

# Sermon

by

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Purge me ... wash me

Psalm 51 v 7



Sermon preached by Mr. John S. Green,  
at Swavesey Chapel,  
on Sunday morning, 25<sup>th</sup> July 1982

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**“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”**

Psalm 51 v 7

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We need not dwell upon David's exceedingly sad and solemn fall; but rather on that gracious spirit of true repentance and prayer that the Holy Spirit bestowed upon him - after Nathan had been to him and spoken that parable, and God had convinced David of his sin. He had broken God's most holy law and command. Sin has a very deadening effect upon a sinner. It had upon David; but eventually the Holy Spirit wonderfully convinced him of his sad and solemn state by nature.

I believe David had some very deep, some very solemn things to learn through this dispensation; things he would never forget as long as he lived. He knew what a defiling thing sin is; that one who is defiled by sin and has not an interest in the merits of the dear Lord Jesus Christ, could never enter Heaven. How earnestly he prayed, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.” I believe this prayer sprang from the very heart of the Psalmist; and it will spring from your heart and from mine if the Holy Spirit be our teacher. We need not be left to fall into some outrageous sin to make us sinners - we are sinners already. I was thinking yesterday of what the Psalmist said, “In sin did my mother conceive me.” I was born in sin, “shapen in iniquity.” Solemn truths you know, solemn truths, but they are true of each one of us here this morning. Our very nature is sinful, it cannot be otherwise, and it will be to the very end of our lives; but it is a mercy if our souls are cleansed.

John the Baptist had a remarkable view of the dear Lord Jesus and he said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” We were reading this morning of the leper, one who had that fearful disease. Lepers were excluded admission into their own homes and from amongst the people of God. Very often they had to put their fingers upon their lip and cry, ‘Unclean, unclean,’ so that no-one should come near to them.

That's the deep, spiritual experience of one mercifully convinced and taught by the Holy Spirit. What they feel to be is a leper indeed - defiled. What does this do? It humbles the sinner. The leprosy of pride is one of our worst sins. Whether people believe it or not, it is a terrible thing, and we are all of us, in some way or other, affected by it.

Provision was made for the leper under the old Mosaic dispensation, if he should be cleansed of the leprosy. I thought, in reading that really wonderful chapter early this morning, we have none of that to do, but, if we are God's people, that has been done for us. The dear Lord Jesus did that when He was here on earth upon the cross.

My dear friends, the most important thing in religion is to have faith in the Person and in the precious blood of the dear Lord Jesus. I couldn't set anything more important, more vital, before you than this. No outward forms, no outward ceremonies will cleanse us, will make us fit for God's presence.

“Not all the blood of beasts  
On Jewish altars slain,  
Could give the guilty conscience peace,  
Or wash away the stain.”

It's a very sad thing in religion to be left to formality. I believe thousands upon thousands are formalists in religion. They are satisfied with their performances and quite think that by these things they will get to glory. It wasn't so with good Toplady: he said,

“Nothing in my hand I bring;  
Simply to thy cross I cling.”

What have you and I brought this morning? I haven't brought any good! Painfully, with the Apostle, I have to confess, “In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” That is true of each one of us in this little company.

So our performances will never get us to Heaven. No! The time comes, through the gracious teaching of the Holy Spirit, when the sinner has to give up everything, renounce everything which is of the flesh. The Holy Spirit opens their eyes spiritually to see their sad state, and to see God has provided a Saviour and a great One. David needed salvation, and so will you and I need it - I mean experimentally, feelingly. May the same Holy Spirit make us acquainted with our own hearts. We shall have no stones to throw against “the man after God's own heart.” We shall feel, with the

Apostle, that of sinners we are chief and most unworthy. David felt exceedingly unworthy of the Lord's blessing. He did pray what I hope some of us have prayed a good many times, "Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." What would that mean? It would mean despair. How solemn, to feel no hope for us, to feel we have gone beyond the limit as it were.

"Glory to God, they ne'er shall rove  
Beyond the limits of His love."

Not one of His redeemed, not one for whom Jesus died, shall be suffered to go beyond the limits of His love. Many professors have. There are those mentioned in the scriptures who had not the fear of God. I suppose Judas preached, and I suppose he must have preached the truth, otherwise he would have been detected, but he was beyond the limits of God's love wasn't he? No hope for him, no! Then, since Biblical times, we may have read of a number who very wilfully transgressed God's commands, and there has been no hope for them. What a mercy to be kept! You may have to pray day by day that God will keep you, and keep you from your own heart, keep you from your own nature.

But, the Psalmist wanted something done for him; and all God's dear people reach that place where they feel they need the Holy Spirit to do something for them that they cannot do; something which ministers cannot do, but that which needs Omnipotence, and that is to be purged.

