

PERFECT CLEANSING NO. 379

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 7, 1861
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed.”
Joel 3:21*

SOME think that this text has reference to the blood of the persecuted and martyred Israel. God had by terrible judgments avenged Himself of the different nations who had carried His people captive, and according to some expositors, in this verse He threatens to make His vengeance complete. If there be any blood which still cries from the ground, if there be any martyrs whose murders have not been punished upon their persecutors, God vows that He will cleanse their blood which He had not as yet cleansed.

We shall, however, this morning take the text in a more simple and I think after a more spiritual sort. It is a great truth which lies at the foundation of the Gospel system, that the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s dear Son, cleanses us from all sin. When a man is washed in the sacred laver which is filled with the blood of the atonement, he is not partially cleansed, but he is clean every whit. Not so much as the shadow of a spot remains upon the blood-washed.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” If that cleansing were partial it were unavailing. If it left but one sin still upon us in the sight of God, it would have no power to save. It is only because, when once applied by the Holy Spirit and received by faith, it makes a total and complete cleansing from all past guilt, that it is of any use whatever to the poor trembling conscience of the distressed sinner.

Let us lay it down then in our own minds as a settled fact which neither our experience nor any of the teachings of many heretics shall make us let go, that he who by faith lays hold on Christ, has his blood cleansed in that same hour, and all his iniquities are put away. But in what light, then, are we to understand the text? For it says, “I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed.”

Well, this may refer perhaps to the uncalled among God’s elect. They are not as yet cleansed. Their faith has not as yet descended into the sacred pool of blood. They still stand in their iniquities, and in their transgressions, unconscious of their lost estate, and now God gives an absolute promise to the rest of His chosen that they shall in due time be brought in. They shall repent.

“A new heart also will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them, and I will sprinkle pure water upon them and they shall be clean. From all their iniquities and from all their transgressions will I cleanse them.” It is not a matter of doubt as to whether the uncalled as yet shall or shall not be saved. If God has chosen them, He will call them, for whom He did predestinate, “them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified,” and this stands as a part of the divine decree, and as an absolute promise uttered by the lips of divine sovereignty.

“As for the rest of My elect as yet unwashed, as yet unsaved from all their iniquities, I will cleanse their blood which I have not cleansed.” But I think I shall only be speaking the mind of the Spirit, if I say this is not the first meaning of the text. I shall confine myself this morning to two thoughts which I think very naturally arise out of it. There are two senses in which believers in Christ have blood which as yet has not been cleansed, and to these two senses our text has especial reference.

First, there remains still on the minds of some of the regenerate *a certain consciousness of sin*—their conscience has not been thoroughly purged from dead works. And secondly, it is an undoubted fact, that

in the nature, even of the regenerate, there still remains the *black drop of the old depraved blood which needs to be cleansed away, and which according to this promise shall soon be removed.*

I. We shall commence with the first sense—GUILT UPON THE CONSCIENCE.

The promise is given to believers who have any guilt still remaining upon their troubled consciences, “I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed.” If our faith were what it should be, we should know that there is no condemnation against the man that believes in Christ. If our faith were always simple, and had a clear eye to look alone to the Savior, we should always view ourselves as being in the sight of God accepted in the Beloved.

But our faith partakes of the frailty of our nature. It is often trembling, it sometimes staggers at the promise, and then in such moods, and in such hours, there comes upon the conscience a sense of sin to a greater or less degree. The soul is still justified, but doubts its justification. It is still accepted but that acceptance is not so clearly read by its eye as to be to it a matter of certainty and a cause of joy.

Now, brethren, I think I can soon prove that very many of us have some guilt remaining upon our conscience. Let me ask you in the first place, what is it that makes us doubt our eternal salvation? We have believed in Christ,

*“Our hope is fixed on nothing less,
Than Jesu’s blood and righteousness,”*

and yet we doubt. We have come to the cross—we do look to it as being all our salvation and all our desire, yet we are troubled at heart—yet dark suspicions flit across our soul, and we ask, “If it be so, why am I thus?”

