

Wash & Be Clean

by Chuck Smith

The sermon emphasizes the simplicity and sufficiency of God's grace in cleansing us from sin, and the importance of humility in receiving forgiveness.

Duration: 34:22

Scripture: Psalm 51:1-2, Psalm 51:4-5, Psalm 51:7, Psalm 51:10-14, Matthew 19:16-22, Ephesians 2:8-9

Topics: "Purity"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that there is nothing we can do to save ourselves. The only one we can glorify is Jesus. Salvation is not achieved through our own works or efforts, but through the simple act of being washed and cleansed from our sins. The speaker references Psalm 51, where the psalmist acknowledges his transgressions and asks God to blot out his sins. The sermon concludes by highlighting the story of the rich young ruler who sought eternal life through his own efforts, but Jesus taught him that salvation comes through faith and surrender, not through works.

Transcript

Let's turn now in our Bibles to Psalm 51 for our scripture reading today. I'll read the first, the unnumbered verses, and Pastor Brian is back with us again this Sunday morning to read and to lead the congregation in the even-numbered verses. Let's stand as we read the word.

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness, according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight, that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice.

Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.

Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free spirit. And then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee. Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness.

O Lord, open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise. For Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it. Thou delightest not in burnt offering.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise. Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion. Build Thou the walls of Jerusalem, and then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, and with the burnt offerings, and the whole burnt offerings, and then shall they offer bullocks upon Thine altar." Let's pray.

Father, as David was so conscious of his guilt, and he recognized that his only hope of forgiveness was that you would wash him from that guilt. That the things that he might do, sacrifices and all, weren't really sufficient, Lord. He needed your cleansing.

Lord, today we are in need of your cleansing. We're in need of that work of your spirit within our hearts and lives. Cleanse us, Lord, that we might be clean.

Wash us, Lord, that we might be as white as snow. Teach us, Lord, that we might walk in your ways. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

You may be seated. We have arrived at 2nd Kings, chapter 4, and this week we'll be reading through chapter 6, and studying tonight these three chapters. But this morning we'd like to look at chapter 5, the beginning portion of it, where we have the interesting story of a man whose name was Naaman.

And this is what the scripture teaches about this fellow Naaman. First of all, that he was the captain of the host of the king of Syria, or he was the general in charge of the Syrian army. And he was a great man with his master.

Because of his success on the battlefield, he was highly respected by the king of Syria. He was an honorable man, and by him we read that Jehovah had brought deliverance to Syria. Now, this to me is an interesting statement.

Jehovah, through him, have brought deliverance to Syria. He doesn't even know Jehovah, but Jehovah is already working in his life, though he doesn't know him. I believe that God oftentimes begins his work in our lives far sooner than what we are aware of.

That God is working in the circumstances in our lives that we're not even conscious that God's hand is in the various things that happen to us. But God is working, even though we're not aware of it. And sometimes, even in adverse circumstances, as I would judge the situation, and yet God is at work.

And here in this man's life, God is at work before he even knows God. We are told that he was a mighty man of valor, a great man on the battlefield, brave, strong, powerful. All of these are wonderful, positive assets.

But there is one detriment that is overshadowing all of the assets. Though he was all of these wonderful things, we read, but he was a leper that dreaded loathsome and in the early years incurable disease. It is interesting how that so many wonderful, commendable, admirable traits can be lost in one flaw.

I might describe someone as a handsome, wealthy, successful child molester. And you see, the one flaw negates the positive aspects. Here is Naaman with a lot of positive aspects, aspects, but the one flaw, he was a leper.

And that overshadowed all of the positive things. Now, in one of the raids of the Syrians against Israel, and usually they would raid a city, and they would plunder the city, and they would take captives from the city to be slaves. And in one of the raids of one of the cities of Israel, this young girl had been taken, among others, as a captive back to Syria that she might become a slave.

And it so happened that she became the maid of Naaman's wife. And now we see how God is working, even in adverse circumstances, His wonderful plan. You see, God was planning to save this Syrian general.

And so God is working now, and working out His wonderful plan to reach this man. No doubt His leprosy was something that was allowed by God in order to cause him to seek God's help, to bring him to the place of turning to God for help, knowing that there was no help in man from this loathsome disease. Now, in capturing this young girl from an Israeli city in one of the forays, she becomes the maid of his wife.

And again, how God works. No doubt when she was taken captive, that she was terrified, just a young girl. And now she's being carried by these rough soldiers back to Syria to an uncertain future.

Her parents must have been weeping and waiting over the loss of their daughter. And she is extremely fearful as to what might happen to her. And she is sold on the slave market.

And it just so happens that Naaman was the one who purchased her, that she might be the maid of his wife. One day, as she was talking to her mistress, she said, you know, it's really too bad that your husband couldn't meet a prophet there in Israel, because that prophet could actually cure him of his leprosy. One of the servants overheard what this young girl had said to her mistress, that there was a prophet in Israel that could cure the man of the one blight in his life.

