliss. Self and pride and reputation, and the love of money and name and fame, these idols you cannot take with you into the courts of heaven, as Rachel took her father's teraphim and hid them under the camel's furniture. How God would be moved to jealousy if you could you carry an idol, were it no bigger than a child's doll, into the courts above. "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you."

III. But I must just say a few words, and only a few words upon our last point, although I fear I have almost exhausted your time and patience- the ACCOMPANIMENTS of the sprinkling with clean water. God has promised to give a new heart, a new spirit--to take away the stony heart out of the flesh and give us a heart of flesh.

A. The first effect then of the clean water is to take away the stony heart out of the flesh. A stony heart is an obdurate, an impenitent heart, that cannot be and is not moved by anything to sorrow or to repentance. God, when he sprinkles the clean water, takes away the stony heart; and what does he give in its room? A heart of flesh. I reminded you just now that one of the first effects of regenerating grace was an enlightened understanding.

I will now give you another early mark of quickening grace. A SOFT heart. You felt yourself wonderfully moved under some discourse; the stony heart gave way; the heart of flesh was given; you were melted to tears; your impenitence was dissolved, your obduracy removed, and you found, to your astonishment, that the old stony heart that had so long resisted everything that looked like mercy was removed out of your breast--and there was a soft, tender, humble, penitent, believing, loving heart given in its stead. Wherever the clean water is sprinkled there goes with it the taking away of the heart of stone, and the giving of the heart of flesh.

And this is expressed further by the NEW heart, which embraces with new affections heavenly objects presented to it, where faith and hope and love graciously dwell.

B. And with this new heart there is "a new SPIRIT," whereby we worship God in spirit and in truth; believe, understand, and relish spiritual things; are made spiritually minded which is life and peace; and being made partakers of the Spirit of God, are thus made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

I would that time and strength were given to me, and patience to you to enlarge more, but I have spoken enough if God is pleased to bless the word this morning. May the Lord add his blessing.

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