Now, what does this indicate but that there is some guilt still remaining on our conscience? If we knew ourselves to be what we really are, if we be believers, guiltless, innocent, pure, clean every whit, do you think we should have any doubt of our salvation? If we could look upon ourselves in Christ as being without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing—and that is what we are, if we believe in Him—do you think there would be a shadow of a shade of suspicion as to our eternal salvation?

No. It is because the conscience knows some secret stain—because the black finger marks of sin are not completely washed out, that we fear lest after all sin should involve punishment, and punishment should cast us into hell. Oh, that this blood upon the conscience were cleansed away, and we should never, never doubt again.

And then again, let me ask you, are there not times when you think very hardly of God? You think, perhaps, that He deals severely with you, that He will not deliver you out of this seventh trouble, that He will let you sink at last, and perish in the deep waters, where the floods shall overflow you. You come to think of Him, not as a tender Father, but as, to say the least of it, a severe taskmaster.

You come to think that one of these dark days He will shut His eye of love, withdraw His hand of power, and suspend the sympathies of His heart. Do you suppose you would have any of these thoughts of God, if you knew yourself to be perfectly cleansed from sin? No, you would say, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away, and blessed be the name of the LORD.”

You would be willing to leave everything in His hands, but the dark thought that there is sin in you, and that God is punishing you for that sin—that in that chastisement, there is mixed something penal—that in the smiting of the Father’s rod, there is something of the severity of the judge’s hand, betrays the fact that your conscience is not thoroughly cleansed from sin.

If it were, you would know that every affliction was but love, that every blow was but another form of a caress, that your troubles were not punishments, but chastisements, not penal inflictions, but the loving deeds of a tender Father who longed to make you perfect like Himself.

Still further, why is it that so many of us dare not indulge in close access to our God? We pray, but it is often to a distant God, as to one who stands upon a mountain beyond our reach! How few of us come

like a child to his Father, and lay hold on God as one who is near to us by ties of divine affinity. The most of Christians, I fear, are outer-court worshippers. They stand in the place of the priests, but they never come to stand where the high priest stood, within the veil.

Luther was a man who used familiarities with God, and if some of us had heard Luther praying, we should have been shocked—"Oh," we should have said, "how dare he talk thus with God?" But Luther knew that he was completely justified, that there was no sin on him, and therefore he did not tremble when he stood near to the holy, the perfect, and the just.

If I know that there is no sin remaining, but that all has been washed away, why need I fear? I may go the throne of God and cry, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Not God, for He has justified—nor Christ, for He has died." Once let the soul have perfect peace through believing in its perfect purity in Christ and the nearness of our access will be perfectly wonderful.

The boldness of our fellowship will make us look with wonder, and even Christians will be astonished that we dare to indulge in such a holy familiarity with God, and talk so plainly with our Father and with our Friend. There is still guilt upon the conscience of many professors, and it is proved by the fact that they fear to have a near approach to God.

How frequently does this lurking evil betray itself in another form! There is a promise before you—an exceeding great and precious promise. Why do you not lay hold upon it? Why not receive it in all its length and breadth, and call it your own? "Oh," say you, "but I am so unworthy. How shall I take such a promise? I, so unbelieving, so ungrateful, so unheavenly, how can I think that such a promise is made to me? It is too good, too great for such a one as I am."

Do you not perceive that when you say "unworthy," you are acting as though you were under the covenant of works, instead of being under the covenant of grace? What has your worthiness to do with it or your unworthiness either? God did not choose you for your worthiness—Christ did not purchase you from your goodness. The Holy Spirit did not call you because of your excellencies, nor will you be saved because of any inherent virtue in you.