He could cure his leprosy. And so, that servant came to Naaman and told him how that this little Israeli girl was saying that there was a prophet there in Israel that could cure him of his leprosy. And so, the king of Syria sent a letter to the king of Israel.

And Naaman came down with this letter from the king of Syria. And basically, the letter said that I have sent Naaman to you that you might cure him of his leprosy. Desperate men will take desperate measures in order to find help.

When the letter was brought to the king of Israel, he was just completely upset, disturbed. He tore his clothes. And that is a sign of great distress.

He said, Am I God that I can kill and make alive? That he would send this man to me and say, cure him? Look at how he's trying to pick a fight. I mean, this is incredible. He's just looking for trouble.

Sending this man here saying, cure him. Now, you can sort of picture the king. Ay yi yi.

Who does he think I am, God? He's just trying to pick a fight. He's just looking for trouble. At this point, we are introduced to the second principle of the story.

And this is the prophet Elisha. The man of God upon whom the mantle of Elijah had fallen. And when Elisha heard that the king had torn his clothes and how he was just so totally upset, Elisha sent a message to the king of Israel and saying, why did you tear your clothes? Send the man down to me and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.

And so Naaman came with his horses and chariot and he was standing there at the door of the house of Elisha. And Elisha sent his servant out to him with a message, when you pass by the Jordan River on your way back to Damascus, dip yourself seven times in the Jordan River and you'll be cured of your leprosy. Naaman was incensed.

He was used to people bowing and scraping before him. This prophet didn't even have the courtesy to come out and to speak to him personally, just sent his servant out to me. How dare he? And he was incensed.

Because he was expecting that the prophet would come out and, you know, wave maybe his mantle and strike the place of the leprosy. And he was looking for Benny Hinn. Some big kind of fanfare.

And for the prophet just to send his servant out with a message, not even come out himself. He was completely upset and angry. The very idea, surely, you know, he would have come out and struck the place.

So we see this Syrian general headed back to Syria, just murmuring and muttering about Jordan River, the thing is muddy, we've got clear rivers up in Damascus, better rivers to dip in, the very idea, you know. But as they were coming to the Jordan River, some of his servants came to him. And they said, you know, you came all of this way to be cured.

I know you're upset. But, you know, why don't you just try it? Seems like a very simple thing, to be sure. Just dipping seven times.

But, you know, had he told you to do some great exploit, some deed of daring and bravery, you would have been glad to have complied with the prophet. But he just said, wash and be clean. Why don't you just try it? Sort of nothing ventured, nothing gained.

It can't do any harm. And who knows? Maybe you will be cured. And so, sort of swallowing his pride, when they came to the Jordan River, he alighted from the chariot.

And he dipped himself seven times in the Jordan River. And when he came up the seventh time, we read, his flesh came again like the flesh of a little child. And he was cured.

And so he returned, we read, to the man of God, he and all of his company. He came and stood before him. And he said, Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel.

Now therefore, I pray thee, take this blessing of thy servant. And he tried to reward Elisha with the silver, the gold, and the things that he had brought. But Elisha said, As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, I will bless thee.

And he said, Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel. Now therefore, I pray thee, take this blessing of thy servant. And he tried to reward Elisha with the silver, the gold, and the things that he had brought.

But Elisha said, As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, I will bless thee. And he said, Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel. Now therefore, I pray thee, take this blessing of thy servant.

And he tried to reward Elisha with the silver, the gold, and the things that he had brought. But Elisha said, As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive nothing from you. And he urged Elisha to take it, but he refused.

And then Naaman said, Well, how about me just giving a couple of mules to your servant here? And please just take that. And he said, From now on, I will neither offer burnt offerings or sacrifices, unto other gods, but only unto Jehovah. And he said, In this, one thing, may Jehovah forgive me, that when I go with my master, as he goes to worship in the house of Rimmon, because I am his bodyguard, he leans upon me.

When I bow in the house of Rimen, may the Lord forgive me." In other words, I'm not really bowing to Rimen, though I'm in his house, I'm bowing unto Jehovah. May he pardon his servant this thing. Elisha said, go in peace, so he departed.

From Naaman's own testimony, I believe that Naaman was genuinely converted. I expect to see Naaman in heaven. He acknowledged that there was no God in all of the world like the God of Israel.

He vowed to sacrifice, not to sacrifice to any other gods, but only to Jehovah. He asked for the one indulgence, which seemed to be granted to him by the prophet. There are many, many valuable lessons that we could point out in this interesting story of Naaman and his meeting with the prophet of God, Elisha, but there's just one that I would like to sort of emphasize with you this morning, and that is in the manner of the cleansing from leprosy, which in the Bible is a type of sin.

In the Bible, leprosy has become a very poignant type of sin because of the mystery of its origin and its transmission. We know very little of the origin of leprosy. The bacillus has been isolated and we now can treat it with a medication that will arrest the progress of leprosy.

