Cleansing.

A SERMON BY PASTOR C. H. SPURGEON.

"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you."—Ezekiel 36: 25.

I. Our first remark at this time shall be that God begins to deal with his people *while they are yet in sin*. The text evidently implies this. He does not wait until they are clean before he bestows his love and pity upon them. He does not wait till they have saved themselves, and then come to them with a nominal salvation. He does not make promises of purification to them upon condition that they cleanse themselves; but he comes to them according to the riches of his grace, even when they are dead in trespasses and sins. He finds them in all their defilement, rebellion, and iniquity, and he deals with them just as they are.

JESUS SAVES SINNERS.

God's love comes to those who in no degree merit it. His grace stoops to the ruin of the fall and lifts us up from it. These are very simple words, you say, but there are those here to whom these plain sentences will sound like the ringing of the silver trumpets of jubilee. I know them, for I once was one of them—they are a people sighing because of their defilement, which they mourn over, but cannot remove.

I may be speaking to one who is ready to cry out, "I am not fit to be in the house of God to-night. I am not worthy to lift mine eyes to the place where his honor dwelleth." That is where He finds you, just there; and it is to you in this sad position that the covenant of grace refers. Our Redeemer comes to us in our very worst estate. As I was speaking to *an aged brother* in Christ, who is, probably, very near home, he said, "I feel what a blessed thing it is still to come to Christ with the cry, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' I do not rest upon past experience, nor upon anything else, but I constantly begin at the beginning. I come to Jesus even as I did at the first, only more humbly, and with a more intense sincerity than I ever knew before." I am sure there is wisdom in this course, and in no other.

If the covenant of grace did not deal with sinners as sinners, I should be

AFRAID TO COME

to Christ; but because it opens its mouth wide to me while I am yet unclean and polluted by sin, I feel that it meets my case. The free grace of the covenant does not come half the way, and say to me when I am nearly dead, "Get up and take what I give you, and I will deliver you." But it comes, like the good Samaritan, where I am. It sees me to be unconscious, and it arouses me. When it sees me conscious of my wounds it pours in the oil and the wine. When it sees my weakness to be so great that I cannot stir a step, it sets me on its own beast, and takes me to the inn. When it marks my utter poverty, so that I am not worth so much as two pence, it does not ask me to pay my own shot, but discharges everything for me, and leaves its promise that whatever more is needed shall be freely given.

You may notice in the text, or gather it therefrom by clear inference—that these people with whom God dealt were not only unclean, but they

COULD NOT CLEANSE THEMSELVES.

It is a rule with miracles, as well miracles of the Spirit as miracles of the body, that God never does what others can do. As long as there is strength left in the natural laws God does not go beyond them; but our extremity is God's opportunity. Now, inasmuch as the text brings in God, saying, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean," it is clear that this evil could not be cleansed without the divine interposition. There was no other way for the purging of the chosen ones but by the direct interposition of the Lord.

Oh, but divines have fine notions nowadays! It appears, according to the latest information, that children are not now born in sin as they used to be. They say that certain highly favored children commence life in a most extraordinary way: they are born gracious at the very first. They do not want any regeneration or conversion, for the stock is so superior that the branches naturally bring forth good fruit. I have never read of such people in the Scriptures, but I am often told that there are such nowadays; at least, their parents and their parsons say so. Of old it used to be, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and only "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." That, of course, is very

OLD-FASHIONED DOCTRINE.

Well, when we have a new-fashioned God, I dare say we shall have new-fashioned truth; but at present truth seems to me to be as immutable as God himself. If it be true to-day, it was true yesterday, and will be true even to the end, even as God himself changeth not.

As for myself, I know that I was born in sin, and I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing. I know also that I once tried to purge and cleanse my own heart, and labored at it, I believe, as honestly as any person that lived. I went about to seek a righteousness of my own, and I endeavored to get quit of sin; but my failure was complete. I do not advise any other person to try self-healing. It brought me to despair; it drove me almost to the loss of reason. Therefore speak I of my own experience; and, taught by my own failure, I cannot urge any man to seek cleansing by his own doings or efforts, but I urge him to accept that cleansing which God has promised in the covenant of grace.