You betray at once, I say, the sad fact that there is some consciousness of evil still remaining upon you. Oh! if your heart knew itself to be wholly purged from dead works, and freed from sin, you could walk at large. If no more a criminal, but absolved, pardoned and acquitted, you had leave to roam throughout all the rooms of your Father's palace, and to take hold upon all your Father's riches as His heir, yea joint-heir with Christ—you would never stagger at the promise because of its greatness, but account it all the more true because its greatness proves that it came from a great God, who has great faithfulness, and great power to fulfill.

Precious, precious promise, "I will cleanse their blood which I have not cleansed." I will make your conscience yet so pure of sin that you can take the promise and believe it to be all your own.

Yet once more. There is another fact which demonstrates at once that the conscience of some believers is not totally purged from sin. Why is my sister yonder afraid to die? Why does my brother there tremble when he knows that he carries a disease about him which may on a sudden launch him into eternity?

My brother, if you will probe that fear of yours to the bottom you will find the old venom of some guilt upon the conscience still. Let us suppose that the promise of the text is fulfilled in you, and that you know today that there is no sin against you in God's book—that you feel today that you are perfectly freed from the consequences and the guilt of sin through the substitution of Christ.

I defy you to be afraid of dying after that. The two things could not stand together. Sin is the sting of death and the strength of sin is the law. But when sin is removed, what is it but a serpent without its fangs, a thing which a child may play with, and not that a man must tremble at? What, when the dragon's teeth are broken and we know it, shall we be afraid? When death is no more the gate of gloom, but the portal of the skies, and we know it, shall we tremble then? God forbid that I should allow the thought.

No, perfectly pardoned, with a conscience recognizing, and rejoicing in that perfect pardon, all fears of death would be impossible. There would even be a longing and a thirsting after death, not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up in life. We would have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.

I do not think, my brethren, after the five reasons which I have given, that any of you would be willing to say, "I am guiltless there." We have guilt, many of us, still upon our conscience, because we at times doubt our salvation. Often, we have hard thoughts of God. We sometimes neglect to approach nearly to the mercy seat. We often tremble to take the promise at the full. We are afraid of dying. All these prove that the blood is not entirely cleansed from off the conscience.

Having thus proved the necessity of the promise, let us sit still a moment, chew the cud of meditation, put the promise into our mouth, and taste its preciousness. Great God! You will yet by Your grace take from my conscience and the conscience of all Your people every stain of sin. And what then, beloved? What then? Let these thoughts charm you.

When once the last stain of sin is removed, then you will never have a doubt. You will triumph in full assurance. Who can doubt when sin is washed away? It shall not be partly day and partly night with you when this promise is fulfilled. Your night shall be turned into day, and the light of your day shall be as though there were seven suns. You shall sing with Toplady—

*“My name from the palm of His hands
Eternity cannot erase;
Impressed on His heart it remains
In marks of indelible grace.”*

You shall know that heaven might sooner pass away than your soul be imperiled—that for us the very throne of God is a security of life. Because He lives, you must live also, and because He reigns, you must reign with Him. I pray that promise over till I have it fulfilled to me, because I know that in that hour all my doubts shall be brought out to execution, shall be hung on Haman’s gallows, and shall never trouble me any more.

And what next, beloved, if this promise be fulfilled? Why, then, we shall praise the Lord with gladness. No more harsh thoughts of Him! Our life shall be one Psalm. We shall sing in our hearts, and sing with our lips, and each day shall be a note, when sin is pardoned.

*“How sweet the song there’s none can say,
But those whose sins are wash’d away;
Who feel the same within.”*

I believe that the shouts of angels are not as glorious as will be the songs of the redeemed, because those songs shall warble from blood-washed lips. Oh, cannot you and I sing! We cannot get our praise out as we would. It is too big for expression when once we know beyond hesitation or suspicion that every sin is gone, and can say, "Great God, I am clean. Through Jesus’ blood I am clean."

But more than this—to put each point in opposition to those evil things which prove sin to be still on your conscience, let it be removed, and what nearness to God will you have? Holy souls must come together—there is a mutual attraction between a holy God and a holy being. It were impossible for a perfect being to be far removed from Him who is perfection’s self, and once let you and I know our perfect justification in Christ, and far from God we could not live.