I was thinking in the night of what Toplady said, "Be of sin the double cure." Haven't we got it in our text? I believe we have two things pointed out. The first is, what sin does, and secondly, the effect of it. You have just been singing that little hymn about the leper and the leper's defilement - that's what sin does. Hyssop is no doubt typical of the sacred merits, the precious blood of the dear Lord Jesus. You may have come into chapel this morning feeling you need both these blessings mentioned in the text. The first can be very painful work, very solemn, yet very wonderful. Under the old dispensation this was commanded of God, and David knew the old dispensation, wonderfully well. So he prays, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean." Is that your prayer? Do you want to be clean?

I remember reading once, somewhere, of two godly people out for a walk on a snowy morning, and one said to his friend, 'Do you know of anything whiter than this snow?' The other said, 'Yes, a soul washed in the precious

blood of Jesus.’ How wonderful! Snow naturally soon becomes defiled, doesn’t it? It is defiled in coming down from the skies.

Well now, the godly Psalmist, he prayed that God would grant these blessings unto him. No doubt he had felt them before, felt his interest in these things, but he wanted to feel them again. If you have got grace in your heart there will be times when you feel you need the Lord to do something for you again, as if he had never done anything in the past. Are there not times when you feel so lifeless, spiritually? You feel so dead. Sin has a deadening effect. Unbelief seems to deaden everything in the poor sinner’s heart. You come to that place where you will ask the Lord to do something for you again, if he has ever done anything before. I have got no time, no room, for those people who think they were blessed years back and can manage things themselves now. There is a dear truth in some of our sweet hymns:

“Daily I’d repent of sin,  
Daily wash in Calvary’s blood.”

I would that I could; that I might be so favoured! Is it so with you? “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.”

God’s dear people have thoughts of heaven; they are exercised about heaven and the end of this life. It will come quickly, quicker than some of us may expect it, but for some of us it cannot be far off. What a mercy to feel you want to be made right. What can make you right? The precious blood of the dear Lord Jesus. There isn’t any other remedy for sin, my friends. No other remedy is needed. But this is needed: not the mere theory of it, but the gracious application of it; and that will cleanse you. Heaven is a holy place, God’s abode. That holy God dwells there, and the spirits of the just made perfect; their souls have reached that holy, happy place. They have done with sin, finished with sin - washed; because on earth they had faith in the precious atoning blood of the dear Lord Jesus. They felt their sins forgiven. What a mercy if you and I have felt our sins forgiven!

The dear Lord Jesus, in a most wonderful way, blessed some when He was here on earth; and some of them had been great sinners. They had wandered far away from the truth, and yet the dear Lord had mercy upon them, and He forgave their sins; He washed them, He cleansed them. This was a great mystery to the poor Pharisee when that dear woman had real heart repentance given her and she washed the feet of Jesus. Have you ever

done that? Have you ever mourned over your sins? You know there is something wrong with your religion if there be no repentance. That isn't the miserable thing some people would make it out to be. Oh there is wonderful relief in it! It is a mercy if you and I mourn over our sins. If in secret we have shed tears, not only because we shall be lost, but to feel we have sinned against God. "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." Now *that* is conviction; now *that* is real, true, spiritual conviction - when a sinner feels that whatever they may have done against others, their sins are against God: a good, kind, holy God. Sweet tears! Wonderful tears! "Without repentance," we are told, "there is no remission," no forgiveness, no understanding experimentally of our little text. What a mercy to pray for it. I need it, you need it, and will feel to need it - that the Holy Spirit might come and bless us.

We shall know a little of the truths experienced by that good woman. What did Jesus say to her? Wonderful words, "Thy sins be forgiven thee, go in peace." You will go in peace if your sins are forgiven you. Do you feel, through the precious blood of the dear Lord Jesus, this forgiveness? It will bring with it heavenly peace, God's peace, that peace which passeth all understanding. David was in a good deal of trouble until he got this. He did receive it. He said, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." He experienced it; the Lord wonderfully blessed him.

Now some of you may feel, 'That's just the blessing I want, just the blessing I pray for!' You want the dear Holy Spirit to apply that precious blood to your heart. It is done by faith: nothing of a natural nature in this. No, it's that precious faith that God gives, that leads a sinner to the dear Lord Jesus, to that fountain open for sin and for uncleanness. Without true faith, my dear friends, there is no coming to Jesus; there is no seeking His blessing, no, none whatever. If the beginning be right, the end will be right. If the beginning be wrong, everything is wrong. Sad state to be in, it is indeed. But where the Holy Spirit does come, as He did with David, and mercifully teach us, there will be that true repentance. Jesus commenced His wonderful ministry almost with those words didn't He? "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." It is a mercy to be a true mourner. You may go about, day by day, secretly mourning; mourning perhaps that you can't get what you long for, no! But I would say, 'Press on.'