More than that, when God begins to deal with his people, many of them have a

SPECIAL FILTHINESS.

"From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." When he begins with them they are given up to their idols. Other lords have dominion over them, and these lords lead them into filthiness. Some upon whom God has looked with everlasting love have become, before their conversion, openly, manifestly, loathesomely filthy; and yet he begins in his grace with them. The harlot—she strays into the house of God, and feels that she has no right to be there; and yet the day comes when she stands behind the Master, washing his feet with her tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head, because she has had much forgiven. The man who has been guilty of foul vices, of which we say but little, but which he would fain weep over with tears of blood at their remembrance—when the Lord of love comes to such a horrible offender in a way of mercy, he says to him, even to him, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins."

The heathen of old once retorted that ours was the religion of the most abandoned. There is much truth in the statement; it is a very good figure, though meant to be a slander. The Lord does receive

THE DEVIL'S RUNAWAYS.

If there is one here that is servant to that black master, I would recommend him to run to Christ to-night, and not give his master five minutes' notice. Quit the tyrant's employment and run for it at once. But then look at this: the Lord receives sinners to cleanse them. He does not receive them that they may remain as they were. The Lord Jesus receives sinners just as teachers receive children into a ragged-school. It is their glory that it is a ragged-school. The more ragged and the more dirty, the more welcome the child. But why do they receive the ragged child? Why, to wash him, to teach him, to clothe him, to instruct him. We do not receive ragged children for the love of their rags, nor to keep them in their rags; but that they may be taught, cleansed and elevated. Such is my Master's house of mercy. It is a hospital: sick folk are always welcome. It is not a place for spreading disease, nor for treating it lightly: it is the place where disease is discovered, set apart, and made to appear in all its horror, in order that it may be conquered and destroyed. Nobody speaks so sternly against sin as Jesus, and those who believe his gospel; but yet it forever stands true, "This man receiveth sinners."

II. The second is this—that God

PROVIDES FOR THE CLEANSING

of those to whom he comes in sovereign grace. "I will sprinkle *clean water* upon you." Pure water is the best of purifiers, and the Lord has provided that which is the most sure purification from sin. When, under the old Mosaic law, they took water and scarlet wood and hyssop, and sprinkled the unclean therewith, he was cleansed ceremonially; and now, under the gospel, God has provided a wondrous way by which, being himself perfectly pure, he can put away the impurities of our nature, and the iniquities of our lives.

It is a righteous way. You do not need that I explain to you the way in which God puts away our filthiness? Whether you need it or not, there are many who do need it, and, therefore, we must have the gospel over again. You put bread and salt on your table at every meal, and even so every sermon should have the gospel in it. God must be just; even if he would forgive sin, he must still be just. Sin must not go unpunished. Therefore, the Lord took sin and laid it on his Son, that his Son might bear what was due for our transgressions. This the Lord Jesus did as our substitute and Saviour, "He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." He made a full atonement and expiation for the guilt of men, so that "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

In addition to that, God has given the Holy Ghost as a gift of Christ on his ascension; and that Holy Spirit is here to renew men in their hearts, to take away from them the love of sin, to give them a new life, to create in them a new heart and a right spirit, and so to change their inward longings and desires that their outward conduct shall become altogether different from what it was before. Here are two cleansings—the blood of Christ and the work of the Holy Ghost; and these are as clean water. God can justly forgive you, fellow sinner, and God can totally change you and make you to be as though you had been new-born to-night, and were now to begin afresh. You see it is a clean way which God has devised; there is nothing in it which favors wrong or injustice. And what

A SIMPLE WAY

it is, as well as clean. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you." The application of the blood of Jesus Christ to the conscience, and the coming of the Holy Spirit to the heart, are as simple as the sprinkling of water. The wisdom of God made the rite by which the leper was cleansed under the law very simple; but even more simple is the act by which God applies the merit of his dear Son to us. Oh, that we might have the blood of Jesus sprinkled on our hearts at once by faith.