Just as the needle seeks its pole, so should we seek our God. As the dove flies to the dovecot, so would our perfect spirit fly to the bosom of a perfect God. It were impossible for us to be far from God when purity has covered us and the righteousness of Jesus is plainly seen, and then, my brethren, enjoying this nearness of access to God, we would never be afraid to take the promise.

Adam, I think, never trembled to pluck the pomegranate or to crush the grape. He was a perfect man and he knew that the bounties of God's providence in Eden's garden were his own. And when you and I are perfectly justified, and our conscience knows it, we shall take God's mercies with a thankful hand, we shall lay hold upon His promises with a firm grasp.

The sin that made us tremble to lay hold being all withdrawn, we shall take the promise with a grip that death and hell can never loose, and say, "It is mine, for I am cleansed in Christ." And then, no fear of death will ever disturb us. Our cleansed spirit will not dread the Jordan, but long to pass through its streams.

The fetter of sin broken, we shall never fear the loss of liberty. If the great enemy, Sin, has been conquered, we shall not feel the little enemy, Death. If the hell within us has been quenched, we shall know that there can be no hell without us for us. We shall long for evening to undress, that we may rest with God, and having on the wedding garment we shall be ready to enter into the marriage supper with shoutings and joy—with a heart full of thanksgiving.

O Lord, fulfill unto us this Your promise whereon You have caused us to hope, and from our conscience cleanse that blood-guiltiness which as yet has not been cleansed, and so will we praise and magnify You forever and ever.

But secondly, I think the text has perhaps a yet more pointed bearing upon our sanctification than upon our justification. It is thrice blessed to live daily and continually under a system of grace which gives a perfect deliverance from the *guilt* of sin. But this can never be separated from the desire to know the dispensation in its deliverance from the *power* of sin.

If any man hope to be saved from punishment, and yet to hold with sin as his friend, that man's hope is a delusion. The Lord Jesus came into the world to save His people from their sins, not *in* their sins. He who breaks the chain kills the tyrant master. When you and I are delivered from the taskmaster's lash, we must be delivered from the taskmaster's labor—but it is a fact that God's people though perfectly justified and clean every whit—are none of them here on earth perfectly sanctified.

All dreams about perfect sanctification here are dreams indeed. In fact, I find upon conversing with those brethren who believe in perfection, that they only mean this—that men may come into such a state of grace that the spirit of God will keep them from the gross sin, and they shall finally persevere. I believe the *perfection* of the Wesleyan is nothing more than the *justification* of a Calvinist. He makes a mistake in the use of terms.

If he were put to a school of a good theologian, he would speak more plainly what he meant, and we should find that we did not differ. In the sense many Wesleyans use the term "perfect," I do not hesitate to say that I know thousands of perfect men, completely justified men, whose lives outwardly are free from any sin which the world could detect, and men whose private conversation is such, that if it were matched by any man, you would scarcely detect any flaw against which a worldling might exclaim.

But my dear friends, I think you and I, knowing a little about ourselves, are ready to frankly confess that there is much blood in us that is not yet cleansed. The corruption of the flesh remains even in the regenerate. Let me, in a sorrowful spirit, show some of those signs which prove to us the indwelling of sin still.

Sometimes our old nature betrays us into great and sudden sin. Have you a hasty temper? Have you ever risen in the morning, and prayed to have it subdued, and you have gone on and everything has been as smooth as possible. But a sudden squall has come, and before you knew it, you had lost your balance and had been carried away by the winds.

I don't think I ever grieved one-millionth part as much from any hurt my feelings ever had for another man, as I have done when I have hurt another man's feelings. Another man may hurt me as much as he likes, I defy him to hurt me now, but when I have been betrayed into a hasty word in reply, I have often felt more sadness of spirit than I could tell. And yet each of us knows that with the very best intentions, resolving against this evil nature of ours, there are seasons when suddenly it overwhelms us and takes us by storm.