Just how leprosy is transmitted is still a mystery. Just as sin, its origin and transmission, born in sin is just there. It is a type of sin because in Bible days it was incurable by human methods.

Today it remains incurable, but it can be arrested, but in those days incurable by human methods. A type of sin because it has an effect of numbing or deadening the senses. It usually starts in the extremities, in the fingers or in the toes.

And it progresses by the rotting of the flesh. And of course, again, a type of sin in that it sort of develops or progresses by rotting process. And so by the rotting of the flesh, and it just will progress until it does hit a vital organ of the body, just the flesh rotting away.

And thus a type of sin, incurable, rotting away your life until it hits a vital organ. I think of how people today like Naaman are seeking to do some great deed in order to find a cure from their sin. And in fact, the religions of the world sort of take advantage of this, that in the heart of man there is the desire to atone for my sin.

If I can just do something wonderful, if I can just give a great amount to charity, if I can just, you know, do this magnanimous deed, and we're looking for something that we might do in order to create an atonement for our sins. And people are encouraged to do all kinds of works to expunge their conscience

from the sense of guilt. They will prescribe to you various forms of penance.

They'll have you selling awake magazines on the street corners. All kinds of things people will do in order to earn their salvation. There are many noble people like Naaman who are more than happy to do some great feat so that they felt that they have somehow deserved their forgiveness.

But the tragedy is that all of these wonderful things that people are doing to try to get that sense of forgiveness for their guilt, none of them have any value as far as removing the sin. All of the good works in the world cannot bring you forgiveness or cleansing or pardon. As in the psalm we read this morning, David said, sacrifice and offerings, Lord, you don't want.

There, you know, I would be glad to do it if that's what you were wanting, but that's not what you're desiring. And David recognized that it wasn't any work that he could do that would bring him the cleansing from this horrible sin with Bathsheba. As Paul wrote to Titus, it's not by the works of righteousness, which we have done or which we can do.

But according to his mercy, he has saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. The remedy is the same today and very simple. Just wash and be clean.

Naaman had they told you some great feat you'd have been happy to have, you know, plunged into it. But he just said, wash and be clean. Sounds simplistic.

Can't really understand how that can do it, but try it. So simple that we stumble over it because it does nothing to glorify me. You see, it's not by works of righteousness that I have done.

If it were, then I would be glorying in what I had accomplished. For by grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourselves. It is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.

And so none of us can boast of our salvation today. Because if we are indeed saved, we've been cleansed by just the washing. Not by our works, not by our efforts, but just being washed from our guilt.

And so, how can you rid yourself from the blotch of sin today? Very simple. Just wash and be clean. You remember the story of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus kneeling before him and saying, good master, what good thing must I do to inherit eternal life? And that is the question of so many people today.

What good thing can I do to receive the forgiveness of my sins, to receive that ease of my conscience from the guilt that I feel because of the things that I have done that I know were wrong? How can I get relief? God's solution is very easy. Just wash and be clean. For the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, we are told, will cleanse us from all sin.

What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. God has provided no other way, no other fount I know.

Nothing but the blood of Jesus. But the wonderful thing is that the blood of Jesus is sufficient. Though your sins are as scarlet, you can be as white as snow.

It cleanses us from all sin. It doesn't matter how deep into depravity you have sunk, how horrible a sin you may have committed. All you have to do is wash and be clean.

Wash in the blood of Jesus Christ, cleansed from our sin. Simple, beautiful, God's remedy. Father, we thank you that you have made the way of salvation and the forgiveness of sins so easy.

Lord, there are so many people today that are looking for complex ways, but it's so easy. Just wash and be clean. And so Lord, we pray today that those that are here that are plagued by the conscious realization that they are guilty, guilty before you, and that guilt has been pressing down upon them.

Lord, let them realize just how easy it is to be cleansed, to be cured, to go from this place today, pardoned, cleansed, forgiven, fully, completely, their sins exonerated. Lord, may they receive now that washing in Jesus' name. Amen.

So we stand. And standing down here at the front are pastors. And they're here to pray for you.

If you'd like to be forgiven your sins, if you would like to know that your sins have been blotted out, if you'd like to know that the record has been made clean, if you'd like to know that if Jesus should come today, you would be ready to go with him and to share in the eternal kingdom of God, then I would encourage you to come on down as soon as we're dismissed. And let one of these men just pray with you that you might be washed and cleansed from whatever defilement, sin, may have left upon your life. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

And the Lord wants to do that for you today. And I would encourage you. Receive this gift of God.

You can't earn it. You can't deserve it. There's nothing that you can do.

And the net effect of that is that there's only one that you can glorify. And that's Jesus. You can't go around bragging about all you did to be saved.

Because all you did was just simply washed and were cleansed. May the Lord watch over and keep you in his love. May you experience a quantum leap in your spiritual walk this week.

May God reveal himself to you in a very special way. And may you be drawn closer to him. And to his love.

By the power of his spirit, the Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make his face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace.

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