It is a way of unfailing efficacy, for he says, "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you." He does not only attempt the cleansing, but he accomplishes it. You may have a thousand sins, but this clean water can put the thousand sins away. Your heart may be a very pandemonium of idols, but the power of the Holy Spirit can break them all to pieces, and can do it for you at once. What, though your heart be like the Augean stable, the labors of Hercules shall be outdone by the wonders of Jesus. He shall cast your sins into the depths of the sea. Your hardness of heart, your pride, your lust, your unbelief, your enmity, your fickleness, shall all go down at a stroke, as when Dagon fell before the incoming of the ark of God into the holy place.

III. Thirdly, God himself

APPLIES THIS MEANS

of cleansing. See how he puts it: "Then will *I* sprinkle"—"*I* sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." Ah, dear sirs! if God had only provided the medicine, but had never brought it to us, we could not have found it, reached it, or applied it. If he had made the plaster and had left it by the side of the wounded man, the poor wretch would have died, for he never could have laid it to his own wound. The same grace which "first devises a way to save rebellious man," carries out all the plan from the beginning to the end. Who can sprinkle clean water on the foul sinner? "I will do it," saith the Lord.

I am sure that I speak to many brothers and sisters here whose experience will bear out what I am going to say: it was the Lord who made us first to feel that we were filthy, and that we loved idols. We were very fine people once—were we not? Our own righteousness was quite as good as that of anybody else, and a little better. If we had sinned we had a great many excuses for our failings; and, besides, we always meant to be so good by-and-by; therefore, we felt that we ought not to be condemned, but rather to be commended. The Lord fetched us down from the tree, and made us lie at the bottom of it and cry for mercy. We should still have refused to taste of his mercy, and we should have perished in our sin if divine grace had not convinced us of our folly. Oh, yes, the clean water is provided, but the clean water must be sprinkled by another hand than ours, if we are to be cleansed. Are we not witnesses of this? Do we not acknowledge that when at last we were made clean through the precious blood of Christ the closing act of faith was wrought in us by the Holy Ghost?

And all the way through the rest, we find it is just the same. "All things are of God." If he that has brought me so far toward heaven does not help me throughout the rest of my journey, I must die, even within sight of the promised land. When we get to heaven, it will be, "Glory be to God for ever and ever and ever." We shall not hum even a single note to ourselves for our own glory, or on account of any part of the work for which we deserved credit; but we shall ascribe the whole of our salvation to infinite love and undeserved favor, and to the unceasing faithfulness and power of our gracious, covenant God.

IV. I close with this last remark: The Lord effectually

CLEANSES ALL HIS PEOPLE.

First, he cleanses them from all their filthiness. I do want to dwell on that for a minute. "*From all your filthiness* will I cleanse you." *All* of it. Oh, what a vast "all" that is! "*All* your filthiness." All the filthiness of your birth-sin; all the filthiness of your natural temperament and constitution and disposition. "From all your filthiness will I cleanse you." All the filthiness that came out of you in your childhood, that was developed in you in your youth, that still has vexed your manhood, and, perhaps, even now, dishonors your old age. From all your actual filthiness, as well as from all your original filthiness, will I cleanse you. From all your secret filthiness, and from all your public filthiness; from everything that was wrong in the family; from everything that was wrong in the business; from everything that was wrong in your heart—"From all your filthiness will I cleanse you." From all your pride. What a filthy thing that is! From all your unbelief. What an abominable thing that is! From all your tainted imaginations; from all your lustings; from all your wrong words; from all your covetousness; from all your murmuring; from all your anger; from all your malice; from all your envy; from all your distrust—"From all your filthiness will I cleanse you."

And then it is added that we shall be cleansed "from all

OUR IDOLS."

We are, all of us, idolaters by nature and by practice. The unregenerate man has always an idol. He will worship anything rather than his God; yea, he will sooner worship himself than his Saviour. Even the Christian may find, to his own surprise, that his dear Rachel, whom he loves so much, has managed to hide the idols away under the camel's furniture, and she is even now sitting on them and concealing them. I do not know an idol that is more apt to escape being broken than the idol that some beloved Rachel protects. But it must not be: "The idols he shall utterly abolish." God's way is, "From all your idols will I cleanse you."