Perhaps, however, your temptation is of another class, not with temper, but with some other frailty of your minds. Oh! have we not sometimes tossed on our beds sleepless because our eyes would not shut, for they were bursting with tears? We have done that which our soul hated. We have said, "I would sooner have lost my right hand than have said what I have said or have done what I have done. Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

If any of you can live without sin, I wish I knew your secret. If you can at all times maintain the same purity of heart, the same loveliness of disposition, the same charity of carriage, the same holiness of bearing, I would to God that I too might sit where you have sat to learn the lesson which you have learnt so well.

But I half suspect you have not seen yourself as you should have seen yourself or else you would scarcely venture to boast of such proficiency in the Gospel school. But my brethren, when our old evil nature does not throw us into the ditch, and mire us from head to foot, yet how every day it stains us!

That every day sin—that sin which gets into the closet, that evil which creeps into our very bed, which has a chair for itself at all our tables, that evil which goes with us into the market, haunts us in the street, follows us into the family, sits at the fireside, or goes with us into the throng—that evil which penetrates the house of God, gets into the church meeting, follows us even in prayer and in praise, and tries to spoil all that we do.

Oh! I am sure if you have watched yourself with but half an eye, you must feel that in those daily acts, which the ungodly call "trifles," but which you know to be solemn things, there are signs that there is blood in you which has not been cleansed. How often does this evil come upon us so as to disable us when we need the most spiritual strength!

There is the angel, and I would wrestle with Him, but sin has cut my sinew and I cannot wrestle as I should. There is the throne, and I would sing, but sin has made my voice hoarse and my spirit dull. The strings of my harp are loose, so that I cannot send forth music as I would. There are sinners to be saved. My heart will not melt with compassion, my eyes will not flow with tears.

There are many to be addressed in the ministry, but sin takes away our power to plead for God as we would. We can't be Baxters, we can't feel that soul-moving compassion for the redemption of sinners which we would feel. Have not you, each of you, felt that if you did not hate sin for anything else, you must hate it because it would not let you serve God, and serve His church as you would desire?

When you want to be Davids, in comes Satan, steals your sling and your stone. When you would be like Jael, sin mislays the hammer and hides away the nail. When you would smite the Philistines with the ox-goad of Shamgar, there may be the ox-goad, but you have not strength or courage to wield it.

Sin! Sin! you accursed thing, you have desecrated the house of God, you have climbed the sacred heights of Zion. You have spit your venom upon the burnt offerings of David's self. Yea, you have gone up to Tabor's summit, and when we have been rapt and transfigured, even then we have heard the moving of your wings, and the dark shadow of your evil influence has crept over our spirits. Oh, we have plenty of reasons in our best frames as well as in our worst to confess that there is blood in us that is not as yet cleansed.

More arguments you do not want, but if you wanted one more, I might give it you in this. Why do we ever doubt our God? Some men make light of doubts as though they were little sins. To doubt God is the most damnable of crimes. There is no iniquity which has in it a greater blackness of rebellion against God than mistrustful thoughts of His goodness, and His faithfulness.

Unbelief stabs at every attribute of God. Pride does but smite His crown. Lust does but tread upon the pure whiteness of His garment, but unbelief would snatch from His hand His sceptre, from His head His crown—nay, it would shake the very foundation of the throne itself. Now, why is it that we ever doubt God?

We have no cause to doubt Him. He has never been ungenerous or unkind. The only answer we can give is that we have still an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. There is still the house of Saul within our coasts. There is still the old Adam, still the deadly principle which needs to be

cut up, root and branch, and to be totally eradicated. And so may God cleanse in us the blood which He has not cleansed.

II. Having thus endeavored to prove that there is blood in us in the matter of sanctification which is not cleansed, I take the promise just as we find it, and read it through again. "For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed; for the LORD dwelleth in Zion." So then, one of these days, there will be no propensity to sin left in any one of God's people.