I feel that's one of the most important things in the ministry - to set forth the atonement of the dear Lord Jesus. The vital necessity of knowing and feeling our sins are forgiven. Without this there is something solemnly lacking in our ministry, (there is), in setting sinners down short of that which will take them to heaven.

Well that woman, she had forgiveness. And it is a mercy if the sermon stirs you up sometimes. You don't find fault with the word; you don't find fault with the minister; but you say, 'Lord, I believe what I have heard, that it is the truth, and that is what I need: that precious blood applied to my conscience, fitting me and preparing me for heaven.' I have to thank God as I look back, that His servants, one of them in particular, did preach faithfully, and I wasn't offended at it. But it instructed me and it showed me that people may learn experience. They may get a lot of the Bible in their head; they may get enough of it in their head to preach it. But you see with God's dear people the ministry is blessed to them, if God sends a man and instructs them, and they have to pray for this wonderful blessing. They need it! 'Lord, don't let me die without it!' A seeking soul feels their need of it; and a seeker may not be young in years either. They feel their need of this wonderful blessing - to be washed. "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

How wonderful to feel all one's sins forgiven! It is a good few years since I read a memoir of good old J.K. Popham. When he came near his end he said, 'My black-like sins.' He felt it! I believe conviction attends God's dear people more or less to the end of their days. In other words, we shall not be rid of sin. However much the Lord may bless us, we shall not be free from our vile sin until we come to the end of this present life. So this text may, and should be, and will be, in substance, if the Holy Spirit be our teacher, our earnest prayer.

Now, I believe that sinner who has felt their sins forgiven is safe, is secure. Are you safe? Am I safe? Am I secure? Nothing else will make us safe; nothing else will make us really secure, but this. You may have felt a few times - when the dear Lord has washed you, purged you, cleansed you from all your guilt and purged your sin - you may have felt that you could die and your favoured soul would go to heaven.

I sometimes think only God's people are happy. The worldling today is after his pleasure, but by nightfall it will all have gone. Something may



face him tomorrow and he faints, for all his so-called pleasure. But God's dear people, who are favoured with an answer to the prayer in our text, are a happy people. However tried they may be, whatever difficulties they may have, they are really a happy people. "Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord." I can't find happiness anywhere else but in this text - I mean in the substance of it, in the sweet truths of it. And if the Lord answer it for you today, you will be peaceful, you will be happy; and if you were nearing the end of life you wouldn't be distracted. No!

We sang somewhere during the week,

"In that dread moment, O to hide  
Beneath His sheltering blood!  
'Twill Jordan's icy waves divide,  
And land my soul with God."

~ beautiful verse. In my early days in the ministry I knew an old deacon, whom I esteemed, and that was one of his favourite hymns. As he lay on his dying bed, apparently unconscious to all around, I said to him, 'I hope you feel that precious verse you often gave out - "In that dread moment".' And I believe that registered; I believe that went home to his heart. Now what a favour if we know the like experience! "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." What efficacy there is in the blood of Jesus, it will never lose its power. No! He has entered heaven with it. I want Him to bestow it upon me from heaven. There is no other source, no other way of getting these blessings but from heaven. What made the atonement so precious? Why, it wasn't the blood of any ordinary man! No! If you could have found a sinless man, which you couldn't, his blood couldn't make an atonement. It is safe to say that it was the blood of God, God incarnate. It was this Deity, the Godhead, of the dear Lord Jesus, that gave and gives His precious blood - such blood!

We sometimes sing that good hymn (I like it),

"The vilest sinner out of hell,"

are you that one?

"Who lives to feel his need,  
Is welcome to a Throne of Grace  
The Saviour's blood to plead."

Keep on pleading it, keep on praying for it. If you are knocking on mercy's door; if you believe there is a remedy and you need it; seek it poor sinner! It very often comes when the sinner least expects it. If you do not feel your need of it, if you do not pray for it, what a sad state you are in! No doings

of ours, no works of ours, as we said at the beginning, can do us the least good. We have to fall flat (so to speak) at Jesus' feet and plead His mercy. Oh I like that word, 'mercy'. What else could David plead in his sad state and condition? Why, he starts his Psalm with that very petition, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness; according unto the multitude - *multitude* - of Thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions." Good ground, you know, to plead. If you think you will get forgiveness in any other way but through mercy, you are wrong. For God has provided mercy, divine compassion - God's love. That's why He gave His Son, why He saved poor sinners. Jesus, possessed of the same love, laid down His life for His sheep. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

The precious blood of Jesus.

The Lord bless these few observations.

Amen.