If there is anything, beloved, that has our love more than God, it is an idol, and we must be purged from it. This is not a threatening but a promise: it is a great blessing to have our images of jealousy put away. If you make an idol of a child, either that child will die, or something else will happen which will make your idol to be your burden. If you want to kill your husband, idolize him. If you desire ill to a beloved one, set him up in Christ's place. We can, alas! make idols of baser things than these: we can love gold, or dress, or honor, or rank, or even a forbidden thing. We are so dull and carnal that our affections are soon captured by earthly objects. Whatever it is that we idolize, God says, "I will cleanse you from it." And I think that we can say in response, "Lord, be it so."

Now, poor sinner! do you see what the Lord can do with you? He can break you loose from your temptations. He can set you free from your sin that holds you in captivity. Pardon and purity Jesus gives most freely. Trust him to cleanse you, and the work shall be surely done. Trust to him that did hang upon the tree to redeem his people, and you are delivered. Trust him to sanctify you wholly by by his Spirit, and he will purify you till every spot and wrinkle is gone. It is his work to save his people from their sins; believe in him and you shall triumph in his salvation. May the Lord add his blessing, for Jesus' sake!

The Deep Waters.

Some think that manliness means a large acquaintance with *the world*, by which is meant, not only the pleasures of the world, but many of its follies and some of its secret sins and impurities. When they say: "We must see something of the world," they mean what we call *the underground world*, not the world as it is in broad daylight and pure beauty. The world of the prodigal son gave him more knowledge than he would have acquired at home, but did it give one touch of nobility to his character? It afforded him a close view of Sodom and its sensualities; but when he turned his back upon it was his retrospect a happy one? Through eternity that prodigal will not forget and will not cease to regret the period of his degradation, when he was a feeder and an envier of the swine. The underground world, where the "fast livers" dwell, had better be unknown for ever; and the *literature* of that region must be turned away from as from a moral miasma, unless men prefer spiritual opium to the manna which comes down from heaven. The brilliant but impure literature of the period needs dealing with as Satan when arrayed in robes of light. A thoughtful gentleman, once speaking to an old tutor of ours of an impure poem, written by one of England's geniuses, said: "I would freely give $500 to-day if I could erase from my mind the recollection of that poem."

A young gentleman was one day riding in a fine steamer down one of the world's broad rivers when he fell into conversation with the pilot. "How long," he asked, "have you been a pilot on these waters?" The old man replied, "Twenty-five years; and I came up and down many times before I was pilot." "Then," the young gentleman said, "I should think you know every rock and every sandbank in the river." The old man smiled at his friend's simplicity, and replied, "O no, I don't; but *I know where the deep water is*."

It is not necessary for young men to have intimate and experimental knowledge of every sandbank of moral danger and every rock where character and hopes may be shattered; it is enough to know *where the deep waters are*, the waters of purity, health, noble-mindedness, and righteousness; and with the Pilot of Galilee on board the vessel will be kept in the deep waters.—*Rev. W. Middleton.*

Mata's Missionary Hen.

SUSAN TEALL PERRY.

"O, Waddy, what shall I do with you? Every day since last week you haven't done anything but stand around. Why don't you lay some eggs for me? Don't you know there are only ten days more until Easter?"

The little girl who was speaking stood in the farm yard feeding a large fat hen, who from her propensity for waddling, had been nick-named "Waddy." Her legs were very short, and she was indeed a comical sight when she attempted to run, and that was quite often, because Mata's brother Tom had such a bump for the love of the ridiculous, that he was continually finding opportunities to chase that hen out of the garden, or the back piazza, or off from the barn floor. But she was a missionary hen, and Tom was showing her great disrespect when he treated her in this manner.

"She's mistaken her calling, Mata, that hen of yours," said Tom, coming up just as the little girl finished speaking. "She's a lazy, frivolous good-for-nothing. Why don't you take her honorable name away from her, and put some more worthy hen in her place?"

"She laid two eggs last week," replied Mata, "and last year she laid ever so many eggs, and I sold them and sent the money to the Foreign Mission. This year, I'm going to send it to Home Missions."