Then it is true after all that perfection is possible, and is attainable, for it is guaranteed to us in that verse, and God will as surely give what He promises, as He has greatly given what He promised in the old time. It is a great doctrine of the Christian religion which ought always to be kept prominent, that every one who believes in Christ, by believing, receives a promise of being totally set free from the indwelling of sin in his nature.

But how is this to be done? There is a great dispute about progressive sanctification. Some of us take one view of it and some another. I will endeavor to give you mine.

And first, the purging of true nature will not be done in the Antinomian way, by calling good evil, and evil good. That theory, as I have heard it expounded by some, is something like this—let a child of God do what he will, what was sin in another man, is no sin in him. That is to say, in other terms, that darkness in a child of God is light—that bitter in a child of God is sweet—that injustice—what would be injustice in another man—is justice in him. What would make another man a rogue, still leaves him honest.

If any of you believe such villainous blasphemy as that, the sooner you drive it out of your mind the better. There is a dreadful woe against that man who removes his neighbor's landmark—how much more against the man who, under pretense of Gospel teaching, would sap the foundations which divide morality from immorality, and righteousness from vice.

Sin, in a child of God, is sin—as damnable a sin as it would have been in the most accursed of the profane. The reason why it does not destroy you is not because it has ceased to be a deadly poison itself, but because of the grace of God which has given Christ to be the propitiation for our sins, has become a most blessed antidote.

Neither is the way in which the blood of believers is cleansed, as some say, by the changing of their old nature. The old nature never did change and never will. Old Adam, ever since he fell, was earthly, sensual, devilish. He will be the same as long as we live, depend on it. Brethren, the common experience of Christians proves that their nature does not get one whit better.

You know how our aged friends pray at the prayer meetings. They generally ask that the young may be kept in the slippery paths of youth. I do not hesitate to say that the paths of youth, though slippery, are not more slippery than those of old age. Look at Scriptural history! Who were the great sinners mentioned there in the church of Christ? Not a solitary young man is there mentioned as having disgraced his profession.

See David. While he was a young man, he stood. 'Twas in his declining years that he committed that great sin with Bathsheba. I do not read of Noah that he was ever drunk as a young man. It was when he was old, and his children were all grown about him, that he fell into that iniquity. Was Peter a lad? Was Judas a child? No. Bible history goes to show this, that if there is one period of human life more dangerous than another, it is when men think themselves to be out of danger—dreaming that their nature is improved.

Ask the venerable men to speak for themselves. It ill becomes the youth to bring an accusation against the hoary head, but let them be their own witnesses. They will tell you that the fires they have seen to tremble in ashes, are still as full of power to devour as they were when they blazed up in the first flames of early youth.

They will assure you—for I know, and have often heard their testimony, that they need as much to be kept by the aid of divine grace at the age of seventy, as they did at seventeen—that at eighty, they

will become, unless grace keeps them, as fit fuel for the flame as they might have done at eight-and-twenty.

Oh! yes, my brethren, ask the church, and they will tell you that the fiction of the old nature getting better is a fiction without a foot to stand upon. They will tell you that old Adam always is, and always will be an enemy to the cross of Christ, the friend of sin, and the hater of all that is good.

And yet once again—the way in which God cleanses our blood is not by making the new nature any better. Believers are partakers of the divine nature. That divine nature as divine cannot be improved. The new principle which God implants in regeneration is as good as it can be. It is a seed as we are told. That seed which cannot sin because it is born of God. The old nature cannot be good. The new nature cannot be bad.

The new nature can by no means sin, for it is a spark of the divine purity. It can by no means fall, for it has in it immortality and life of perfection. But you say to me, “How then, how then is our blood to be purged?” You have perceived in yourself that daily these two principles come into collision. The old Adam wants his way, the new Adam will have his way.