"Oh, I understand now why Waddy refuses to aid you; she probably prefers the old object to the new one. You'd better change your mind and continue to have her work in the same field."

"No," said Mata, "I'm going to send some Easter eggs to the poor children in New York, and Miss Crawford says she will paint them for me, and take them with hers to the Mission School. She's got to lay the eggs for that very purpose;" and the little girl caught up the dilatory, delinquent hen and went into the barn with her.

"She's growing fatter every day," said Tom, as he followed with his provender for the horses. "Tell her Tony Weller's idea of width and wisdom keeping pace with each other."

But Mata didn't believe in reprimanding, even as much as a hen, before an audience of listeners, so she took what Tom designated as the "backslider," up to the hay mow, and then she sat down and held it in her lap, and said, "Waddy, do you know you are growing very selfish and narrow minded. What are you doing to make the world happier and better because you are living in it? Nothing whatever. I am ashamed of you. Won't you please act better for my sake, Waddy? I've always been very good to you. Now I want you to lay me an egg every day until two days before Easter—nice, large, smooth, handsome eggs, too. Miss Crawford will paint them for me, and they'll be beautiful; and then she'll take them to the city and give them to poor, sick little children, and they'll be so happy, Waddy—a great deal happier than you and I will ever know."

Waddy listened, and at first she began to scold only as hens can scold, and she held her head up and looked rather defiantly at her little mistress in the hay mow. But she saw a tear in Mata's eye, and then she jumped out of her lap, and flew up on the high beam, and began to cackle as loud as she could. Then she flew down on to the barn floor, and ran out toward the hennery, and after stopping a few minutes to talk with the crowd of old hens who were sunning themselves by the door, she went in and jumped on to the clean straw nest which Mata had fixed for her.

"Your hen has reformed," shouted Tom, as he passed by the hennery door at that moment; "she's begun to mend her bad ways. I think your Home Missions will be well represented in the way of a good showing of freshly laid eggs."

Mata didn't like to be teased, and Tom knew it, so he added: "But you are a kind hearted, generous little sister. 'Small beginnings make great endings' oftentimes, and I am sure you'll do a great deal of good in the world when you are a woman."

"But I want to do a great deal of good now," said Mata, "while I am only a little girl."

"Do you hear that hen cackle, and see her strut about, and all because she has just done her duty," said the speckled hen to a crowd of listeners, two hours after when Waddy came off from her nest where a large white egg was lying. "How she does blow her own trumpet," another hen remarked, and two or three young chickens said, "I know I'll never act like that." But a few hours later those very hens were strutting about and cackling in the same manner, and the young chickens will do just the same a few weeks later.

Two days before Easter, Mata had eight eggs in a little willow basket with cotton wrapped around them, and was on her way to Miss Crawford's, and that young lady painted them all that very evening, and put a short text on each one, such as these: "The Lord is risen," "Christ died and rose again," "He lives to intercede for us," "He died that we might live," etc. Saturday morning they were all safely packed, with a number of others which Miss Crawford had prepared, and were on their way to the great city.

Easter Sunday she went to the Mission School and distributed the eggs Mata had given her with her own, with the exception of one which she had painted for a particular object. It was much handsomer than the others. It had a bunch of apple-blossoms on it, and this verse in very small but distinct letters:

> Christ is thy Comforter, dear child,
> In all thy weary hours at night;
> Although to thee 'tis darkness now,
> Yet He will sometimes make it light.

After the exercises of the Mission School were over, Miss Crawford went down-town to a large high building. She stepped into the hall and touched a bell by the side of the elevator. Soon she saw the elevator coming slowly down, and when the man opened the door, she said, "How is Mary, Mr. Crofts?"

"She's no better, Miss, no better, but she's the patientest little thing you ever did see. She'll be so glad to see you once more, Miss Crawford."

While the man was talking, the elevator kept ascending very slowly; it did not stop until it got away up to the highest floor. Then the man led the way to a room at the farther end, and when he opened the door, the young lady saw a little girl lying upon a cot in one corner of the room.

"Dear little Mary, how are you to-day?" she said, very cheerfully, a bright smile upon her face.