They fight, they struggle, they are contrary the one to the other. We are afflicted, we mourn and weep, “When we would do good, evil is present with us.” How to will we find, but how to perform we find not. The evil that we would not, that we do, and the good that we would do, we often do not. So then we find a law in our members warring against the law of our members.

This will go on to the last, and on your dying bed, it may be you will have as sore a conflict as you ever had while you were in health. John Knox said his sharpest spiritual struggle was his last. The old nature said to him, “John Knox, you have never feared the face of man, you have worked a great work in Scotland. You have some merits of your own.” And the new nature said, “No, John Knox, you must be saved as a sinner resting simply on the merits of Christ,” and it was as much as the new nature could do to tread out the last spark of the self-righteousness of the old Adam, but it did.

And blessed be God, it shall be done in each of us, and in the last moment when we leave our body, we shall leave our sin behind. When we shall leave off this mortal coil, the dust that is in the garment shall be shaken off too. When we are disembodied, we shall be disembodied of the body of this death of sin. When we stand in heaven, we shall bear the image of the heavenly, and cease to bear the image of the earthy.

We shall be changed, we shall be made like unto the quickening Spirit, and no more be merely as the living soul. We shall receive our second nature in all its fullness, while the first and fallen nature shall be shaken off and done with, and put away as filthy rags—only fit for the destroying dunghill—and we shall be clean. “I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed.”

Brethren, I was dreaming, dreaming of what would be the consequence if now our blood could be cleansed. We are assembled here as a mighty congregation. Oh! if the minister’s blood were wholly cleansed. A perfect minister! What a pulpit! What a power! What a very incarnation of the love of Christ would there be! No fear of discord then. The shepherd’s presence in the midst of his flock would surely prevent all divisions. No hard words would ever come from His lips. All would be kindness, sympathy, and Christ-like affection.

And what preaching! What exhortations to Christians! What solemn earnestness and what pleading with sinners! What tearful eyes! What a melting heart! What moving periods! What rousing thunders! What cheering syllables of consolation! Oh! God, I would Your promise were fulfilled to me! “I will cleanse their blood which I have not cleansed.”

And what a consequence if the deacons and elders had their blood cleansed too! No mistakes then. We are fallible now because we are sinful men. What priests of the flock! What overseers of God’s house! What examples to you all! What pillars of light! What flaming torches of devotion! How they would be like the horses of Pharaoh’s chariot, glorious as they were strong, and strong as they would be pure. Oh! would that the prayer were fulfilled in them, “I will cleanse their blood which is not cleansed.”

And what a church we should be! Perfect members, freed from sin! No denominations would break up into sections! There would be no denominations. Christ would be the one Head and there would be no party names. A perfect believer! What a power would he be against the darkness and the iniquity of this vast city!

A perfect church! What joy! What peace! We only need this, we sometimes think, to make a millennium. But indeed, it would not make a millennium. It would make an aceldama. For the world would be in arms to put to death the perfect ones as they did Christ. It is only Christ's coming that can make a millennium. And when He shall come with power as well as purity, with reigning sovereignty as well as with wooing love, then shall the church have her Sabbath, and it shall be said, "Hallelujah! the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ!"

But as I was dreaming, I thought how different everything would be if our blood were wholly cleansed. How sweet would be the bread upon our tables! Is it scant and is there little of it? What blessed contentment would there be to impart to it a manna-like flavor! Is our house ill-furnished, narrow, and ill-ventilated? If grace were in our hearts to perfection would not that very hovel become a palace, and the dungeon itself glitter with the gems of Paradise?

How different would our trials be. How light! how light! how easily should we endure them! How different our joys—not flashes in the pan, meteors that are and are gone—but as suns shining both by day and night! Oh! if we were perfect, what a different world this would look. We would not be standing on our dignity towards our brethren, we would not be cut up because we were not enough respected. We would not be troubling ourselves because we were not made much of and fussed over. Perfect men would hate such as that, and be ready to be the least among saints, that they might so become the greatest of all.