"I'm very quiet, Miss, thank you," and the pale thin face showed how happy the sufferer was, because the young lady had come to see her.

Then Miss Crawford took the pretty Easter egg out of the box, and handed it to the sick child.

"O how lovely," she said taking it into her thin hand. While she read the verse, "I know He'll make it light for me by-and-by, Miss," she said.

Then the young lady told her all about Mata and the hen who was so naughty at first, but who became sorry for her conduct, and laid the pretty egg for sick Mary, away off in the city.

The story pleased the little one, and she said "What a funny hen! I had some fowl of my own at home in England," she continued. "I used to love to feed them. Give my thanks to the little girl."

Miss Crawford soon bade Mary good-bye, and took the elevator and went down to the first floor again.

"She'll soon be in the country," said the man, as she stepped out of the elevator. "You'll probably not see her again in this world, Miss."

"I'm afraid not," Miss Crawford replied. "But she'll be at rest with the Good Shepherd, Mr. Crofts."

"Yes I know, I know," the man replied, wiping a tear on his coat-sleeve, "but we'll miss her—its like having an angel with us, Miss."

When Miss Crawford went to see Mata, after her return home, she told about the little sufferer who lived with the janitor and his good wife, away up in the upper loft of the great building, and who for two long years had lain so patiently upon a bed of weariness and pain. When Mata heard how pleased Mary was with the pretty egg and the verse on it, she could not keep away the tears. After Miss Crawford went away, she took Waddy in her arms and sat down in the hay in the mow, and told the old hen the whole story, and then buried her face in its feathers and cried as hard as she could cry. No hen ever paid better attention to her business, and deserved the honorable name of "The missionary hen" better than Waddy did after that story was told her.—*Evangelist.*

The Wonderful Awakening in Persia.

In a long and deeply interesting letter from Rev. J. H. Shedd, D. D., dated Oroomiah, May 14th, and published in the *Foreign Missionary*, he describes the glorious outpouring of the Spirit that has recently been witnessed in that land. He says:

"In seventeen congregations there have been revivals, some of them of great power, moving the whole community. In all there were over five hundred inquirers. In Gulpashaw, ninety; Dizzataka, eighty, and so on in smaller numbers. Of these there have been received to the church to this date about two hundred. Others will be received at the communion seasons of the summer. The fruits of the revival are the more marked as many of the converts are men in middle life or early manhood, and heads of families. More than two thirds of all our church members are women, but of the converts this winter more than half are men. Many very hardened and profligate men have been reached and brought to Christ. Some hard drinkers have made their stand for Christ by *giving up their wine*, and all received to the church are conscientiously total abstainers. In the villages where the awakening has prevailed there has been a great decrease of drinking and quarrelling and other forms of evil, and the winter has passed, and the Easter feasts also, with marked sobriety and morality.

Among the causes assigned for this movement, a prominent one is the gratitude awakened to the Christians for their kindness to the sufferers by famine and by the Kurdish War. The Persians appear to have thought that there must be something good in a religion which prompted its professors to deeds of love to the sick and suffering.

—A remarkable event which is reported by a correspondent of the *Odenburger Zeitung*, reads more like a chapter from the Reformation epoch than an incident of the present age. The Roman Catholic inhabitants of Acsa, a village in the county of Stuhlweissenburg, have had a grievance against their parish priest for some time past. They applied to the bishop to remove him, and if their report of his conduct be true, he is certainly unfit for the office of a pastor. The bishop refused, so they appealed to the Hungarian Minister of Worship, who declined to interfere. Hereupon, after a precedent that was common in German and Switzerland in the fifteenth century, the communal council of the village convoked a full meeting of all the adult inhabitants, in order to settle what action they should take. "As neither bishop nor minister will hold us," said the president, "we must now help ourselves." He made the bold suggestion that the entire parish should go over bodily from the Roman Catholic to the Evangelical Lutheran Church. His advice was adopted without one dissentient. A deputation was sent to the Evangelical Lutheran Consistory requesting to be received into communion, and in one single day 134 Catholic heads of families registered themselves as Protestants.

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