Oh! if we were perfect what forbearance we should have! What forbearance towards the imperfect ones. Hard words we could afford to smile at. Dark sentences—we should be deaf to them, and the sharpest cuts of sarcasm would only just touch our armor to blunt theirs. With the perfect, this would be a new world indeed, and if perfect, how new would heaven seem to be to us.

There would be rents in the firmament through which we should see the glory of God. There would be windows without curtains or blinds to shut out the vision of angels and of the King of kings. A perfect eye would see through clouds and mists, and see God Himself, and all the glories of the court.

And how different would hell itself seem to a perfect man. How awful and tremendous! What thoughts would he have of the sin which had digged the pit, and of the iniquity which piled the fuel, and of the justice which like a stream of fire had kindled it.

Let us but mount to perfection and we come to the highest degree of intellectual and spiritual attainment. We should not be what we are now—blind, deaf, dumb, halt, weak, dead—we should be full of all that life can mean. A quickened eye, a purified pulse would surely bring forth perfection in every other faculty.

***“O happy hour, O blest abode!
I shall be near and like my God;
And death and hell no more annoy
The solid pleasure of my joy.”***

Hasten this, oh God, hasten it in Your own time.

Well now—there is one of you who says, “Well, I shall never get there—perfection is too high for me. No, sir, I can never think that I shall be perfectly free from sin.” You shall be though, and that for these reasons. First, Christ purposes to do it. He loves His church and gave Himself for it, that He might present it to Himself a perfect church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. That is His purpose, and He'll do it.

But next, the Spirit has engaged to do it. He has come into this world like purifying rain. He has come to take the flint away that would not be refined, and put into your soul a new and heavenly mind. Now, what Jesus purposes and what the Spirit works can surely be accomplished. Besides that, heaven requires it. "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth." You must be perfect, then, to enter there.

More than this, God's honor needs it. Unless He utterly destroy the works of the devil, His honor is not perfect. If He does not make you completely free from all sin of every kind, then Christ has not completed His work, and "It is finished!" was but an empty brag. His honor requires it. Put your hand upon that promise and say, "His promise certifies it."

I cannot see how. I can scarcely tell why—it seems impossible. My soul can scarcely get the thought into its mind. But great God! with my finger this day upon that promise, I do believe that You will cleanse my blood which You have not cleansed, and I shall at length be without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, accepted in the Beloved.

Now, brethren, how shall I conclude except with a practical exhortation? What then, if it be promised to us that the old nature shall thus be removed, and we shall be purged, what then? Why, then, let us struggle against our corruption, because we shall get the victory. Nothing makes a man fight like the hope of getting the victory.

When poor soldiers feel that it is of no use, then they are only too glad to hear the trumpet sound a retreat. But when they are confident of victory, how they draw their swords, how they hasten to the struggle, how they weary not of the fight. Even now, today, my soul takes hold upon her sword. Sin, death, and hell I defy you, for I shall bear the palm as surely as I bear the sword. I shall wear the crown as certainly as I agonized unto death.

Struggle with yourselves, strive daily to get the mastery of your passions. The victory is sure. Let no discouragement weaken you. "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," for He is able to give you the victory through Jesus Christ your Lord.

And what next? Why, today, pray against your corruptions more than ever you have done. You have got a promise to plead. Take it, salt it with your tears. Lay it upon the altar, put your hands upon the horns of the altar, and say, "Great God, I will not rise, I will not let You go until I know by divine assurance that this promise shall be fulfilled to me."

So shall you go forth to your daily struggle with temptation wearing a smile upon your face and smoothing those wrinkles on your brow. Sorrow does not become the man who has so rich a promise. Be glad. The joy of the Lord shall be your strength. You shall at last win the victory.

Sinner! he that believes in Christ may claim this text for himself. Do you believe, and this text is yours as well as mine, and shall be fulfilled to every one of us today, and in the last day, and in day without days in glory everlasting.

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